

# Upcoming GED updates worry students

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More people are asking about taking the high school equivalency exam, and a local career center has added more preparation courses and increased the number of people who can take the course at one time.

The goal for many of those people who didn't finish high school is to take and pass the exam yet this year. That's because starting Jan. 2, the General Education Development exam, or GED exam, is changing.

The exam, which is equivalent to earning a high school diploma, usually is updated every 10 to 12 years, and starting next year the exam will go from five sections to four. Students also will have to take the test online, instead of with paper and a pencil, and the cost is increasing.

But one of the changes getting the most attention is to a rule that had allowed people to retake only the sections of the test they didn't pass. Starting next year, that rule is changing. If someone doesn't pass all five sections before the end of the year, they will have to take all four sections of the new online exam to earn their GED, the testing service spokesman Armando Diaz said.

The Central Nine Career Center currently has 12 locations offering GED courses in Johnson County and southern Marion County, which help students who have been away from high school for several years review lessons in math, science, social studies and language arts.



SCOTT ROBERSON | DAILY JOURNAL

Students attend a GED course Tuesday at the Grace Assembly Church Annex in Greenwood.

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## ABOUT THE CHANGES

The exam students will take to earn a GED is changing in January. Here's what you need to know:

### What's changing?

The exam will go from a paper and pencil test with sections on science, social studies, reading, math and language arts to an online exam with sections on science, social studies, math and literacy.

The price of the exam also is increasing for Indiana students, from \$70 to \$120.

### Why the change?

The GED updates its test once every 10 to 12 years to ensure students are being tested on the kinds of skills they'll need in college and the workforce.

### What do students need to know?

Currently, if a student has passed some of the GED's five sections, they can be retested over the sections they didn't pass without retaking the sections they did pass. But students who haven't passed the entire GED before Jan. 2 will have to retake the entire exam online to earn their GED.

# • Test

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About 800 people have contacted Central Nine about taking a course, and currently about 250 are enrolled in the courses, Central Nine adult education coordinator Michelle Davis said.

The career center plans to add a 13th site soon and also has increased the number of students taking the GED exam at one time from 20 to 30 students.

Central Nine hasn't had a problem giving GED exams or courses to people who wanted or needed them. But when word of the testing changes started to spread at the end of last year, more people contacted Central Nine about completing the test.

"I think we're meeting the needs, but we're growing as the (demand) is growing," Davis said.

Currently the test contains five sections — science, social studies, reading, math and language arts. Next year, that is changing to four sections — science, social studies, math and literacy. A student who doesn't pass all of the sections can retest over the portions they missed. But students who don't pass all five sections before the end of the year will have to take all four sections of the new online exam to earn their GED, Diaz said.

The cost of the GED exam also is increasing, from \$70 to \$120, Davis said.

The GED is updated about every decade to test over information needed in college and the workforce. For example, the math skills graduates were expected to have in 2004 is different from what will be expected in 2014, Diaz said.

And part of the reason the exam will be given online is because people need to know how to use a

computer to apply for jobs and often for job duties once they've been hired, Diaz said.

"We need to make sure our test takers can demonstrate they have some form of basic technology skills," Diaz said.

But the changes to the test worry Jesse Phillips, of Needham, and Laura Ferguson, of Barchersville, who are planning to take the test for the first time this year.

Phillips has been out of high school for 10 years, and Ferguson for 35 years. Phillips worked for about five years at auto body shops after leaving high school one credit short of graduating, and Ferguson has worked mostly at gas stations. Both of them are looking for better careers and know they won't find them without their GEDs.

"We basically can't get on with our lives until we pass this GED test," Ferguson said.

They both worry about taking an

online exam, which includes answering essay questions. Phillips' typing skills largely involve circling the keyboard with both index fingers, and he and Ferguson worry they accidentally could lose their answers with an electronic exam.

"I would flunk. I'm computer illiterate," Ferguson said.

Currently Central Nine doesn't have any GED courses or lessons that show students how to take a computer-based test, but Diaz said the national GED testing center is working to see what kind of online testing help career centers can provide students.

Davis is going through statewide GED training to learn about the new exam. Once that's complete, she'll know whether Central Nine can offer any additional courses to Phillips, Ferguson and other students worried about taking an online exam.





Darren King, 27, Indianapolis, was all smiles in his graduation cap and gown before getting his GED diploma in 2010. The test is changing next year. MATT DETRICH / THE STAR 2010 PHOTO

# Changes to GED in 2014 spur interest in exam

Students are trying to complete work before test alters next year

By Tom Lange  
Daily Journal

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have to take the test online, instead of with paper and a pencil, and the cost is increasing.

But one of the changes getting the most attention is a rule that had allowed people to re-take only the sections of the test they didn't pass. Starting next year, if someone doesn't pass all five sections before the end of the year, they will have to take all four sections of the new online exam to earn their GED, the testing service spokesman Armando Diaz said.

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coordinator Michelle Davis.

The career center plans to add a 13th site soon and has increased the number of students taking the GED exam at one time from 20 to 30 students.

When word of the testing changes spread last year, more people contacted Central Nine about completing the test.

"We're meeting the needs, but we're growing as the (demand) is growing," Davis said.

The five current sections of the test are science, social studies, reading, math and language arts. Next year, that changes to four: science, social studies, math and literacy.

The cost of the GED exam will increase from \$70 to \$120.

The GED is updated about every decade to stay current with knowledge needed in college and the workforce. For example, the math skills graduates were expected to have in 2004 are different from what will be expected in 2014, Diaz said.