



COLORADO
Department of Education

Memo

To: Colorado State Board of Education
From: CDE Staff
Re: High School Equivalency Examination Selection Process
Date: December 2, 2015

Recent statute change required CDE staff to initiate a procurement process to identify one or more exams that meet the requirements in statute for Colorado's high school equivalency examination. The next step is to bring forward possible test providers to the state board to be considered as possible high school equivalency exam options in Colorado.

This is the first time in the state board's history that a range of high school equivalency exam options may be considered. A recent statute change removed the proprietary term "GED" from statute and replaced it with "high school equivalency exam". There are strong and varied views on exam options in the field. Because cost of the exams vary widely, and are not subsidized with state dollars for students taking the exams, some advocacy groups have expressed that having multiple exams will open up less expensive options and may encourage more expensive testing companies to lower rates. At the same time, many in the corrections community and higher education have indicated that they believe the GED is the only option we should have because while it is more expensive, it is more rigorous, and more accurately reflects high school equivalency. We anticipate the board will hear from these varied views in public comment.

It is important to remember the procurement process was not initiated to address those issues and was about whether the responses met criteria, which were based in statute and agreement with the field about quality practice.

Additionally, approval from the board of any or all of the vendors that were identified as meeting criteria in the procurement process would mean that CDE staff will begin contract negotiations with those vendors. It is possible that contract negotiations may fail or time-out as we ensure the contracts align with statute, rule, and the terms of the RFA. We do not anticipate a specific outcome associated with this process, but want to be transparent about the possibility. We will notify the board and field of the outcome of those negotiations.

If the board certifies multiple vendors, and we are successful in negotiating contracts with multiple vendors, institutions of higher education would still have the ability to decide what credential they would accept as a reflection of college readiness. Similarly, testing centers would be able to decide which exams they would offer.