

New Jersey Department of Education

Division of Academics & Performance

Adjusting Passing Scores on the Adult Education High School Equivalency
Assessments

January 2020

Please note that this PowerPoint presentation has been modified
from its original version to be more accessible.



Presentation Objective

- To preview proposed Resolution to adjust passing scores on the three adult education High School Equivalency Assessments.
- To learn more about the national landscape of High School Equivalency Assessments from Pearson and ETS representatives.



Background

- In December 2013, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the new assessments offered to adult education students to receive a state-issued high school diploma.
- The approved tests and associated vendors were:
 - **GED** - General Education Development (Pearson), which was the only assessment in years prior, but now updated to align to the Common Core State Standards
 - **HiSET** - High School Equivalency Test (ETS)
 - **TASC** - Test Assessing Secondary Completion (McGraw Hill, which is now known as Data Recognition Corporation (DRC))
- The State Board of Education approved the associated passing scores for meeting high school equivalency for each of these assessments in December 2013.



Cost Differences between the Assessments

General Education Development (GED)	High School Equivalency Test (HiSET)	Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer-based
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Language Arts – Reading & Writing ✓ Science ✓ Social Studies ✓ Mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Language Arts – Reading & Writing ✓ Science ✓ Social Studies ✓ Mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Language Arts – Reading & Writing ✓ Science ✓ Social Studies ✓ Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$120 non-refundable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$103.75 non-refundable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$104 non-refundable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10 test center fee per subsection for the 1st and 2nd retest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10 test center fee per subsection for the 1st and 2nd retest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10 test center fee per subsection for the 1st and 2nd retest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 2nd retest, \$30 fee to retake each subsection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 2nd retest, \$20.75 fee to retake each subsection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 2nd retest, \$20.80 fee to retake each subsection

High School Equivalency Assessments

For out-of-school youth (ages 16 and 17 with parental permission) and adults (ages 18 and over) to obtain a State-issued high school diploma.

Additional information:

- Students must pass 5 subtests (reading, writing, math, social studies, and science) to receive a State-issued high school diploma.
- All 3 High School Equivalency Assessments (HSEs) are aligned to the Common Core State Standards.
- The average age of a person taking one of the HSEs is 25.
- In 2018, approximately 40% of test takers were unemployed, 23% worked full-time, 21% worked part-time, and 16% were not in the labor force.

Passing scores approved by State Board December 2013 and effective January 2014

Subtest	ETS – Hi-SET	Pearson Vue - GED
	Each subtest score range: 1-20	Each subtest score range: 100-200
Language Arts – Writing	9 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay	150
Language Arts – Reading	9	Included with Writing
Social Studies	9	150
Science	9	150
Math	9	150



HiSET: Rationale for Adjusting Passing Scores

- In 2013, the HiSET (ETS) passing score was set at 8 for passing each section of the assessment with a total score of 45 needed to pass the assessment. At that time, the New Jersey Department of Education set the HiSET passing score at 9.
- This impacted approximately 9.5% of test takers who would have passed the assessment with a cut-off score of 8 and total score of 45 since 2014.
- New Jersey is the ONLY state to have a passing score of 9 which is beyond the national recommended standard for high school equivalency. Our passing average is approximately 10% lower than the national average.

HiSET: Proposed Passing Scores

Subtest	ETS – HiSET Approved Score 2013	ETS – HiSET Proposed Score 2019 (to be applied retroactively)
	Each subtest score range: 1-20	Each subtest score range: 1-20
Language Arts – Writing	9 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay	8 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay
Language Arts – Reading	9	8
Social Studies	9	8
Science	9	8
Math	9	8
Total Score Needed	NA	45

GED: Rationale for Adjusting Passing Scores

- In January of 2016, GED Testing Service, announced that after extensive review they were moving the passing score per subject to 145. In addition, GED's recommended that states retroactively apply the 145-passing score to GED test-takers who had taken the 2014 series GED test from January 2014 to the time of the announcement (January 2016).
- Each state had to make the decision as to whether they would move to a passing score of 145.
- Out of 36 states that administer the GED, 35 states and the District of Columbia adjusted their GED passing score to 145.



GED: Proposed Passing Scores

Subtest	Pearson - GED Approved Score 2013	Pearson - GED Adjusted Score 2016 (to be applied retroactively from 2014 - 2019)
	Each subtest score range: 100-200	Each subtest score range: 100-200
Language Arts – Reading & Writing	150	145
Social Studies	150	145
Science	150	145
Math	150	145



How the adjusted GED passing scores modified the performance levels

2016 Modification of Performance Levels

The results of the performance level monitoring and ACE CREDIT^{®*} analyses were discussed in ongoing meetings with jurisdictional stakeholders, and as a result, effective December 31, 2015, the following modifications of the performance levels were implemented:

Performance Level 1: Below Passing (100 – 144 scaled score points)

Performance Level 2: Pass / High School Equivalency (145 – 164 scaled score points)

Performance Level 3: GED[®] College Ready (165 – 174 scaled score points)

Performance Level 4: GED[®] College Ready + Credit (175 – 200 scaled score points)

* American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service reviews a wide variety of training programs from courses to examinations, including languages, certifications, and apprenticeship programs.



TASC: Rationale for Adjusting Passing Scores

- When the initial cut-off scores for TASC (DRC) were presented to the State Board of Education in 2013, they were incorrectly recorded. The chart showing the scores for TASC were mistakenly shown as the same passing scores as HiSET (ETS). TASC has a scaled score that ranges from 300 – 800 with a passing score for each subtest set at 500. Student score reports had the correct score range of 300 – 800 since 2014.



TASC: Proposed Passing Scores

Subtest	McGraw Hill - TASC Approved Score 2013 (inadvertently presented the HiSET passing scores)	DRC – TASC Corrected Passing Score
	Each subtest score range: 1-20	Each subtest score range: 300-800
Language Arts – Writing	9 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay	500 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay
Language Arts – Reading	9	500
Social Studies	9	500
Science	9	500
Math	9	500



Impact: Adjustment of these passing scores on our students

- **HiSET** – Adjusting the HiSET passing score from 9 to 8 for all subtests would result in approximately another 634 individual students (9.5% of those who took the assessment) immediately receiving a State-issued high school diploma since 2014.
- **GED** - Adjusting the GED passing score from 150 to 145 for all subtests would result in approximately another 343 individual students (9% of those who took the assessment) immediately receiving a State-issued high school diploma since 2014.
- **TASC** – Adjusting the TASC score would have NO effect as New Jersey has been using the recommended scale of 300 – 800 with a passing score of 500 for each subtest since 2014.



Conclusion: Proposed Passing Scores to the Adult Education High School Equivalency Assessments

Subtest	ETS - HiSET	Pearson – GED	DRC - TASC
	Each subtest score range: 1-20	Each subtest score range: 100-200	Each subtest score range: 300-800
Language Arts – Writing	8 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay	145	500 and at least a score of 2 on the writing essay
Language Arts – Reading	8	Included with Writing	500
Social Studies	8	145	500
Science	8	145	500
Math	8	145	500
Total Score Needed	45	NA	NA



The revamped GED test launched in 2014: Why?

- Changes in the landscape of education and workforce requirements required a new kind of GED test
- GED grads prior to 2014 were not prepared for success in today's world of postsecondary education
- Fewer and fewer low-skill jobs are available, but there are more middle-skill jobs available than qualified applicants – but students don't have the skills those jobs require.



About the 2014 GED[®] test

- Measures both High School Equivalency and College and Career Readiness (CCR)
- Measures essential higher-order critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed for success in jobs and career and college training programs
- Ensures that passers demonstrate the knowledge and skills on par with high school graduates
- Aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education
- Standardized and normed on a national sample of high school graduates from the class of 2013
- Performance standards established in 2016 measure high school equivalency, college readiness, and attainment of college-level skills

