



# COLORADO

## Department of Corrections

Division of Education  
2862 South Circle Drive  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-4195  
P 719.226.4417 F 719.226.4424

Mr. Steve Durham, Chairman  
Colorado State Board of Education  
201 E. Colfax Avenue  
Denver CO 80203

November 25, 2015

Chairman Durham:

Through this correspondence I would like to present to the State Board of Education relevant information regarding High School Equivalency (HSE) testing in the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC). The DOC is one of the largest providers of HSE testing in the state, and this letter is being offered from that perspective. As the Board considers upcoming action on HSE I hope you will consider this information beneficial to your discussion.

As background information please note the DOC, in August of 2013, was the first correctional system in the nation to offer computer based GED testing for incarcerated offenders, a fact we are very proud of. When it was first determined GED was transitioning to a new and more rigorous assessment and to computer based testing (CBT) the DOC quickly embraced these actions and began making plans to offer CBT in all state correctional facilities. Since 2012 the Department has invested well over \$800,000 toward this effort. This includes \$370,000 for computers and computer labs, \$235,000 for new textbooks, preparation software, study guides, and other classroom materials, and \$200,000 for the testing itself, including computer based pre-testing. In addition, the Department has ensured that extensive teacher training was available for all relevant staff through specialized training coordinated with CDE, contracted training with national experts and conference attendance.

In essence, the Department has been computer based GED testing for over two years and is very pleased with the process to date. While our completion numbers did drop significantly, as they did throughout the nation, we are pleased to report they are moving upward and we believe it is in the best interest of our students to continue to offer CBT for HSE. We believe that having, at least, minimal computer skills is a necessity for offenders returning to our communities as they seek to gain employment, apply for college admission, or to merely adjust to everyday life with tasks such as paying bills or filing taxes. Having to take the HSE exam electronically significantly contributes to that goal.

Please understand that any decision by the board to offer multiple tests or to add a paper based option will have considerable impact on the Department. Almost assuredly the DOC will have to





# COLORADO

## Department of Corrections

Division of Education  
2862 South Circle Drive  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-4195  
P 719.226.4417 F 719.226.4424

mirror the direction of the Board. Since we receive offenders from all areas of the state it is very conceivable that we would be receiving students who have taken at least one of the individual batteries of any of the available, approved exams. In that scenario we would be somewhat compelled to allow them to finish the same exam. So if multiple tests are approved the Department (i.e. Colorado taxpayers) will find itself in the unenviable position of having to obtain additional preparation materials, offer increased teacher training, contract with additional vendors and absorb any other necessary start-up and/or ongoing operational costs.

A return to paper based testing would present its own individual problems for the Department. Paper based testing is a very arduous process including maintaining inventory and ensuring security of the exams, lengthy time frame for return of scores, and PBT creates a much more favorable atmosphere for possible cheating. Since we have converted to CBT we have had no instances of attempted cheating on the GED exam. Having to offer the paper based option also creates a unique challenge for the DOC. Upon receipt of the exams they must pass through our facility mail rooms, which, as you can imagine, are very high security areas. The test packages must be tightly screened before being transferred to our testing centers, creating additional burdens on these already heavily tasked DOC areas.

In summary, adding additional HSE vendors and/or a paper-based testing option will almost certainly result in increased state spending, operational changes, and amplified security challenges for the Department while providing minimal, if any, benefit for our offender test takers. The Department will certainly respect and support any decision made by the Board and we sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to you. If I can provide any additional assistance please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Ross Kimbrel  
Associate Director of Education  
Colorado Department of Corrections  
2862 S. Circle Dr. Colorado Springs CO 80906  
Ph. 719-226-4417  
Email [ross.kimbrel@state.co.us](mailto:ross.kimbrel@state.co.us)



Members of the Colorado State Board of Education:

I am writing to respectfully request that you add high school equivalency test options in Colorado as soon as possible. The current single option of the 2014 GED test produced by Pearson Publishing has proven to be academically unrealistic and unfairly expensive for the thousands of Coloradans who need their high school equivalency to advance in employment or move on to college in our state.

I have been a professional editor of books and academic papers being published in professional journals since 1997. Prior to that, I taught college English for nearly nine years and was a writer and editor for a university publications office. From about 2002 to 2005, I volunteered in the St. Vrain Valley School District's Adult Education program. This fall, I decided it was again time for me to give back to my community by becoming a part-time GED instructor.

I have been stunned by the unrealistic expectations of the Language Arts section of the 2014 GED test since beginning to teach in September, and this assessment was confirmed during a full-day training provided by the GED Testing Service in October. During that training, we looked at writing samples supposedly produced by GED testing students. During a 45-minute segment of the 150-minute Reasoning through Language Arts portion of the test, students are asked to analyze and evaluate two passages in terms of the relative strengths of the authors' support of their positions through the use of various types of evidence. The testing service suggests that students should write "4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each" to complete this task (GED Testing Service RLA Extended Response Answer Guide, p. 6).

Of the thousands of first- and second-year college composition students I worked with over the years, a handful at most could have analyzed the passages and written the GED Testing Service's thorough and impeccably reasoned sample student responses in the 45-minute time period allotted. I can honestly say that many upper-level college students, and indeed, many of the writers and academics whose work I edit currently would have trouble completing this task. In fact, I must admit that I even question my own ability to successfully pass this section of the Language Arts test.

I am not questioning the importance of ensuring that Coloradans who receive their high school equivalency have achieved a level of academic competence equivalent to that required of our state's high school graduates. But raising the bar to the unrealistic level required by the 2014 GED test is a huge disservice to students as well as to employers who have seen a dramatic drop in potential employees due to the unprecedented drop in the number of students passing the test since it was instituted in January 2014.

I hope you have seen the recent iNews article chronicling Colorado GED students driving up to the testing center in Cheyenne to take the HiSET test instead (see the link, below). These students, who are ready to move on with their college plans or careers, understand that their ability to do so has been radically diminished by the institution of the 2014 GED test.

<http://co.chalkbeat.org/2015/11/19/for-a-better-life-a-colorado-teenager-traveled-to-wyoming-to-take-a-test/#.VlihLLzgr8s>

Thank you for considering the institution of additional high school equivalency test options for Colorado students in 2016.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Maier

--

Mary Anne Maier

Mary Anne Maier Editorial Services

Ph: [303.485.2223](tel:303.485.2223) \* Fax: [303.485.7223](tel:303.485.7223)

[mamediting@gmail.com](mailto:mamediting@gmail.com) \* [mamediting.com](http://mamediting.com)

Dear. Dr. Flores,

I just learned that the board will be discussing a proposal from CDE to remove language from the rules about high school equivalency exams, which I understand would remove the board's authority to regulate these exams in Colorado.

I read this action alert from my professional association - <http://blog.caepa.org/action-alert/>.

One of my greatest concerns is that the GED is the ONLY choice for test takers in Colorado. If the board no longer regulates high school equivalency exams then it seems to me that Colorado cannot adopt either of the other two options or any in the future. Ten states have adopted the TASC <https://www.tasconline.com/> and 15 states have adopted the HiSet <http://hiset.ets.org/>.

I would be happy to share with you further why those who do not have a high school credential, especially older adults, need alternatives to the GED, and it's not because the GED is difficult and the other two exams are easier. That's not true, at least not of the TASC. It's aligned with the CCSS like the GED and it has multiple item types, not just multiple choice like the previous GED.

I cannot be at the meeting on Nov. 11 because I volunteered to help with a resume writing class at Manual High School. Otherwise, I would be there. Let me know if you have any questions or if I could be of assistance.

Jessie Hawthorn

Adult Educator for 21 years

Parent of three preschool and elementary school age children

303.246.2024

3259 Elizabeth St., Denver, CO 80205

November 8, 2015

**Joyce Rankin**

**Office of the Colorado State Board of Education**

201 East Colfax Avenue

Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Rankin,

My name is Scott Lambert, and I am an Adult Education/GED teacher in Pueblo, CO. I am writing to you, as my representative on the State Board of Education, to request that you vote in favor of opening the State of Colorado to other high school equivalency tests besides the GED test, particularly the HiSET and TASC.

I make this request for three reasons. First, the new GED test, which we have been using in Colorado since 2014, is unfair to students. I do not mind that it is harder than the old GED test, but I do mind that its scoring is flawed, opaque, and extremely inconsistent. I would be more than happy to go into greater detail, but suffice it to say, it makes our students' already challenging lives much more difficult and defeats the purpose of equivalency testing with no apparent benefit to any individual or agency other than Pearson-Vue, a subdivision of Pearson Education, the for-profit British company that currently owns the GED test and a large percentage of the intervention instructional materials for the test.

Second, by opening up Colorado to the other test options, Colorado stakeholders are given the right to choose for themselves which path to take towards bettering their lives. The current GED test is geared towards college readiness, but should all students be pushed towards college? What is wrong with high school equivalency options that allow students the opportunity to enroll in a nursing program or a welding program? More test options mean more competition amongst test makers and more options for our students.

Third, and equally important, I am writing for my students who feel too disempowered to advocate for themselves.

So, please consider this an impassioned plea from a seasoned educator and from the hundreds of students who are often perceived as rising or lowering percentage rates rather than actual human beings.

Respectfully,  
Scott Lambert  
Director

SEL Tutoring

To the State Board of Education representative of Eagle County.

My name is Skye Stege and I've resided in Eagle County my entire life. I am so blessed to have been raised in such a beautiful place. I attended Battle Mountain High School all four years, but in May 2013 I had to drop out due to some health issues, causing me not to graduate and receive my high school diploma. Two and half years later, I'm finally ready to begin my journey on my educational path and my future. Earning my GED is my first step and I have recently started taking prep classes at CMC in Edwards.

However I've learned of two other high school equivalency tests that are less expensive, that allow the option to use pen and paper, and have been accepted in 17 other states. These tests that I have mentioned are the HiSet (High School Equivalency) and the TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion) both of which are alternative options for the GED.

I think it is incredibly unfair these options are not an option of mine simply because of the state that I live in. A cheaper, more time efficient test, and the option to use pen and paper are all the options that I want as an emerging student in this world. I work to support myself and I could be saving money and time if the HiSet and TASC tests were available to me as a me. Will I have to drive to Wyoming or New Mexico to have the same opportunity as other students? I don't think I should have to. Not to mention the number of students passing the new GED in Colorado has decreased by 79%. From July 1st, 2012 to June 30th, 2013, 650 students passed the GED. Now the new GED is aligned the new Common Core standards, which may not have been reflected in the curriculum of those who have dropped out. From July 1st, 2014 to June 30th, 2015 only 128 students passed.

My reason for writing to you today is to ask you to vote to allow all high school equivalency tests in the state of Colorado. I think every adult deserves a chance to better their lives and their career by having the opportunity to pursue more education. I would like to see these tests approved and I'd like the representative of Eagle County, the place I love, to really consider the benefits of allowing these tests.

Thank you for your consideration,

Skye Stege