



NEWS RELEASE

January 29, 2010

For more information, contact:

Jim Morris, DESE, 573-751-3469

Mary Bruton, MERIC, 573-751-3635

Jeremy Kintzel, MDHE, 573-751-2361

Michael Waltman, DWD, 573-526-8267

David Lankford, MCC, 573-634-3511

More Seek Help for GED Test to Beat Unemployment Odds

In this tight job market, more Missouri adults without a high school diploma are realizing the value of a GED or General Education Development® credential.

New unemployment figures released this month confirm that education has a significant impact on the likelihood of employment. December data released from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show the overall national unemployment rate at 10 percent, while the rate for people with less than a high school diploma is 15.4 percent.

“A quick look through the job postings on MissouriCareerSource.com reveals that having a high school diploma or GED would be extremely advantageous to jobseekers,” said Bill Poteet, director of GED testing for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or DESE. “In the past couple of years, many of Missouri’s GED testing centers have been reporting larger numbers of displaced workers wanting to take the GED test.”

Numbers Up, Yet Down

While the number of Missouri adults taking the GED is up 6 percent in 2009, from 10,113 to 10,700, over the same period the pass rate declined statewide from 80 percent to 76 percent. So while 587 more people took the test in 2009 than in 2008, only 57 more passed it.

“We don’t know why the pass rate is down; it seems the economy might be attracting people to the test who have not prepared, but that’s just speculation,” said Ron Jewell, director of adult education at DESE.

“What we do know is that people who take advantage of the free help of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) centers stand a better chance of passing the test than those who do not. These centers are proven resources for helping adults earn their GEDs.”

Pass Rates Improve with Free Help

The numbers back up Jewell’s claim. Instead of dropping, the pass rate among GED test-takers enrolled in AEL classes went up 2 percent from 2008 to 2009, from 87 to 89 percent.

Missouri has 44 local AEL programs. Funded by state and federal monies, these programs provide basic academic instruction, GED preparation, assistance in transitioning to postsecondary education and employment, and English as a Second Language instruction at no cost to the student. The state’s AEL program also offers a Web-based GED Online Class (www.gedonlineclass.com) to students who are unable to attend class due to

work schedules, transportation or other factors but who want to prepare to take the GED Test or supplement their classroom work. For adults who just need to brush-up their academic skills, the DVD-based “GED Fast Track” program may help.

“The average age of individuals taking the GED test is 25,” Jewell said, adding this means a lot of people taking the test have not been in a structured educational setting for several years. “Those who attend an AEL program are assessed to determine areas of academic deficiency and academic strength. Based on these results, students are provided the instruction and guidance needed to prepare for the GED test.”

More GED Graduates Attending College

The higher number of Missourians taking the GED is not the only statistic showing a growing appreciation for the opportunities a GED affords. The number of GED-holders going on to higher education in Missouri also is up. From 2008 to 2009, the number of GED-holding students enrolled in Missouri public post-secondary institutions increased 12 percent, from 5,361 to 6,026 students. This compares to an overall increase in enrollment of 8 percent.

Missouri Department of Higher Education spokesperson Jeremy Kintzel pointed out that GED recipients are eligible for both the Bright Flight and Access Missouri aid programs, so long as they meet all the requirements.

“The bottom line is having a GED opens doors,” Jewell said. “The first step is deciding that the benefits awaiting behind those doors – greater job security, higher wages, higher education and personal satisfaction – are worth the effort it takes to earn a GED.”

For more information on the GED and free preparation classes, visit DESE’s Web site at www.ged.mo.gov.

###

More information is available at http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm.

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Neal Harrison.