

# GED test due for big changes in 2014

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*The Associated Press*

Adults who have begun working toward their GED are being urged to finish up this year, before the test for a high school equivalency diploma changes and they have to start all over.

GED Testing Service will introduce a new version of the test, given nationwide, on Jan. 1, 2014. Developers say the first major changes since 2002 will align the test with the new Common Core curricula adopted by most states to increase college and career readiness. It also will shift test-taking from pencil and paper to computer.

Joyce Monroe, 24, is putting in dozens of hours in class every week at the Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center. Two practice tests show she is ready for writing and science but needs slightly more work in math, along with social studies and language arts.

"I'm really trying to get in before it changes. I'm so close," said Monroe, who said she left high school for family reasons and is trying to set an example for her 5-year-old daughter. "I don't want to start all over. That would make me want to drop GED like I did high school."

Those who administer the test have begun to alert the million or so adults who have passed some but not all of the five parts of the current test to complete the missing sections by Dec. 31. If not, their scores will expire and they'll have to begin again under the new program Jan. 1.

"If they are in the pipeline, they need to get it done," said Dr. Danis Gehl, education director at the University at Buffalo's Educational Opportunity Center.

There is also financial incentive to complete the GED this year. At \$120, the computer-based version is nearly double the cost of the current test. Several states subsidize some or all of the expense, but the student share is widely expected to rise.

Although the General Education Development exam has undergone regular updates since being introduced in 1942, the upcoming changes are the most dramatic yet.

"We see that higher education has new standards, the workforce, the economy's changing," said Armando Diaz, spokesman for Washington-based GED Testing Service. "We decided it's time to completely give the testing program a facelift."

Instead of five sections, the test will be re-aligned into four: reasoning through language arts, mathematical reasoning, science and social studies. The current stand-alone essay section will be incorporated into writing assignments within the language arts and social studies sections, Diaz said.

EOC Executive Director Julius Gregg Adams suggested that adults unfamiliar with the Common Core standards, a uniform school curriculum heavier on writing and content analysis, might be more comfortable getting the test out of the way this year, though he's reluctant to say the new test will be harder.

About 700,000 people take the GED exam yearly in the United States, said Armando Diaz, spokesman for Washington-based GED Testing Service, the trademarked test's creator. About 72 percent pass to earn their states' high school equivalency credential. More than 1 million people are expected to try in 2013 in advance of the change, a number that could strain preparation programs and testing sites.