

OFFICE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, OVERSIGHT AND RECOVERY
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
June 24-25, 2010

OFFICE OF DROPOUT PREVENTION

**Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement, Alternative Education/
GED and Counseling**

06. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To revise State Board Policy 902 – GED Option Guidelines

Executive Summary

State Board Policy 902 (GED Standard) was revised in December 2009. The policy was revised in accordance to the guidelines established by the American Council on Education (ACE). During that time, a technical amendment was submitted to revise Mississippi Code Annotated Section 37-35-3 (3)(f)(i) and (3)(g). House Bill 629 was signed by the Governor on March 15, 2010 which will permit students that are one grade level behind their peers' entrance into the GED Option Program and aligns the assessment requirements with federal guidelines.

Also, since GED prep is a very individualized program, as each student comes to the program with a different level of readiness; additional changes to the policy are being requested to allow districts the flexibility to determine a student's instructional needs and academic readiness prior to taking the GED test.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

DESCRIPTOR TERM: GED® Standards	CODE: 902
ADOPTION DATE: May 1995	REVISION: December 2009

STATE BOARD POLICY

Guidelines for Alternative Education/GED® Option Program

Introduction

Section 37-13-92 of The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated authorized school districts in Mississippi to provide a program of GED General Education Development (GED) preparatory instruction as a part of the Alternative Education Program. Section 37-35-3 mandates that students who are enrolled in an approved GED program shall not be classified as dropouts and that the school district will continue to receive ~~Minimum Program~~ State funding for the students while they are enrolled in the GED Program. Students placed in the GED Program shall not be eligible to participate in regular academic courses or other programmatic activities within the school district, including athletics, choir, band, or any other extra curricular activities, except that a GED student may participate in existing job and skill development programs or in programs developed in conjunction with the GED Program and the Vocational Education Director. Local school districts are also authorized to contract with a Community College for the purpose of preparing students for the GED testing process. If a school district contracts with a Community College to provide a GED Program, the students placed in the program will be reported on the monthly attendance report of the public school district of origin and counted in the average daily attendance.

Minimum Guidelines for Implementing a GED Program in Mississippi School Districts

1. The GED Program is defined through written policies approved by the local school board. Approved policies and procedures for the GED Program are published and available to the public for review. All policies and procedures for the operation of the GED Program must meet minimum requirements specified in Section 37-13-92. Further, the program must meet the requirements and applicable policies of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges as stated in Section 37-35-1.
2. Selection procedures ~~should~~ shall ensure that students who enroll in the GED Option will not graduate with their class because of credit deficiency and are otherwise capable of completing graduation requirements. Recommendation for student participation in the GED Program will be made by a committee of school staff consisting of campus **administrators, counselors, classroom teachers, and support staff**. Written Documentation of the committee recommendation shall be maintained for each student. The criteria for student participation in the GED Option Program as outlined in Section 37-35-3 will consist of the following:
 - a) The student must be at least 16 years of age;
 - b) The student must be at least ~~two (2)~~ one (1) full grade level behind his or her ninth grade

- cohort or must have acquired less than four (4) Carnegie units;
- c) The student must have taken every opportunity to continue to participate in course work leading to a regular diploma; and
 - d) The student must be certified to be eligible to participate in the GED course by the school district superintendent, based on the developed criteria.

Additionally, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), students that have been referred to the Alternative Education Program for disciplinary reasons shall **not be eligible for placement in the GED Option Program** until behavioral modification goals for exiting the Alternative Education Program have been attained.

3. The recommendation for placement in the GED Program **must be approved by the superintendent of the school district.** Students shall not be placed in a GED Program prior to obtaining written parental or guardian consent for placement. Documentation of parental consent for placement in the program will be maintained for each student. {37-13-92 and 37-35-3}(ACE Guidelines)

4. ~~It is recommended~~ American Council on Education recommends that students demonstrate the ability to perform on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) at an eighth grade level.

5. Counseling is required prior to enrollment in GED Option and must be available on a regular basis throughout participation in the program. Student motivation and individual needs are critical factors to consider when determining the quantity of counseling services. Students should have access to certified counselors. {MS Code 37-13-92 (ACE Guidelines)}

6. The GED component will remain under the supervision of the Alternative Education Administrator. {MS Code 37-13-92}

7. GED Option should offer a full range of instruction that aligns with the core content measured by GED Tests. Content will align with high school mathematics, writing, social studies, reading and science. {ACE Guidelines}

8. To ensure effective instructional delivery, sufficient instructional resources and qualified instructional staff must be assigned to instruct and supervise GED classes. According to ACE guidelines the students should participate in the GED academic instructional program for a minimum of 15 hours each week. Individualized instruction should be outlined in the student's Individual Education and Career Plan (IECP) and based solely on the individual needs of the student.

Content should include instructor-prepared material, standardized GED-instructional material from publishers, instructional materials from secondary publishers and developers. Workforce development instruction and activities should focus knowledge, skills, and abilities required for securing and maintaining employment. GED Option instructional time and workforce development ~~should total at least 27.5 hours weekly~~ shall be determined by the district based on the individualized needs of students.
GED TESTING IS SET WHEN A STUDENT HAS STUDIED SUFFICIENTLY TO PASS.

9. The student/teacher ratio in the GED Program shall not exceed 15:1 with an exception of 20:1 when an aide is employed full time to assist the teacher. {ACE Guidelines}

10. The curriculum and instructional methodology must address the individual needs of each student as specified in an Individual Education and Career Plan (IECP) developed at the time of placement. The

IECP committee (the committee should include an academic counselor, academic teacher, principal, and vocational personnel) will emphasize academic/instructional needs of the student, job readiness skills, and work experience options. {MS Code 37-35-3}

11. Under normal circumstances, students cannot circumvent the State's Compulsory School Attendance Law or receive a GED certificate/diploma prior to their age equivalent peers. However, students in GED Option may be eligible to receive a GED equivalency diploma prior to their age equivalent peers and/or prior to reaching mandatory compulsory school age, as outlined in Mississippi Code Section 37-13-91, provided the district in which the student resides is in compliance with the minimum guidelines for implementing a GED Program in Mississippi School Districts. ~~In addition, the district superintendent must submit a request to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement, Alternative Education/GED and Counseling for approval. There must be documentation to support the extenuating circumstance(s) for which the request is being made. The student will not be allowed to exit early until written approval from the MDE is given. Any abuse of this policy (i.e. habitually exiting students early requesting that students exit early) will result in a review of the district's GED Option program for future authorization.~~ {ACE Guidelines}

12. School districts must comply with GED Option testing guidelines provided by the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges.

13. Evaluation of the student's progress shall be conducted at regular intervals according to GED policy and the appropriate records shall be maintained and subject to the Mississippi Department of Education review. {MS Code 37-13-92}

14. The facility housing the GED Program shall be commensurate with facilities provided to other students by the local school district and shall meet minimum accreditation standards for public school buildings as required in the current edition of the Public School Accountability Standards. The GED Program shall not be housed in a vocational facility unless a request for waiver has been granted by the State Board of Education. {MS Code 37-13-92 and 37-35-3}

15. Two or more local school districts may form a consortium to provide a GED Program for eligible students. {39-13-92}

- a) The consortium formed to provide a GED Program shall be bound by a Mississippi Board of Education approved contract;
- b) The district designated as the lead district will be responsible for the operation and governance of the program; and
- c) Transportation services shall be the responsibility of each student's school district of origin.

16. The cumulative folder and permanent record of each eligible student placed in an approved GED Program shall remain at and be maintained by the school district of origin. {37-13-92}

17. Evaluation of the student's progress shall be conducted at regular intervals according to GED policy and the appropriate records shall be maintained and subject to the Mississippi Department of Education's review. {37-13-92} (ACE Guidelines)

18. Appropriate assessment and evaluation of each student's educational progress shall be conducted at regular intervals according to established policy approved by the local school board. Assessment and evaluation records will be appropriately maintained to ensure individual student confidentiality. {37-13-

19. Data will be collected by the Office of Compulsory School Attendance annually and reported to the State Board of Education. {37-13-92} (ACE Guidelines)

- a) The total number of students enrolled in the GED Program;
- b) The age range of students enrolled in the GED Program;
- c) The reading level of students entering and exiting the GED Program;
- d) The total number of students successfully completing the GED Program each school year; and
- e) All school districts will complete an annual report provided by GED Testing Services beginning with the end of the 2009-2010 school year. Reports should be completed and submitted after the end of each school year but no later than July 31.

~~20. Students enrolled in subject area courses through January 31 in a school with a traditional class schedule will be required to take the subject area test(s). Students enrolled in subject area courses through October 31 or through March 31 on a 4X4 block schedule will be required to take subject area test(s).~~

20. Students participating in an approved GED Option program, who are enrolled in subject area courses through January 31 in a school with a traditional class schedule or who are enrolled in subject area courses through October 31 or through March 31 in a school on a block schedule, shall be required to take the end-of-course subject area tests for those courses in which they are enrolled. {37-35-3}

21. GED Option graduates should receive official school recognition of their achievement. The student who fails to meet the graduation requirements is not permitted to participate in the graduation exercises (Accountability Standard 20.4). A separate graduation ceremony should be held near the same time as the high school graduation ceremony for their peers. The following students are eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies:

- a) Student receiving a standard high school diploma. (SB Policies 2902 and 2903)
- b) Student receiving a special diploma or certificate of completion, which states: "This student has successfully completed an Individualized Education Program." {MS Code 37-16-11(1)}
- c) Student with disabilities receiving a Mississippi Occupational Diploma. {MS Code 37-16-11(2)} (See Appendix G)

22. Local school districts that fail to comply with the above requirements will risk future approval for providing a GED® Option Program in their district.

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MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
2010 Regular Session
To: Education
By: Representative Brown

House Bill 629

(As Sent to Governor)

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-35-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE GED PROGRAM ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE AT LEAST ONE FULL GRADE LEVEL BEHIND HIS OR HER NINTH GRADE COHORT; TO REQUIRE THOSE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CERTAIN SUBJECT AREA COURSES TO TAKE THE END-OF-COURSE SUBJECT AREA TESTS FOR THOSE COURSES IN WHICH THEY ARE ENROLLED; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 37-35-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-35-3. (1) The board of trustees of any school district, including any community/junior college, may establish and maintain classes for adults, including general educational development classes, under the regulations authorized in this chapter and pursuant to the standards prescribed in subsection (3). The property and facilities of the public school districts may be used for this purpose where such use does not conflict with uses already established.

(2) The trustees of any school district desiring to establish such program may request the taxing authority of the district to levy additional ad valorem taxes for the support of this program. The board of supervisors, in the case of a county school district, a special municipal separate school district, or a community/junior college district, and the governing authority of any municipality, in the case of a municipal

separate school district, is authorized, in its discretion, to levy a tax not exceeding one (1) mill upon all the taxable property of the district for the support of this program. The tax shall be in addition to all other taxes authorized by law to be levied. In addition to the funds realized from any such levy, the board of trustees of any school district is authorized to use any surplus funds that it may have or that may be made available to it from local sources to supplement this program.

(3) (a) Any student participating in an approved General Educational Development (GED) program administered by a local school district or the appropriate community college shall not be considered a dropout. Students in such a program administered by a local school district shall be considered as enrolled within the school district of origin for the purpose of enrollment for minimum program funding only. Such students shall not be considered as enrolled in the regular school program for academic or programmatic purposes. Students in such a program administered by a community college shall be considered as enrolled in the school district of origin for funding purposes.

(b) Students participating in an approved General Educational Development (GED) program shall have an individual career plan developed at the time of placement to insure that the student's academic and job skill needs will be met. The Individual Career Plan will address, but is not limited to, the following:

(i) Academic/instructional needs of the student;

(ii) Job readiness needs of the student; and
(iii) Work experience program options available for the student.

(c) Students participating in an approved General Educational Development (GED) program may participate in existing job and skills development programs or in similar programs developed in conjunction with the GED program and the vocational director.

(d) General Educational Development (GED) programs may be operated by local school districts or may be operated by two (2) or more adjacent school districts, pursuant to a contract approved by the State Board of Education. When two (2) or more school districts contract to operate a General Educational Development (GED) program, the school board of a district designated to be the lead district shall serve as the governing board of the General Educational Development (GED) program. Transportation for students placed in the General Educational Development (GED) program shall be the responsibility of the school district of origin. The expense of establishing, maintaining and operating such GED programs may be paid from funds made available to the school district through contributions, minimum program funds or from local district maintenance funds.

(e) Students participating in an approved General Educational Development (GED) program within a community college shall be included in the average daily attendance of the school district of origin. The school district of origin is authorized

to contract with the community college to provide GED services for the student.

(f) The State Department of Education will develop procedures and criteria for placement of a student in the General Educational Development (GED) programs. Students placed in General Educational Development (GED) programs shall have parental approval for such placement and must meet the following criteria:

(i) The student must be at least sixteen (16) years of age;

(ii) The student must be at least one (1) full grade level behind his or her ninth grade cohort or must have acquired less than four (4) Carnegie units;

(iii) The student must have taken every opportunity to continue to participate in coursework leading to a diploma; and

(iv) The student must be certified to be eligible to participate in the GED course by the school district superintendent, based on the developed criteria.

(g) Students participating in an approved General Educational Development (GED) program, who are enrolled in subject area courses through January 31 in a school with a traditional class schedule or who are enrolled in subject area courses through October 31 or through March 31 in a school on a block schedule, shall be required to take the end-of-course subject area tests for those courses in which they are enrolled.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2010.

GUIDANCE TO STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION FOR REQUESTING A WAIVER TO IMPLEMENT THE GED OPTION FOR SELECTED SECONDARY STUDENTS

This document provides background information, instructions, and materials required for state departments of education to request a waiver from the General Educational Development Testing Service to permit selected students who are still enrolled in secondary schools to prepare for GED Tests and to take the tests at Official GED Test Centers. The document is organized into three sections:

- ⇒ Section I – background information about the GED Tests and the development of an option for administering the GED Tests to selected students still enrolled in secondary schools.
- ⇒ Section II - guidelines for instruction and testing that states must observe to receive and maintain a waiver from GEDTS
- ⇒ Section III - instructions for completing and submitting the Application Package.

The GED Option Application Package, Prototype Data Collection Form, and a Sample Monitoring/Observation Form are included as appendices.

Section I: Overview of the GED Option for Selected Secondary Students

In 1942, the GED Testing Service was established in response to the military's desire to validate the high school-level skills of service men and women returning from World War II. The purpose of the GED Tests, essentially unchanged for nearly 60 years, is to measure the mastery of academic skills and knowledge in the core content areas that comprise the curricula of four-year programs in U.S. and Canadian high schools. More than 14 million adults have earned GED high school equivalency diplomas since the program began. Each year, more than 800,000 adults take the GED Tests, and more than half a million obtain a high school credential based on passing the tests. About one in seven high school diplomas issued in the United States each year is based on successful completion of the GED Tests.

The GED Program in all U.S. states and territories and the Canadian provinces is a cooperative program administered jointly by the states/territories/provinces and the General Educational Development Testing Service (GEDTS) of the American Council on Education (ACE). Because the GEDTS mission is to serve adults, GEDTS established regulations

reserving the use of the tests for those who need a second opportunity to achieve a high school equivalency diploma.

Background of the GED Option

Beginning in 1988, and in response to a request from the state of Virginia, ACE began accepting requests from states for waivers to use the GED Tests for students who had not left secondary school but who were at risk of leaving school without meeting graduation requirements. The pilot GED Option was offered only to enrolled students who were academically capable of obtaining a high school diploma but were so deficient in Carnegie Unit or other graduation requirements that they could not graduate with their classes. Instruction in high school level academic content prepared these students to take the GED Tests, which were administered to these students at Official GED Testing Centers.

In some states (e.g., Virginia), the instruction to prepare for the GED Tests existed as a free standing program. In others, (e.g., Florida and Tennessee) GED instruction was integrated into several alternative instructional programs. In both cases, individualized instruction plans were usually defined, based on specific student needs, and instruction was delivered in small groups, one-on-one, or via computer packages. The individualized instruction strategies appeared to be especially well suited for a specific sub-population of students who did not function well in high school because of factors other than academic capability. These students may have been unmotivated or unable to follow typical classroom and school routines, or their life circumstances may have been incompatible with regular school attendance.

Two concerns prompted GEDTS to grant temporary waivers and conduct a pilot study of the GED Option. The first concern was the possibility that GED testing for enrolled secondary school students might compromise the primary mission of the GED – to serve adults needing a second opportunity to obtain a high school credential. States participating in the pilot program were thus restricted to serving students 16 years of age or older with credit deficiencies so that the program represented a valid second opportunity for students to complete high school with

their peers. The second concern was the possibility that students would be inappropriately tracked in the GED Option (e.g., either as an alternate measure for “problem” students, or as a method for diverting minority students). States participating in the pilot program were thus required to assure GEDTS that the GED Option would be an integrated educational option for students who were (1) selected using specific, academic performance-based criteria and (2) supported by adequate instructional resources.

In 1998, ACE President, Dr. Stanley O. Ikenberry, directed that a thorough re-examination of the policy and an extensive study of the pilot GED Option be made. The findings of Caliber Associates, Inc. indicated that the participating states complied with these requirements. No evidence was found that the practice of allowing high school students to receive GED instruction and take the GED Tests compromised the primary GED mission, or that schools assigned students to the program on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or sex rather than academic considerations (i.e., tracked students inappropriately), or permitted discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. The evaluation results led GEDTS to establish the GED Option on a permanent basis and to continue granting waivers to states that agree to adhere to certain guidelines related to instruction, program administration, and testing.

What the GED Option Is (and Is Not)

The GED Option is designed to be an integral component of a high school curriculum that provides another way to obtain a high school level credential. Specifically, the GED Option is targeted for a subgroup of students who have the capabilities to complete high school requirements, but for a variety of adjustment and life circumstance obstacles are behind in the credits needed to graduate with their class and are at risk of leaving school without a high school credential. The GED Option provides these students a viable second opportunity to stay in

school and acquire the necessary high school level knowledge and skills to pass the GED Tests and earn a high school diploma/credential within the same time frame as their peers. The table below summarizes the major features of the GED Exit Option.

GED EXIT OPTION	
IS	IS NOT
An approved option affiliated with the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education and the State Department of Education	An independent offering at unapproved or unaffiliated sites
A valid way to complete high school	<i>A PUNITIVE TRACK FOR UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS</i>
Voluntary	Required
A screened entry program using academic pre-testing to predict success	An easy access program for any level of academic performance
For students in jeopardy of not meeting or beyond original graduation date	An early exit from high school always prior to original graduation date
Diploma producing program upon completion	Certificate producing program upon completion
Content substantive – aligned with high school course material	A test preparation course, only
With counseling services: pre, during and in transition	With isolated, random contact with counseling
Quality, best practices instruction	<i>PACKET-BOUND PERFORMANCE BASED INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE</i>
Fulltime high school schedule; which may include work force development courses/experiences	Isolated test preparation schedule
An enriching alternative that provides closure and future direction	A second-class option to finishing high school

All states requesting waivers to implement the GED Option must satisfactorily demonstrate the willingness and capability to conform to the 2000 GEDTS guidelines that define expectations related to student-focused activities—student selection, counseling, and instruction—and for program administration and GED testing. The guidelines are intended to help a state implement the GED Option in a way that neither compromises the primary purpose of GED Tests to measure academic proficiency of adults who have not completed high school; obstructs the authority and flexibility of the state to manage education programs in accordance with its legislation and policies; encourages inappropriate tracking or assignments based on race, color, national origin, religion, or sex; or permits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.

Section II: Instructional and Administrative Guidelines

For The GED Option for Selected Secondary Students

In May 2000, GEDTS, in collaboration with the six pilot program states, developed ten guidelines for implementing the GED Option for selected secondary students enrolled in state approved high school completion programs. Six guidelines relate to instructional aspects of the GED Option; four guidelines relate to administrative and testing issues. The purpose of the guidelines is to: (1) maintain the integrity and credibility of GED Tests for testing adults who are not high school graduates, (2) provide states the latitude and flexibility to meet their secondary students' needs, and (3) prevent inappropriate tracking or biased assignment based on race, color, national origin, religion, and sex, or discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.

The guidelines were tested and refined over several years with pilot programs in a limited number of states. States that request a waiver to use GED Tests for selected students must provide written assurance in their applications that the GED Option strategies they implement will conform to these guidelines. **Failure to follow these guidelines will result in cancellation of the state's waiver to administer the GED Option to Select Secondary Students.**

Guideline I-1. Selection procedures should ensure that students who enroll in the GED Option (1) will not graduate with their class because of credit deficiency, and (2) are otherwise capable of completing graduate requirements.

Participation in the GED Option should be restricted to students who will not graduate with their class because of credit deficiency but who are otherwise capable of completing graduation requirements. Indicators of a student's ability to benefit from instruction and earn a GED high school equivalency diploma might include, but should not be limited to, scores from the Official GED Practice Tests, which are valid predictors of performance on the GED Tests and meeting the state minimum passing score for the GED credential, or scores on other standardized tests that indicate adequate ability.

Selection procedures must be designed to preclude inappropriate assignment or tracking of students who have serious intellectual or social adjustment problems that would prevent them from obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the GED Tests within a reasonable time frame. Qualified students who require accommodations should not be excluded. However, students with inadequate reading or math skills may need to understand that successful completion of the program will require more time than is allocated for this program, and they may need to be guided toward other types of alternative instruction.

Entry and exit policies for the GED Option must conform to state compulsory attendance legislation. The GED Option is not to be used to circumvent compulsory attendance regulations or facilitate an early exit (e.g., by students who wish to obtain a terminal credential in order to enroll in college). Preferably, students enter the GED Option during the last year in which their cohort attends high school and do exit at approximately the same time as their cohort graduates.

The state's policy governing the selection process should include, at a minimum, specifications for the following:

- Age of the participating student (e.g., the student must be at least 16, or as old or older than the minimum age for compulsory attendance).
- Degree of credit deficiency (e.g., the student has achieved tenth grade status and his/her peers are in the twelfth grade).
- Evidence of academic ability (e.g., Official GED Practice Test scores – with accommodation if needed, grades, rank in class, or standardized test scores).
- Procedures for involving teachers, administrators, and counselors in the decision.
- Procedures for explaining the GED Option and expectations for student performance to the student and parent/guardian.
- Procedures for obtaining written agreement from the student and parent/guardian to voluntary program participation.

If students are selected on the basis of these criteria, the risk of inappropriate tracking or biased assignment based on race, color, national origin, religion, and sex, or discrimination against qualified students with disabilities will be minimized.

Guideline I-2. Counseling is required prior to enrollment and must be available throughout participation in the GED Option.

Counseling is required before entry and must be available during participation in the GED Option. Because the decision to participate in the GED Option is a serious one for the student, counseling and advising services should be provided to both students and their parents/guardians. The decision to enroll in the GED Option should not be an automatic one based only on records or written criteria. Student motivation and needs also are critical factors to consider, because many of these students have encountered problems in relating to school requirements and persisting in the regular high school routine.

- Students should have access to certified counselors dedicated to the GED Option or have ready access to the site-based counseling staff.
- Pre-entry counseling must take place and should involve an administrator, teacher, and counselor as well as the student and parent/guardian.
- Pre-entry counseling should include discussion of alternative education options available to the student and detailed explanation of the requirements and expectations of the GED Option.
- Academic, personal, and career guidance counseling should be provided as needed during participation in the program.
- Counseling sessions with individual students should be available on a regular basis during participation in the program.
- Counselors should maintain counseling records comparable to those maintained in other high school counseling.

Guideline I-3. Curricula and instructional content must be at the high school level.

The content of the GED Option instruction shall be academic and may include workforce development instruction or activities. Instruction must be at the high school level.

- The GED Option should offer a full range of instruction that aligns with the core content measured by GED Tests. Content will align with high school mathematics, writing, social studies, reading, and science.
- Content should be presented with some combination, including at least two, of the following: instructor-prepared material, standardized GED-instructional materials from publishers, instructional materials from secondary school publishers and developers, or by some combination of the above materials.
- Workforce development instruction and activities are directed at the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to secure and maintain employment.

Guideline I-4. To ensure effective instructional delivery, sufficient instructional resources and qualified staff must be allocated to the GED option.

Instruction for the GED Option must be of sufficient intensity and duration to ensure that the participating students have a fair opportunity to raise their skills to the level necessary to earn a high school diploma/credential in a reasonable period of time. Appropriate curriculum materials must be provided in adequate quantities and must be available when students need them. Given the particular needs and experiences of GED Option populations, instructional strategies that center on individual student progress should be employed. These strategies should include small instructor/student ratios, multi media (e.g., text, computer, and video), and teaching methods that ensure that students are active rather than passive.

- Students must have qualified instructors.
- Students should participate in an educational program for a minimum of 15 hours each week, or, if greater, for the minimum number of hours allowed by state regulations to maintain full-time school attendance. The state's requirements for the minimum number of hours in a classroom setting vs. experiential training should be observed.

- Diverse instructional delivery strategies should be employed, including, but not limited to small-group, one-on-one, and self-paced instruction. Computer-based, instructor-led, and peer instruction in different combinations are often appropriate. Use of different instructional media (computer, videotape, print, practical exercises) that enhance student interaction, “hands on” experience, and frequent feedback is expected.
- A student/teacher ratio of 15/1 or smaller is strongly recommended.
- Adequate supplies of textbooks, practice material, computers, shop/craft equipment, educational software, and videotapes that will support successful passing of the GED Tests are required.
- Professional staff development related to GED Option instruction must be provided annually.

Guideline I-5. Successful students must be awarded a credential that includes the term “diploma.”

Students who successfully complete the GED Option requirements and pass the GED Tests shall be awarded a high school credential that includes the word “diploma”. It must be more than a certificate.

Guideline I-6. GED Option graduates should receive official recognition.

Students who satisfy all GED Option requirements should be given official school recognition of their achievement. Their successful attainment should be celebrated by participating in the high school graduation ceremony, a ceremony for alternative program participants, or some other fitting ceremony. Preferably, graduation ceremonies for GED Option graduates should be at or near the same time as the high school graduation ceremony of their peers.

Guidelines for Administration and Testing

To ensure effective executive management planning and oversight, the GED Option must be integrated into the structure of the appropriate state agency(ies). Because the GED Option entails specific GED testing requirements and detailed instructional concerns, collaboration between the GED State Administrator and one or more divisions/offices probably will be required. In addition, the GEDTS annual requirement to collect information and data about the implementation of the program from local school systems must be orchestrated by the appropriate state agencies.

Guideline A-1. Planning and oversight of the implementation of the GED Option will be the responsibility of the state department of education or other appropriate state agency and will necessitate collaboration.

The GED Option includes both instructional and testing components. Because these two functions typically are the purview of different state agencies, or different division/offices of a particular state agency, collaboration will be required to plan, administer, and monitor the GED Option. In general, the testing component is the sole responsibility of the State GED Administrator and the instructional component is the responsibility of a “State Instructional Coordinator” (or similar title). The “State Instructional Coordinator” is a state agency staff member who has authority over educational programs that correspond to the mission of the GED Option. The specific roles and responsibilities of the state agencies and the areas of primary responsibility and collaboration must be clearly defined in policies and procedures.

The State GED Administrator has sole responsibility for the oversight of the administration of the GED Tests. When students are enrolled in secondary schools, specific responsibilities of the State GED Administrator include:

- All testing for GED Option participants within the state

- Monitoring testing procedures at all Official GED Testing Centers
- Coordinating with GEDTS
- Planning and coordinating with the “State Instructional Coordinator”
- Acting as a liaison between GEDTS and “State Instructional Coordinator.”

The “State Instructional Coordinator” should have responsibility for ensuring that the GED Option instruction is consistent with GEDTS guidelines and state educational legislation and policies. This responsibility includes being the interface between the state agency and local educational agencies. As part of their responsibilities, a “State Instructional Coordinator” should:

- Communicate personally with local school system staff about the GED Option expectations and requirements
- Receive, review, and approve applications from local school systems to implement the GED Option; clarify requirements and advise schools as needed
- Provide guidance and support to local school staff pertaining to instructional practices, curriculum materials, and state educational requirements designed to enable students to pass GED Tests
- Monitor local schools’ implementation by personal communication and site visits
- Help local school staff plan and complete data collection for the GED Option.

While the specific responsibilities of the State GED Administrator and the “State Instructional Coordinator” will be defined by the policies and organizational structure of the state agency(ies), collaboration is expected to be required for the following activities:

- Developing the state agencies' criteria, application procedures, and related materials for local school systems to request permission to implement GED Options
- Developing state GED Option monitoring and data collection plans
- Developing procedures for scheduling testing of enrolled students at Official GED Testing Centers
- Representing the GED Option at the state department of education, other appropriate agencies, and to the media
- Communicating with and responding to GEDTS on issues concerning the GED Option
- Submitting state reports to GEDTS
- Providing leadership to offer staff development on GED Option instruction for local school staff.

Guideline A-2. Each year, the appropriate state agency will submit documentation to GEDTS describing procedures for contributing a portion of the support needed to administer the GED Option program.

Costs for the GED Testing Service's administration of the GED Option for Selected Secondary Students will be covered by contributions from the participating states. The cost associated with staffing, technical assistance to the states and school districts, data management, and state annual statistical reports will be shared equally among the states that are implementing waivers, and will not be underwritten by the adult GED program. Each participating state will receive an annual invoice from GEDTS (twenty thousand dollars in FY2001-2002). September 2000 through August 2001 is a pilot year for which GEDTS will underwrite administrative costs. GEDTS will initiate collection of fees with the 2001-2002 school year. Each state will submit a document to GEDTS describing their plan for providing their share of the operating budget.

Guideline A-3. The state agency(ies) will annually collect data and information about the GED Option from local school systems and will submit the data to GEDTS.

GEDTS will conduct an on-going evaluation of the impact of the GED Option. To implement this, GEDTS must obtain uniform data from states that have been granted the waiver to prepare and test enrolled high school students. The State GED Administrator, collaborating with the "State Instructional Coordinator," will ensure that a standardized data collection form developed by GEDTS is distributed to the school systems that implement GED Option, that the completed forms are collected, and that the forms are submitted to GEDTS on an annual basis. The GED Option data collection year is from September 1 through August 31.

Guideline A-4. GED test administration for the GED Option must conform to all regulations protecting the integrity of the tests.

Instruction and testing must remain separate. Access to the GED Tests must be limited to authorized GED Chief Examiners. At no time should teachers or students have access to the GED Tests. A test loss or compromise can destroy the usefulness of the GED Tests throughout

the jurisdiction and the nation. A waiver for GED testing of in-school youth will be granted only when students have access to testing at Official GED Test Centers.

GED testing procedures must conform in all ways to the policies of the GED Testing Service. These policies are described in detail in the *GED Examiner's Manual*. Any failure to follow these policies will result in cancellation of the waiver to test enrolled youth.

- Only authorized GED Chief Examiners can administer the GED Tests; school personnel who are not GED Examiners are not permitted access to the GED Tests.
- Official GED Testing Centers must be sufficiently large and adequately staffed to absorb the additional number of test takers resulting from the GED Option
- Procedures must be in place to monitor testing procedures and to close, or otherwise sanction, testing centers at which approved procedures are not followed
- Procedures must be in place to identify test takers who are enrolled students. Documentation must be presented at the time of testing indicating that testing is sanctioned by the local school administration.
- Answer sheets must include information that identifies the test taker as a GED Option participant.

Section III: Instructions For Requesting a Waiver from GEDTS

Before a state or province can administer the GED Tests to students enrolled in secondary schools, the Chief State School Officer (or Minister of Education) must request and receive permission to do so. The application is made through the General Educational Development Testing Service (GEDTS). The instructions to states for making an application to GEDTS and the evaluation criteria that GEDTS will use to assess the state's application are presented in this section. The Application Package that states will complete and send to GEDTS is found in Appendix A.

The application and review process consists of four steps:

1. State completes the Application Package following these instructions
2. State submits the Application Package to GEDTS
3. GEDTS reviews the state's application
4. GEDTS notifies the state of grant of waiver or need for more information

Specific instructions and related information for each step is presented below.

Step 1 – State Completes Application Package

The Application Package is located in Appendix A. The appropriate state agency must apply for a waiver to use GED Tests with students enrolled in secondary schools by addressing each of the six instructional and four administrative guidelines included in Section II. The state is asked to describe how it will address and assure each of these guidelines. In most cases, one page should be sufficient space to address each guideline. If more space is needed, attach additional pages to the application. Because the state is submitting its assurances that the GED Option will conform to the guidelines, and that the state agency is organized to supervise the GED Option, it is important that the application writers be familiar with the GEDTS guidelines (see Section II) and with the criteria that will be used to evaluate the state's application (see Step 3 below).

In addition, the Application Package asks for brief descriptions of how the GED Option planning and oversight will be organized within the state agency structure, and the anticipated implementation plan and schedule for explaining the GED Option and the application procedures to local school systems in the state.

Step 2 – State Submits Application Package

The State GED Administrator should send one completed copy of the Application Package with appropriate signatures to:

Executive Director
General Educational Development Testing Service
One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20036-1163

Step 3 – GEDTS Reviews and Assesses the Application

Program Staff at GEDTS will review the state’s application in terms of its conformity to instructional and administrative guidelines. The application will be assessed against the following criteria.

I-1. Student selection criteria and procedures are adequate. Is there expectation by the state that: students 16 or older who are credit deficient but have capabilities to pass GED Tests will be considered; screening will include a review of past academics, use of practice and/or standardized tests, and involvement of teachers, counselors, administrators, student, and parent/guardian; participation is voluntary; selection is not biased—race, color, national origin, religion, or sex will not be considered in the selection process; and qualified individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against?

I-2. Counseling services provided. Is there state assurance that: students will have ready access to counselors; counseling will be provided before and after GED Option entry; academic, personal, and career counseling will be available?

I-3. Instruction is at the high school level. Is there evidence that the state expects: the instruction will cover high school content appropriate for tenth grade or above; appropriate instructional materials will be used?

I-4. Adequate staff and instructional resources. Is there assurance by the state that: qualified instructors will teach; student/teacher ratio of 15:1 is expected; a minimum of 15 hours of instruction per week, or, if greater, the minimum number of hours allowed by state regulations to maintain full-time school attendance will be required; a variety of instructional strategies and media will be used; instructional materials and facilities will be adequate and comparable to other high school programs?

I-5. Diploma/credential awarded. Is it expected by the state that: a high school diploma or equivalent will be awarded to students passing the GED Tests?

I-6. Program graduates recognized. Is the state's expectation that: successful GED Option graduates will be given recognition at some form of official celebratory ceremony?

A-1. Appropriate state agency(ies) organized to supervise the GED Option. Is there evidence that: the state structure provides planning and oversight of both the testing and instructional components; the roles and responsibilities of key state staff are clear; the different divisions/offices and staff will collaborate?

A-2. Each year, the appropriate state agency will submit documentation to GEDTS describing procedures for contributing a portion of the support needed to administer the GED Option program. Has the state provided sufficient evidence that the required plan for contributing a share of annual administrative costs will be developed and will be submitted annually to GEDTS? Does the application identify the authorizing individual or department? The procedure for obtaining authorization? The plan for transferring funds?

A-3. GED Option data are collected and reported each year. Has the state supplied sufficient evidence that the necessary information will be obtained from local school systems that are implementing GED Option? Does the application include adequate detail about the planned procedures for submitting the information to GEDTS?

A-4. GED Tests administration is secure. Has the state provided sufficient detail addressing the stipulation that only GED Chief Examiners will administer the GED Tests? That GED Option students being tested will be identified as such? That test security will be maintained? That specific action will be undertaken if security is breached?

Step 4 – GEDTS Notifies the State of the Decision

If the review of the state's application indicates sufficient assurance that GED Option policies will conform to GEDTS guidelines, GEDTS will grant a waiver to the state to use GED Tests for selected enrolled secondary school students and notify the state of the decision. GEDTS also will notify the state if additional information is needed to complete the application or if any information presented in the application needs clarification.

(Until the 2002-2003 school year, GEDTS will limit this program to a total of no more than 12 states. It is necessary to limit participation during the first two years of operation to ensure the appropriate staffing and data collection.)

DESCRIPTOR TERM: GED® Standards	CODE: 902
ADOPTION DATE: May 1995	REVISION: December 2009

STATE BOARD POLICY

Guidelines for Alternative Education/GED® Option Program

Introduction

Section 37-13-92 of The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated authorized school districts in Mississippi to provide a program of General Education Development (GED) preparatory instruction as a part of the Alternative Education Program. Section 37-35-3 mandates that students who are enrolled in an approved GED program shall not be classified as dropouts and that the school district will continue to receive State funding for the students while they are enrolled in the GED Program. Students placed in the GED Program shall not be eligible to participate in regular academic courses or other programmatic activities within the school district, including athletics, choir, band, or any other extra curricular activities, except that a GED student may participate in existing job and skill development programs or in programs developed in conjunction with the GED Program and the Vocational Education Director. Local school districts are also authorized to contract with a Community College for the purpose of preparing students for the GED testing process. If a school district contracts with a Community College to provide a GED Program, the students placed in the program will be reported on the monthly attendance report of the public school district of origin and counted in the average daily attendance.

Minimum Guidelines for Implementing a GED Program in Mississippi School Districts

1. The GED Program is defined through written policies approved by the local school board. Approved policies and procedures for the GED Program are published and available to the public for review. All policies and procedures for the operation of the GED Program must meet minimum requirements specified in Section 37-13-92. Further, the program must meet the requirements and applicable policies of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges as stated in Section 37-35-1.
2. Selection procedures shall ensure that students who enroll in the GED Option will not graduate with their class because of credit deficiency and are otherwise capable of completing graduation requirements. Recommendation for student participation in the GED Program will be made by a committee of school staff consisting of campus **administrators, counselors, classroom teachers, and support staff**. Written documentation of the committee recommendation shall be maintained for each student. The criteria for student participation in the GED Option Program as outlined in Section 37-35-3 will consist of the following:

- a) The student must be at least 16 years of age;
- b) The student must be at least-one (1) full grade level behind his or her ninth grade cohort or must have acquired less than four (4) Carnegie units;
- c) The student must have taken every opportunity to continue to participate in course work leading to a regular diploma; and
- d) The student must be certified to be eligible to participate in the GED course by the school district superintendent, based on the developed criteria.

Additionally, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), students that have been referred to the Alternative Education Program for disciplinary reasons shall **not be eligible for placement in the GED Option Program** until behavioral modification goals for exiting the Alternative Education Program have been attained.

3. The recommendation for placement in the GED Program **must be approved by the superintendent of the school district**. Students shall not be placed in a GED Program prior to obtaining written parental or guardian consent for placement. Documentation of parental consent for placement in the program will be maintained for each student. {37-13-92 and 37-35-3}(ACE Guidelines)

4. American Council on Education recommends that students demonstrate the ability to perform on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) at an eighth grade level.

5. Counseling is required prior to enrollment in GED Option and must be available on a regular basis throughout participation in the program. Student motivation and individual needs are critical factors to consider when determining the quantity of counseling services Students should have access to certified counselors. {MS Code 37-13-92 (ACE Guidelines)}

6. The GED component will remain under the supervision of the Alternative Education Administrator. {MS Code 37-13-92}

7. GED Option should offer a full range of instruction that aligns with the core content measured by GED Tests. Content will align with high school mathematics, writing, social studies, reading and science. {ACE Guidelines}

8. To ensure effective instructional delivery, sufficient instructional resources and qualified instructional staff must be assigned to instruct and supervise GED classes. According to ACE guidelines students should participate in the GED academic instructional program for a minimum of 15 hours each week. Individualized instruction should be outlined in the student's Individual Education and Career Plan (IECP) and based solely on the individual needs of the student.

Content should include instructor-prepared material, standardized GED-instructional material from publishers, instructional materials from secondary publishers and developers. Workforce development instruction and activities should focus knowledge, skills, and abilities required for securing and maintaining employment. GED Option instructional time and workforce development should total at least 27.5 hours weekly shall be determined by the district based on the individualized needs of students. **GED TESTING IS SET WHEN A STUDENT HAS STUDIED SUFFICIENTLY TO PASS.**

9. The student/teacher ratio in the GED Program shall not exceed 15:1 with an exception of 20:1 when an aide is employed full time to assist the teacher. {ACE Guidelines}

10. The curriculum and instructional methodology must address the individual needs of each student as specified in an Individual Education and Career Plan (IECP) developed at the time of placement. The IECP committee (the committee should include an academic counselor, academic teacher, principal, and vocational personnel) will emphasize academic/instructional needs of the student, job readiness skills, and work experience options. {MS Code 37-35-3}

11. Under normal circumstances, students cannot circumvent the State's Compulsory School Attendance Law or receive a GED certificate/diploma prior to their age equivalent peers. However, students in GED Option may be eligible to receive a GED equivalency diploma prior to their age equivalent peers and/or prior to reaching mandatory compulsory school age, as outlined in Mississippi Code Section 37-13-91, provided the district in which the student resides is in compliance with the minimum guidelines for implementing a GED Program in Mississippi School Districts will result in a review of the district's GED Option program for future authorization. {ACE Guidelines}

12. School districts must comply with GED Option testing guidelines provided by the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges.

13. Evaluation of the student's progress shall be conducted at regular intervals according to GED policy and the appropriate records shall be maintained and subject to the Mississippi Department of Education review. {MS Code 37-13-92}

14. The facility housing the GED Program shall be commensurate with facilities provided to other students by the local school district and shall meet minimum accreditation standards for public school buildings as required in the current edition of the Public School Accountability Standards. The GED Program shall not be housed in a vocational facility unless a request for waiver has been granted by the State Board of Education. {MS Code 37-13-92 and 37-35-3}

15. Two or more local school districts may form a consortium to provide a GED Program for eligible students. {39-13-92}

- a) The consortium formed to provide a GED Program shall be bound by a Mississippi Board of Education approved contract;
- b) The district designated as the lead district will be responsible for the operation and governance of the program; and
- c) Transportation services shall be the responsibility of each student's school district of origin.

16. The cumulative folder and permanent record of each eligible student placed in an approved GED Program shall remain at and be maintained by the school district of origin. {37-13-92}

17. Evaluation of the student's progress shall be conducted at regular intervals according to GED policy and the appropriate records shall be maintained and subject to the Mississippi Department of Education's review. {37-13-92} (ACE Guidelines)

18. Appropriate assessment and evaluation of each student's educational progress shall be conducted at

regular intervals according to established policy approved by the local school board. Assessment and evaluation records will be appropriately maintained to ensure individual student confidentiality. {37-13-92}

19. Data will be collected by the Office of Compulsory School Attendance annually and reported to the State Board of Education. {37-13-92} (ACE Guidelines)

- a) The total number of students enrolled in the GED Program;
- b) The age range of students enrolled in the GED Program;
- c) The reading level of students entering and exiting the GED Program;
- d) The total number of students successfully completing the GED Program each school year; and
- e) All school districts will complete an annual report provided by GED Testing Services beginning with the end of the 2009-2010 school year. Reports should be completed and submitted after the end of each school year but no later than July 31.

20. Students participating in an approved GED Option program, who are enrolled in subject area courses through January 31 in a school with a traditional class schedule or who are enrolled in subject area courses through October 31 or through March 31 in a school on a block schedule, shall be required to take the end-of-course subject area tests for those courses in which they are enrolled. {37-35-3}

21. GED Option graduates should receive official school recognition of their achievement. The student who fails to meet the graduation requirements is not permitted to participate in the graduation exercises (Accountability Standard 20.4). A separate graduation ceremony should be held near the same time as the high school graduation ceremony for their peers. The following students are eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies:

- a) Student receiving a standard high school diploma. (SB Policies 2902 and 2903)
- b) Student receiving a special diploma or certificate of completion, which states: "This student has successfully completed an Individualized Education Program." {MS Code 37-16-11(1)}
- c) Student with disabilities receiving a Mississippi Occupational Diploma. {MS Code 37-16-11(2)} (See Appendix G)

22. Local school districts that fail to comply with the above requirements will risk future approval for providing a GED® Option Program in their district.

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