

High School Equivalency Program Overview

The High School Equivalency Program (HSEP) or In-School GED Option Program will provide an alternative for high school students, age 16 and over, who are at risk of not graduating from high school and earning a high school diploma. The purpose of the program is to prepare eligible students to take a high school equivalency examination. Any school district can apply for authorization to operate a high school equivalency program in the State of Texas. As part of the application process, the Commissioner of Education for Texas shall require a district or school to provide information regarding the operation of any similar program during the preceding five years. A school district or open-enrollment charter school authorized by the commissioner on or before August 31, 2003, to operate a program may continue to operate that program if they renew their application. A school district or open-enrollment charter school may not increase enrollment of students in a program authorized by this section by more than five percent of the number of students enrolled in the similar program operated by the district or school during the 2000-2001 school year

Students participating in the program must have taken the assessment instrument specified by Section 39.023(a) for Grade 9 before entering the program and must take each grade level assessment instrument administered during the period in which the student is enrolled in the program. A student who has received a high school equivalency certificate is entitled to enroll in a public school and to benefit from the Foundation School Program in the same manner as any other students who have not received a high school diploma.

The board of trustees of a school district or the governing board of an open-enrollment charter school must hold a public hearing concerning the In-school GED Option Program application before submitting the application to the state education agency. Additionally, a public hearing must be conducted annually to review the performance of the program.

The Commissioner of Education may revoke a school district's In-School GED Option Program after consideration of relevant factors, including student performance in state mandated assessment, success rate of participants in the high school equivalency examination, and other criteria adopted by the Commissioner. The Commissioner is required to report to the state legislature regarding the implementation of the program.

School districts and open-enrollment charter schools and In-school GED Option Program participants have a vested interest in the success of the program. The program application will be carefully scrutinized to determine eligibility of participation.

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 incapable of completing graduation requirements

A student is eligible to participate in the HSEP (GED Options) according to the Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 29 Section 087 (d) if:

(1) the student has been ordered by a court under Article 45.054 , Code of Criminal Procedure or by the Texas Youth Commission to:

- (A) participate in a preparatory class for the high school equivalency examination; or
- (B) take the high school equivalency examination administered under Section 7.111 ; or

(2) the following conditions are satisfied:

- (A) the student is at least 16 years of age at the beginning of the school year or semester;**
- (B) the student is a student at risk of dropping out of school, as defined by Section 29.081 ;**
- (C) the student and the student's parent or guardian agree in writing to the student's participation;**
- (D) at least two school years have elapsed since the student first enrolled in ninth grade and the student has accumulated less than one third of the credits required to graduate under the minimum graduation requirements of the district or school; and**
- (E) any other conditions specified by the commissioner.**

All districts wishing to participate in the HSEP (GED Option) will be required to complete an application. Appendix One of the application requires that districts specify how students will be selected for the GED Option Program. There should be procedures for involving teachers, administrators, and counselors. Parental or guardian agreement for the student to be in the program is required and that it is voluntary. The application also requires that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools keep adequate and sufficient records reflecting the student's qualifications to participate in the program. The records will include the following:

1. attendance records;
2. assessments such as the GED practice test, student grades and TAKS;
3. transcripts indicating the number of credits earned by the student and the grade level achieved.

IEA staff, for compliance with applicable program requirements, may monitor student selection procedures and related records.

Guideline I.2

Counseling is required prior to enrollment and must be available throughout participation in the HSEP.

The students in the HSEP will be awarded the same guidance and counseling services as all other students. In addition to services provided for all students, for the purpose of the HSEP, counselors will be required to participate in a pre-entry meeting to discuss available programs to serve the student's needs, program requirements including assessment, and program expectations. The pre-entry counseling shall include the involvement of an administrator, a teacher, a counselor, the student, and the student's parent or guardian. The school counselor shall be responsible for conducting counseling sessions with individual students in the GED Option Program on a regular basis and maintaining a record of sessions conducted in the same manner as for other high school students.

Guideline I.3

Curricula and Instructional content must be at the high school level.

The HSEP will be primarily comprised of students who have been receiving instruction in the minimum graduation plan. Districts will be expected to shift students from instruction in the minimum graduation plan to the GED preparation program in a manner that enables the student to be successful. This transition can occur in a variety of ways. Districts will be provided flexibility in structuring the instructional program for GED Option students in an effort to maximize student's opportunities for success. For example, some students may continue to receive instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills while other students receive instruction in content that more specifically targets GED preparation. The HSEP application requires districts to describe the curriculum and instructional delivery system that will be administered to participating students. While districts will be provided flexibility, no program will receive approval if the instructional content of the GED Option program is not at the high school level. Also, development of workforce instruction for HSEP students should be integrated with GED preparation.

Guideline I.4

To ensure effective instructional delivery, sufficient instructional resources and qualified staff must be allocated to the HSEP.

All school districts and open-enrollment charter schools will ensure that qualified teachers will instruct HSEP participants. School districts and open-enrollment charter schools will take all reasonable affirmative steps to assign appropriately certified school personnel to serve GED Option Program students. School districts may employ paraprofessional personnel to support the efforts of the classroom teacher. School districts will be strongly encouraged to maintain a limited ratio of no more than 15 students to one teacher.

In accordance with TEC §21.451, school districts in the state of Texas are required to provide staff development for faculty and staff. TEC §21.451(b) requires that staff development must be predominantly campus-based and related to achieving campus performance objectives. Campus staff development may include activities that enable the campus staff to plan together to enhance existing skills, to share effective strategies, to reflect on curricular and instructional issues, to analyze student achievement results, to study research, to practice new methods, to identify student strengths and needs, to develop meaningful programs for students, to appropriately implement site-based decision-making, and to conduct research. Each campus has the opportunity to develop their own action plan to address the instructional needs of the participants of the HSEP. The instructional strategies implemented in the program may include group collaboration strategies, hands-on activities, one-to-one tutorials, multi-media strategies, etc. to ensure active student participation with consideration of learning styles.

School districts operating the HSEP shall provide instruction at the appropriate high school grade level. The school district or open-enrollment charter school may modify the instruction, pacing, and material to ensure that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to master the TAKS and the skills required to successfully complete the GED Option Program and receive the GED certificate. The HSEP shall be an integral part of the regular or alternative education program.

Guideline I.5

Successful students must be awarded a credential that includes the term "diploma."

Pursuant to Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 84, Subchapter C, Section 89.43, individuals who are eligible and successfully complete the GED examination will be issued a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency.

Guideline I.6

GED Option graduates should receive official recognition.

School districts and open-enrollment charter schools will provide assurance that students who successfully complete their GED will be provided an opportunity for official recognition. All programs operating an HSEP should offer students recognition activities via graduation ceremonies or similar type ceremonies.

Guideline A.1

Planning and oversight of the implementation of the HSEP will be the responsibility of the TEA and will necessitate collaboration.

Responsibility for planning, oversight, and administration of Texas' HSEP will rest with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Division Student Support Services and GED. This division will designate a High School Equivalency Program (HSEP) coordinator to collaborate with staff from across the agency to include the Texas State GED Administrator in order to accomplish the GED Option Program objectives.

Day-to-day operations concerning the HSEP will be the responsibility of the HSEP coordinator. This will include communicating with local independent school districts and charter schools on matters relating to the GED Option, administering and managing the application process, approving GED Option applications, providing guidance and clarity about GED Option Program requirements and compliance issues, and supervising monitoring of the GED Option program. Approved GED Option programs will be required to submit an end-of-the-year information as required by GEDIS. The division has a relational database for recording and maintaining GED Option progress reports.

The Texas State GED Administrator will continue to have responsibility for the administration and integrity of all testing. The state administrator will ensure strict compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and policies related to testing. The state administrator and HSEP coordinator will collaborate to continually refine the GED Option application.

Guideline A.2

Each year, the appropriate state agency will submit documentation to GEDIS describing procedures for contributing a portion of the support needed to administer the GED Option Program. Authorization is located in [TEC Section 29.087 \(i\)](#).

Guideline A.3

The state agency will annually collect data and information about the GED Option from local school systems and will submit the data to GEDIS.

The GED Option application outlines data submission requirements for participating schools. The HSEP coordinator will receive this self-reported data, aggregate the numbers, and submit state-level data on an annual basis to GEDIS as required. Primary responsibility for data collection will rest with the HSEP coordinator in conjunction with participating school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. Also, starting in the 2009-2010 school year a web based survey will be completed at the end of the school year by all districts with an HSEP.

Guideline A.4

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

GED testing procedures will be consistent with the policies prescribed by the GED Testing Service. Increasing testing controls will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Documentation will be required at the time of testing indicating that the GED Option participant's testing is sanctioned by the school district or charter school;
2. Testing procedures will be monitored. Testing centers not following approved procedures may be sanctioned or closed;
3. Testing centers will be adequately staffed to absorb the additional number of test takers resulting from the GED Option; and
4. Only authorized GED Chief Examiners and GED Examiners will administer the GED Tests; school personnel who are not GED Examiners will not be permitted to access the GED Tests.