



Show-Me

The "Official" Newsletter of Literacy in Missouri

OCTOBER 2009

ISSUE No. 160

Literacy...

Director's Newsletter

2009-2010 Young GED Examinees and Their Performance on the GED Tests

This article was re-printed from GED® Testing Service. For additional information go to:

http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ged/pubs/FINAL_Young_GED_Examinees.pdf

Abstract and Executive Summary

Abstract

GED Tests offer many young adults who have left school a second chance to gain a credential, yet many educators have concerns about policies for very young test-takers and how they perform on the GED Tests. The GED Testing Service sets the absolute minimum age for taking the GED Tests at 16 years of age. However, an individual jurisdiction may establish its own minimum age requirement for testing as long as it is not lower than 16 years. In the United States, 43 states and the District of Columbia require candidates to be 18 years old to receive a GED credential. Most states, however, allow individuals younger than their required minimum age to take the tests with additional documentation. This study provides a comprehensive picture of young adults between 16 and 19 years old taking the GED Tests. What are their academic and demographic characteristics? And how do state policies on minimum age and use of the Official GED Practice Tests (OPT) influence their performance on the GED Tests? Study results show that younger GED examinees who needed additional documentation and approval before testing performed comparably on the tests to teenagers who met the states' standard minimum age requirements. The study also shows that states with stricter state age requirements may possibly encourage early test-takers to thoroughly prepare for the tests. In addition, the study suggests that taking and passing the OPT has a positive association with obtaining a GED credential.

Executive Summary

Rising numbers of recent high school dropouts are participating in adult basic education (ABE) programs. During the past decade, however, the percentage of youth ranging from 16 to 19 years old taking the GED Tests remained relatively stable at approximately 41 percent. This report focuses on GED candidates aged 16 to 19 years and aims to provide additional insight not found in previous studies about these young adults taking the GED Tests. It is important to note that the GED Tests are intended to meet the credentialing needs of adults, both young and old, who are already outside the K-12 educational system.

An individual jurisdiction may establish its own eligibility and minimum age requirement for testing and for awarding a GED credential as long as it is not lower than 16 years of age. The minimum age for taking the GED Tests varies from 16 to 19 years in the United States. However, most states allow individuals younger than their required minimum age to take the tests with additional documentation and requirements. In 2006, 56 percent of candidates aged 16 to 19 years old when tested were younger than their jurisdiction's minimum age.

The purpose of this study is to investigate characteristics of young GED examinees and how state minimum age policies affect their performance on the GED Tests. To identify the young GED examinees, the study examines the demographic, academic, social, and behavioral differences between GED candidates who were at the state minimum age and those who were under the minimum age but met the additional requirements.

Furthermore, the study scrutinizes differences in the completion rates, pass rates, and standard scores of both groups across jurisdictions. Research has shown that test preparation classes and practice tests are positively related to test results. The most reported test preparation activities prior to GED testing were public school/adult class, practice tests, and individual study (home study and self-taught). The study also examines the relationship between age group and preparation activities, including type of preparation, length of preparation, and use of Official GED Practice Tests (OPT). Finally, the study considers the role of the OPT for both groups in terms of passing the GED Tests and state prerequisites.

The data analyzed in this study were from the GED Testing Service International Database (IDB). The IDB contains candidates' demographic and test scores collected from official GED Tests electronic scoring sites. Candidates were first time test-takers in 2006. In addition, 2005 data were selected for analysis using the same methods for cross validation. Candidates in the dataset were categorized into two groups: (1) the exception age group, which included examinees under the state minimum age, and (2) the policy age group, which contained examinees at the state minimum age.

In 2006, a total of 196,912 candidates aged 16 to 19 years took the GED Tests. Nine of every 10 test-takers completed the test battery in the same year, and approximately eight out of every 10 of those passed the tests. These pass and completion rates are higher than those observed in the whole population of GED Tests candidates (86 and 69 percent, respectively).

As in other age groups, the majority of the young test-takers were male (60 percent). Fewer young minorities took the tests compared with the nationwide percentage. The most frequently reported grade the young candidates completed was the 11th grade for the policy age group and the 10th grade for the exception age group. Candidates in both groups reported similar reasons for testing, such as personal satisfaction, getting a better job, and educational advancement.

Overall, testing performance of examinees, as well as their completion and pass rates, was comparable for both exception age and policy age groups. These findings do not substantiate a common perception that young adults are not prepared to take a high school equivalency exam and that the youngest candidates would likely not do well on the GED Tests.

The probability of preparing for the GED Tests with an OPT was higher in the exception age group. A prerequisite of passing the OPT before testing, particularly for exception age candidates, may have a positive relationship with performance of GED candidates. Candidates in the exception age group were more than twice as likely to take the OPT than policy age candidates. In eight states where the OPT is required, the pass rate was higher for young candidates than in states in which there was no OPT prerequisite.

States with stricter age requirements may possibly encourage early test-takers to better prepare for the tests. More preparation may contribute to "evening out" the scores of candidates at exception age and at policy age. That is, exception age test-takers may perform comparably with policy age test-takers, despite the latter's extra year of high school, because of additional preparation. Evidence of additional preparation includes time spent preparing; exception age test-takers reported spending more time preparing. Median preparation time reported for the exception age group was 40 hours, and 25 hours for the policy age group. Median preparation time overall for those who reported preparing was 32 hours, ranging from one to 4,000 hours.

The findings of additional preparation have implications for policy, for instruction, and for stakeholders assisting dropouts to complete their secondary education. While a median amount of preparation time of 32 hours may not seem substantial in a typical secondary school setting, those hours are likely to pass much more slowly if the candidate studies at home around other activities or in a part-time adult education program. Furthermore, with a range in preparation time up to 4,000 hours, many candidates may find themselves taking months to prepare. High school and college counselors, judges, mental health-care providers, rehabilitation staff, and youth employment personnel need to be aware that the GED Tests offer a second chance but not a "quick fix" before they advise or mandate young adults to pursue a GED credential, considering the likely amount of preparation time for and the difficulty of the GED Tests.

Newsletters for Adult Education and Testing Professionals

Contact Person: Tina Liston,
Professional Development Specialist
tliston@mail.ncmissouri.edu
www.maelpdc.org

GED Testing News and Updates

In August 2009 GED Testing Service® launched a new, free online newsletter for adult education and testing professionals called *The Community*.

Delivered once-a-month, the newsletter will include:

- ✦ Updates on the new 2012 Series GED Tests
- ✦ Marketing information and resources from GED Testing Service and others
- ✦ Latest news and updates from GED Testing Service
- ✦ Spotlights on program happenings nationwide

Access to preparation and testing information that matters most to you

Sign up online by going to www.GEDtest.org/thecommunity .

Promoting Lifelong Learning

Help your students move a step closer to a college degree with *CenterPoint*. ACE's free monthly e-newsletter for lifelong learning and adult basic education professionals. *CenterPoint* highlights best practices in lifelong learning and higher education nationwide.

Delivered once-a-month, the newsletter features articles on topics such as:

- ✦ Profiling promising practices in higher education for adult workers in transition
- ✦ Higher education residential programs for single mothers to help them earn a college degree
- ✦ Higher education initiatives targeting adults to fill workforce gaps

National higher education initiatives to increase college degree completion among adults

To subscribe, go to <https://www.acenet.edu/resources/centerpoint/subscribe/>

The official website of the GED Testing Service, www.acenet.edu offers a wide array of useful information about the GED Tests, including sample test questions and study tips. GED Testing Service, a program of the American Council on Education, develops, delivers and safeguards the GED Tests.

Preparation for and Performance on the GED® Test

Joseph W. McLaughlin, Gary Skaggs, & Margaret Becker Patterson

GED Testing Service © Research Study, 2009-2

Abstract and Executive Summary

Abstract

GED testing candidates have many options available to them to prepare for the GED Test, including adult education (AE) classes, practice tests, and self-study. This study focused on candidates who voluntarily took the GED Test and could choose freely among preparation activities. We examined GED Test preparation activities and created eight mutually exclusive test preparation profile groups: public school AE with or without a practice test, community college AE with or without a practice test, individual study with or without a practice test, practice test only, and *none*.

The final sample included 90,032 U.S. candidates who completed the GED Test in 2004 and fell into one of the eight test preparation profile groups. Candidates in the study most often reported studying on their own without a practice test (29 percent) or studying in a public school AE program without a practice test (28 percent). A smaller proportion studied in a community college AE program without a practice test (13 percent) or did not prepare at all (14 percent). The public school and community college AE profile groups had mean GED scores 25 to 34 points higher for candidates who took a practice test. The individual study group means were 20 points higher for candidates who took a practice test.

Among the profile groups, the group members who studied individually with a practice test and the *none* groups scored the highest on average. The lowest mean scores were observed in the group who indicated public school AE preparation without a practice test. All groups' content areas and battery mean scores were higher than the passing requirement (410 and 2,250, respectively). The group with the highest pass rate was the individual study with a practice test group, and the lowest pass rate was recorded for the public school AE without a practice test group.

Executive Summary

GED testing candidates have a number of preparation options available to them, including adult basic classes, practice tests, and self-study. The purpose of this study was to investigate how candidates prepare for the GED Test and how those test preparation activities are related to achievement. In some states, candidates must meet certain prerequisites (such as instruction or passing a practice test) before testing. This study focuses on candidates who voluntarily took the GED Test and were able to choose freely among preparation activities.

The GED Test U.S. Demographics survey asked candidates to indicate which of 27 test preparation activities, including *none*, they undertook. The final sample included 90,032 GED completers from 2004 who fell into one of eight test preparation profile groups. The eight mutually exclusive test preparation profile groups were: (1) public school adult education (AE) without a practice test; (2) public school AE with a practice test; (3) community college AE without a practice test; (4) community college AE with a practice test; (5) individual study without a practice test; (6) individual study with a practice test; (7) official practice test; or (8) "None" (no test preparation).

Candidates in the sample tended to most often report studying on their own without a practice test (29 percent) or studying in a public school AE program without a practice test (28 percent). A smaller proportion studied in a community college AE program without a practice test (13 percent) or did not prepare at all (14 percent). However, different populations of candidates engaged in different test preparation activities. For example, women were more likely to enroll in AE than men, and candidates who entered AE tended to be slightly older. Men tended to take the Official GED Practice Tests (OPT) or not prepare for the GED Test. AE candidates were slightly more likely to report low or no income. Candidates choosing the OPT only or no preparation were younger and out of school fewer years than AE or individual study candidates.

Major findings were:

? The highest scoring groups were individual study with OPT, *none*, and OPT only. The lowest scoring groups were the public school and community college AE groups without OPT. However, all groups' mean test scores were higher than the passing requirements (410 minimum standard score on a single test and 2,250 total).

? For candidates choosing AE or individual study, White candidates were more likely to take an OPT. Black and Hispanic candidates were more likely not to take an OPT.

? For all groups of candidates, the most frequently cited reasons for taking the GED Test were personal satisfaction, pursuing a better job, and enrolling in college. Candidates who took an OPT were more likely than their non-practice test counterparts to select more reasons for taking the GED Test, and more likely to select personal satisfaction, being a role model, and enrolling in a college program.

? On average, the highest scoring groups were individual study with OPT (545.99), *none* (542.14), and OPT only (538.57). Public school AE

Demand for High School Equivalency Credentials Rises with Economic Downturn, Report Shows; GED Testing Service Prepares for Additional Increases

This article was re-printed from the American Council on Education. To obtain more information go to:

http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Press_Releases2&CONTENTID=33149&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm

Washington, D.C. (July 15, 2009)—GED Testing Service®, a program of the American Council on Education®, today announced that the number of adults who took the GED Tests in 2008 rose to nearly 777,000, with an increased passing rate of 72.6 percent program-wide. According to the [2008 GED® Testing Program Statistical Report](#), this is the highest number of test-takers and the highest pass rate since the latest series of GED Tests was introduced in 2002. The report also notes that test-taking in the last quarter of 2008, at the beginning of the economic downturn, rose by 7 percent over the same period in 2007.

To further link test-taking increases and the economy, researchers at GED Testing Service cite an increase in the number of test-takers in 41 U.S. states during the first quarter of 2009. Of those states, 22 have experienced increases greater than 10 percent, with Louisiana and New Hampshire seeing jumps of more than 40 percent.

This situation is not unexpected. "When the economy and job markets weaken, we see increased interest and participation in the education sector," according to CT Turner, associate director of marketing for GED Testing Service. He states that many people respond to downturns by increasing their level of educational attainment in the hopes of becoming more competitive in their current industry or changing to another field. However, rising demand may stretch institutional capacity. "Unfortunately, at times like this when adult education most desperately needs investment of resources, it is competing with other social programs for decreased state funds."

GED Testing Service also warns about an even darker side to the situation: the proliferation of fraudulent, unaccredited programs on the Internet that purport to offer fast and easy access to GED credentials. These programs may go to great lengths to appear legitimate, but in fact, offer certificates that are virtually worthless for obtaining a job or going to college. GED Testing Service wants the public to know that the GED Tests cannot be taken online, and are offered only at Official GED Testing Centers. Potential test-takes can locate their nearest testing center [here](#).

Number of Test-Takers Expected to Rise Even Further

GED Testing Service Interim Executive Director and ACE Vice President Bruce Briggs states that, "Even with the increase in testing numbers and the pass rate over the past year, we are expecting additional increases in the coming year." He adds that ACE and GED Testing Service have not only been preparing for expected increases, but are also in the early planning stages to enhance the program and significantly ramp up the number of test-takers in the coming years. "With the dropout rate stagnant—hovering at 1.3 million students who drop out each year—and President Obama's goal of the United States leading the world in the proportion of college graduates by 2020, the GED testing program must become a vital tool to reach that goal. Providing an alternative path to college for high school dropouts of all ages is an essential element in reaching the president's goal."

The 2000 U.S. Census data indicate that more than 16 percent of the U.S. adult population is without a high school credential.

The 2008 GED® Testing Program Statistical Report is available as a complimentary PDF download by clicking [here](#). In addition, other complimentary GED testing reports and papers are available online at www.GEDtest.org under "Publications & Research."

GED Testing Service® is a program of the American Council on Education (ACE) that develops, delivers, and safeguards the GED Tests, setting the policy for and ensuring compliance of GED test battery administration. GED testing is administered by each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, the Canadian provinces and territories, the U.S. insular areas, the U.S. military, and federal correctional institutions. Each jurisdiction manages its own GED testing program.

Founded in 1918, ACE (www.acenet.edu) is the major coordinating body for all the nation's higher education institutions, representing more than 1,600 college and university presidents, and more than 200 related associations, nationwide. It seeks to provide leadership and a unifying voice on key higher education issues and influence public policy through advocacy, research, and program initiatives.

This publication was produced pursuant to a grant from the Director, Adult Education & Literacy, Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, under the authority of Title II of the Workforce Investment Act. The opinions herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education or the U.S. Office of Education. No official endorsement by these agencies is inferred or implied.