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Changes Coming to the GED® Test in January 2014

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas is one of a few states that offers the General Educational Development (GED®) test at no cost to the student, but because of changes on the national level that require state-level compliance, that is likely to change, says Janice Hanlon, Arkansas's GED Administrator.

The program is under the authority of the Arkansas Department of Career Education and serves Arkansans who are 16 years or older, not enrolled in or graduated from high school, and who meet other state requirements regarding residency and testing eligibility.

"The GED® test is undergoing a significant change in Arkansas and in the entire country," Hanlon said.

"Every few years, the GED Testing Service® begins a new testing series. We've been using the same test module since 2002, but in January 2014 – one year from now – the test will be updated to reflect the common core educational standards required of today's high school graduates."

Those standards include problem solving, computer skills and more advanced math skills. When a student earns a GED® diploma, they are expected to have knowledge and skills equivalent to current-day graduating high school seniors.

"Those who have taken the current 2002 Series GED® test, but not passed all five parts, have until the end of 2013 to pass or they will need to start over again in 2014 with the new GED® test in order to receive their high school credential," said Hanlon. "So we want to be sure that everyone is aware of this deadline. GED® test-takers must act now to finish and pass before the current test expires."

In addition to the content itself, the test-taking method will change according to national standards. The new test battery will be administered by computer, no longer by pencil and paper, beginning in January 2014.

Requiring computer-based testing is part of the effort to ensure those who graduate with a GED® credential are ready for the demands of today's workforce.

"Basic computer literacy is a must for most anyone who hopes to get a job or advance in today's work environment. Our adult education centers are already helping their students with computer literacy and will incorporate those skills into their GED® preparation classes," Hanlon said.

The other big change coming at that time is the cost. Beginning in January 2014, the GED® test and diploma may no longer be free in Arkansas.

“Our adult education centers across the state will be equipped with the proper computer-based testing environment in order to comply with the new national requirements, but that’s not where the cost comes in,” Hanlon said.

The new test battery to be released in 2014 is being managed and produced by the GED Testing Service®, as in the past, but they have formed a new partnership with Pearson, a global leader in education and testing. The new GED® program they’ve developed will not only reflect the common core standards, but will include a new feature that will indicate college and career readiness.

Test-takers will be provided with a report showing their proficiency in various academic skills. That personalized inventory will help guide the student as they pursue postsecondary education or a new job by highlighting their strengths and areas that need improvement.

As it is currently, the same test battery is administered nationwide, but how each state handles the funding and whether test-takers pay a fee varies.

“The new test will cost more money than Arkansas has traditionally been able to absorb, therefore, some of the test’s costs may be borne by the student in the future,” Hanlon said.

Exactly how much a GED® diploma will cost each student remains to be seen but it could be as much as \$120.

“I sincerely doubt Arkansas will be able to bear the entire cost of the test starting in 2014,” Hanlon said. Until then, preparation for the GED® and taking the test are free for Arkansans through the adult education centers around the state. After that, changes are coming.

“We want to let our current and prospective students know, and those who might have started and not completed their GED® credential, that there’s still time for them to complete it before the change. We’ve adopted the national tagline to encourage students to get started – ‘Your Future is Calling. Answer the call by finishing your GED® by the end of 2013 and get started on the life you deserve.’”

Contact information for Arkansas’s adult education centers and about the GED® test can be found in the Adult Education section of the agency’s website, <http://ace.arkansas.gov>, or by calling 501-682-1980.

The GED Testing Service® has established a special website about the closeout of the 2002 test. Students can get information, as well as sign up for text and email alerts: <http://www.gedtestingervice.com/finishtheged>

The Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) has the mission of providing leadership and contributing resources to serve the diverse and changing career educational needs of Arkansas youth, adults, and persons living with disabilities.

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