

PSC-ED-OUS

Moderator: Marco Davis

February 19, 2014

1:00 pm CT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you, all, for standing by.

At this time, all participants will be in a listen-only mode.

During the presentation, we will conduct a question-and-answer session. If you have any questions, please press Star and then 1.

This call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this point.

I will now turn the meeting over to Mr. Marco Davis.

Sir, you may begin.

Marco Davis: Thank you, (Brian).

And good afternoon, everyone, and welcome.

My name is Marco Davis. I'm the deputy director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

And I'm joined by several of my colleagues here at the Initiative including Emmanuel Caudillo.

I want to thank you all for joining us on our Webinar today.

Two quick business matters. I want to inform and remind you that this Webinar is off the record and not for press purposes. And I also wanted to let you know that this Webinar, including the Q&A dialog, is being recorded, as (Brian) just mentioned. And both the recording and a transcript of our discussion, along with the slide presentation, will be posted to the Initiative's Web site after the call to make the information available for anyone who was unable to join us for the live Webinar. So please keep that in mind.

The agenda will go as follows. I will describe today's Webinar topic briefly and then introduce our first presenter who will speak for up to 15 minutes and then we will have 15 minutes of Q&A. (Brian) will come on and give instructions.

After that Q&A session, I will introduce our second presenter who will also speak for up to 15 minutes. And then we will once again open the floor for Q&A for the remainder of the hour.

When we open the floor for questions, as I said, (Brian) will give guidance for you to be able to get into the queue to ask questions.

Now onto our discussion today on high school equivalency test, in particular the newly-redesigned GED.

It is important to note that the GED is only one of the high school equivalence tests currently available and, in fact, different states have begun to adopt or recognized different assessments.

Please note that we will be holding at least one additional Webinar with presenters who will share information about the other assessments. So watch for an invitation to that discussion and we hope you will join us for further dialog at that time about this important topic.

The reason behind this Webinar is that the high school equivalency credential is very important for the Latino community. As of 2010, some 41% of Hispanics aged 20 and older in the United States did not have a regular high school diploma and increasingly obtaining some form of postsecondary education is a prerequisite for reaching the middle class. States and society in general have begun to examine the issue of increased rigor for high school graduation, often termed as college and career readiness or college and career success. And that same thinking is now being reflected in high school equivalency assessments.

Today, we are going to hear about the GED which is currently the most widely-used assessment implemented in at least 38 states. Other states have chosen to adopt either additional or different equivalency test.

The redesigned GED was introduced at the beginning of 2014.

Our second presenter today represents an institution that provides high school equivalency preparation which is St. Augustine College based in Chicago, Illinois.

So without any further ado, I want to turn it over to our first presenter, Nicole Chestang, who is currently the vice president and chief strategist for College and Career Success at the American Council on Education.

Nicole?

Nicole Chestang: Thank you very much.

And good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity to talk with this group about the role of high school equivalency credentials and ensuring college and career success for more adults.

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As you can see from this title slide and as was mentioned in the opening, I have a new title and a new organization than the one cited in the invitation you received because I recently returned to the American Council on Education after helping lead the transition to the new GED program in order to pursue a broader role and helping more adults, particularly though then the adult basic education and high school equivalency pipeline, achieve college and career success.

Next slide.

And this next slide is the one on pathways to college and career success. This diagram illustrates that there are multiple pathways and approaches that adults take to prepare for, gain admission to and successfully complete college.

And earning a high school equivalency diploma or high school equivalency credential is an important gateway. And this particular gateway, as has been mentioned, has expanded to include additional high school equivalency tests.

In fact, nearly half a million adults earn a high school equivalency credential each year with the majority citing that they do so because they want to pursue additional postsecondary education.

As you know, in today's job market, the requirements for most of the jobs being created include some college, be it a degree, certificate or training program.

Next slide.

In my new role at ACE, my charge is to marshal the resources of ACE, including its members who are college and university leaders, to identify and support policies and programs that will increase college access and attainment for more adults.

Because of my work with the GED Testing Service, I accepted this invitation to talk with you today about the GED program specifically. But I look forward to working with all of you as I develop the college and career success agenda here at ACE.

Next slide.

As you are no doubt aware, there is a lot going on in both K-12 and adult education. At the end of the day, all of us are being challenged to step up to the task of building educated and employed communities. And to do so, we have to deal with the fact that high school is just no longer enough.

The Center for Education and the Workforce of Georgetown University projects that by 2018, 63% of jobs will require some education beyond a high school diploma.

Even today, the number of low-skill jobs is growing at a much slower rate than middle-skill jobs, those jobs requiring some college but maybe not a bachelor's degree.

And employers in colleges are telling us that adults need to possess critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, written and oral communication skills and digital literacy if they're going to succeed.

In fact, today, basic digital literacy is required to conduct our daily lives, to seek and apply for jobs and in some states to access social services.

So I don't need to tell anyone on this call how important it is that we begin to set a higher bar for adults and encourage them to aspire for more because earning a high school equivalency credential should be the start of their educational journey, not the end. And it should be a bridge to greater opportunity, not a dead end to their dreams.

Next slide, please.

In response to these realities, the introduction of the 2014 GED program ushered in a new era for adult learners and educators, colleges and employers.

Through the 2014 GED program, test takers and educators are supported throughout the test preparation, testing and post testing process.

The goal of passing the GED test is replaced by the opportunity to demonstrate career and college readiness and signals the real driver for a high school equivalency credential, the continued pursuit of learning throughout one's life.

Next slide.

The new GED program is about just so much more than a test. The entire program is built around the adult learner or test taker who has been too often thwarted by a system that is too hard to navigate and has been provided too little assistance in helping test takers achieve their ultimate goals, be it more education or a good job.

Next. Support before and after the test along with a host of programs and services designed to support test takers can be found in the My GED portal at ged.com. Any of your students can take advantage of this resource and I encourage you to make - creating an account on My GED or part of the learning experience in your programs.

Next. Test takers can now go to one place to access learning materials, link to your adult education programs and access tools like the GED Ready Practice Test to determine their readiness to test.

Next. Easier scheduling means test takers can schedule a test that they are ready to take at a time that works best into their family and work schedule.

And they can schedule a test, you know, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day using a smartphone or a computer.

Next. In the past, if test taker wanted to schedule a math test, they would have to call around the test centers only to find out that either the math test wasn't being offered at a time that was convenient for them or maybe that it wasn't going to be offered for yet another month. While today, test takers can schedule whatever test they want at the location and time that they choose.

Next. After testing, every test taker receives detailed feedback about the skills that they performed well and the areas where further skill development is needed. This kind of detailed feedback will help students, teachers and administrators target instruction and prep time, next, which will lead to improved effectiveness and speed the transition to jobs and to college. This whole new world of information and support for adult learners we think will make the difference.

Next. So now let's talk briefly about the new GED test.

In developing the new test, the GED Testing Service focused on a core set of skills that are integrated throughout the test, enabling the test taker to demonstrate skills in language arts, math, problem solving and critical thinking in each test module.

There are four content area tests as compared to five in the old GED test. Those modules are reasoning through language arts, which combines reading and writing in one test. It's about three hours long including a 10-minute break and a 45-minute extended response item or essay.

Mathematical reasoning is about 90 minutes and includes some items for which an embedded calculator can be used. And the new test uses the Texas Instruments 30XS calculator. And test takers can also - will also have the opportunity to continue to access formula pages that are also embedded in the test.

Science is about 90 minutes and includes some constructive response or short answer items.

And social studies is about 90 minutes and includes a 25-minute extended response or essay item.

The test is offered in both Spanish and English and is delivered on computer at secured test centers.

And being delivered on computer, I should note, only requires the test taker to possess very basic technology skills like the use of a mouse and basic keyboarding skills, nothing fancy or complex.

While the majority of the items are multiple choice, there are six additional item types, including drag and drop and hot spot and others. As I noted previously, every test taker receives extensive feedback from both the GED Ready practice test and the operational GED test.

And there are twice as many retest opportunities, seven, of which the first two are at a discounted rate is taken within 12 months of the initial failed test.

GED Ready, the official practice test, is a half length test or half the length of the operational test and it helps test takers know whether they are indeed ready to take their test.

Next.

So now I want to talk a little bit about resources.

There are a lot of resources available in English and Spanish to assist you and your students. I want to call special attention to the computer-based tutorials in GED Ready which are each available in Spanish.

And if you are an educator or program administrator, I urge you to visit the Educator section of the gedtestingservice.com Web site and become familiar with the wealth of resources available there.

In particular, the Performance Level Descriptors that provide descriptors for each of the performance levels in each module of the test and there are three of them: Below passing, passing and passing with honors or the college and career readiness level.

Coming soon is going to be translations of the portal, school report, posters and other outreach materials in Spanish and you would be alerted to all of that in the Educator pages at www.gedtestingservice.com. So I encourage each of you, if you haven't visited, to please visit that resource.

And as I wrap up, next slide, I thought during this brief presentation it would be useful to share just a few statistics about the Spanish language GED test and Hispanic test takers.

About 48 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia offer the GED test in Spanish. On average, about 4% of our test takers used Spanish language test

and nearly half of those tests were delivered in California, Texas, New York and Illinois.

Over the last ten years, the percentage of test takers of Hispanic origin have ranged from, you know, a high of 22% in 2003 to a low of about 17% in 2012. And the testing service attributes the drop in 2012 to the absence of some test taker data particularly from Puerto Rico.

And finally, I thought it was important to note that last year, the second full year of GED testing on computer, Hispanic test takers demonstrated similar results as other test takers who tested on computer, posting a significantly higher pass rate on computer, 83%, compared to that on paper, 69%.

Well, I hope these provide you with some helpful insight and a bit of an overview on the test. It's a lot to cover in 15 minutes. But I want to make sure that you understand how the program is leaning forward to give more adults a fighting chance to achieve their career and educational goals.

And I want to thank the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics for hosting this Webinar.

I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have now.

Marco Davis: Thank you, Nicole.

And so, (Brian), if you could give our participants instructions on how to queue up for a question?

Coordinator: All right, sir.

Participants, we will now begin the question-and-answer session.

If you have any questions, please press Star and then 1. Please unmute your phone and record your name when prompted. Your name will be required for me to introduce you.

To withdraw, please press Star and then 2.

One moment, please, for the first question.

Again, participants, if you have any questions, please press Star and then 1. Please unmute your phone and record your name when prompted.

Our first question comes from the line of (Gerardo Valias).

Sir, your line is open.

(Gerardo Valias): Thank you.

My question is, and let me see if I got this right, now clients have a choice on taking their test from their home at anytime and they don't have to attend the certified testing centers provided where I live, right? They can go in and they can do it at their own leisure in their own home in a computer at anytime. Is that right or wrong?

Nicole Chestang: That is not quite correct. Tests still are given in secure test locations because it's a high-stake test and it has to be proctored. So a test taker will have to go to a testing center but they could schedule from their home and access any of the resources in the My GED portal at ged.com, you know, at anytime.

Once they scheduled the test that they choose at a location that they can select in their community, then they will go there and take the test at the time they scheduled.

(Gerardo Valias): Got it. Thank you. I was a little bit confused.

Nicole Chestang: No. Appreciate that ability to clarify.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from the line of (Francisco Hurtado).

Sir, your line is open.

(Francisco Hurtado): Yes. I have three questions. I hope that's okay.

Last year's material, as far as the GED book, for example, the book that I use is the Second Bond Version. Is that material still applicable to the new 2014 - because some of the students may not have the money to buy the current book for 2014. So can the students use last year's book to study for their GED exam?

Nicole Chestang: Okay. I'll take your first question first. And, you know, I would respond this way. Yes, materials from previous tests would be good study tool for the new test but they are likely not going to be enough.

And so what you will have to do is think about how you might supplement those, you know, in your instruction with, you know, a different - additional kinds of tools and materials.

And if you go to the gedtestingservice.com Web site, under the Educators tab, there are a host of resources for educators about the 2014 test and it is there

that you can begin to, you know, see, you know, what kinds of things are going to be covered on the test and how you can use, you know, the item samplers to, you know, enable your students to practice on - understand and then practice on the new item types, their tutorials and other resources.

So, you know, yes, I would say, you know, materials that you have been using will still be helpful but you're still going to have to - you and your students will have to supplement them with additional materials to cover some of the new content and way content is approached on this test.

(Francisco Hurtado): Okay. Okay.

My second question is when you say "passing with honors," does that mean that there is a possible scholarship offers if the student passed with honors? Or can you clarify that term for me, please?

Nicole Chestang: Sure. In creating the new GED test, we developed three performance levels. One is, you know, below passing. So it means you have not achieved the level of passing the test. Passing the test requires the test taker to achieve a score of 150 on each of the test module. So there's a different score scale for the new test.

And there - you know, you only have to achieve one passing score. So we are not using the compensatory model that we used with the 2002 series test where, you know, you could pass the test at a minimum score but you had to achieve a higher overall average score to pass the test and get a credential in your state. Now all you have to do is achieve the passing score, you know, once on each module in order to earn your diploma.

Above 150 points moving towards 170 points which is the score point level for GED or passing with honors, that's the level at which it's been determined that if a student scores and performs in that range, they are likely prepared for credit-bearing courses in college and job training programs.

And so this was a way in a very, you know, low stakes environment to give test takers an opportunity to understand where they are on a college and career readiness continuum but, you know, not necessarily make that the bar that they have to achieve to earn a high school equivalency diploma.

You know, over time, you know, I think it's everyone's hope that those level will converge into one. But, you know, until we are at the point, you know, in this country where high school, you know, graduation standards and college and career readiness standards are the same, we did not want to disadvantage adults who are earning a high school equivalency credential.

So that new passing performance level or passing with honors just signifies that an individual possesses the college and career readiness skills in each of the content areas - you earn it on each content area. So you might earn GED with honors in English but you may only hit the passing standard in - I'm sorry, in Language Arts but you might only achieve the passing standard in Math, Science or Social Studies. And that's okay. You know, what that does for an individual is, you know, give them the confidence to know that they are ready in the Language Arts area to pursue more complex work.

(Francisco Hurtado): Okay. Okay. And the essay portion. In the past, the language writing portion of the test required an essay. Is that going to be still required in the group of language arts?

Nicole Chestang: Yes. There are actually going to be two essays, one in the language - reasoning through language arts test. There's a 45-minute essay.

(Francisco Hurtado): Okay.

Nicole Chestang: And in the Social Studies test, there is a 25-minute essay. And you will often - when you - if you go to the Web site, you'll see them referred to as "extended response items." But really, it's the essay.

(Francisco Hurtado): Okay. I did come up with one more question. I'm sorry.

Marco Davis: Okay. If you could quickly, we do want to give a chance for some other folks to ask questions. But go ahead.

(Francisco Hurtado): Yes, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Yes. The way the material is presented, I work for two different places that set up how this is organized, how the material is presented. Can you tell me why there is no set way of how this material is presented in different facility?

Nicole Chestang: I'm not certain what you mean. Can you give me an example?

(Francisco Hurtado): Yes. Like for instance, I may teach at - I teach at two different colleges. One college, there is no set norm of how this material is presented. It's all up to the instructor of how they want to present this material to the students. Why isn't there something set that this is how a teacher, an instructor should present this material to the students? Why didn't they left up to the college or to the instructor?

Nicole Chestang: You know, that is a very good question. I also think a very good, you know, sort of commentary on, you know, kind of where we are in this country around, you know, sort of more standardization and...

(Francisco Hurtado): Yes.

Nicole Chestang: ...consistency in, you know, our adult education instruction and teaching. The Department of Education, you know, has done Elman Service in trying to establish, you know, a set of standards I think that they're also going to lead to, you know, our ability to do just what you asked, which is, you know, present, you know, if not one way, at least, you know, a few good ways of ensuring that, you know, this material is, you know, presented and taught and assessed in ways in which, you know, everybody can understand that, you know, what we're trying to achieve is really happening.

You know, I don't know, you know, others want to comment on that. But, you know, I just think that that is a, you know, a function of, you know, the world that we're in and that we all ought to strive toward that place.

One of the things I will tell you is that, you know, at least initially, you might want to look to some of the publishers in the space who are developing curriculum around how they'd present this, in particular Kentucky Educational Television comes to mind and some others who are developing materials, to help like the GED Academy and a couple others. ProLiteracy I think is one as well.

(Francisco Hurtado): Thank you very much.

Marco Davis: Great. So I think we've got time for one or two more questions before we move to the next presenter.

Coordinator: All right, sir.

Our next question comes from the line of (Maria Madrigal).

Ma'am, your line is open.

(Maria Madrigal): Hi. We have our GED testing center here in - on my location. And you just mentioned that we have a lot of resources online which I have been doing research for more materials. But in Spanish, we don't have enough books to be able to buy it and present information to the students. Do you know if we are going to have more resources for Spanish?

Nicole Chestang: Hi, (Maria). Yes, you will. I think in the push to try and get materials out and because, you know, the English test is most widely-used test, publishers focus first on, you know, getting their English language materials ready. But I know that there are at least three, I believe, in the pipeline they're going to have, you know, materials ready if not this spring, by, you know, middle of the summer.

And I'm sorry that's taking so long. I think my suggestion would be that, you know, for those students that you start using, you know, materials that you have, you know, worked with in the past but, you know, understand again that you would have to supplement some of those materials for some of the new items.

And again, there are tutorials and there's an item sampler, you know, with the different item types and, you know, answer explanations in Spanish on the Web site. And I would turn to those first. And I know that my colleagues at the GED Testing Service are, you know, working diligently with the publisher community to make sure more materials are available for you.

(Maria Madrigal): Okay. Also, you also mentioned that it's easier to get the report. But we have experienced that we have students taking the official GED test on the computer then they have to wait 24 hours to be able to get the report with this course.

Nicole Chestang: Yes. And that is happening probably for not all test takers but for some, you know, here at the beginning of the new test because we wanted to make sure and do the kind of, you know, quality assurance checking to make sure that our scoring systems are, you know, working as we would expect and that the information, when we do present it to the student is, you know, completely accurate. And that's why you're seeing the delay now. But that will not persist.

(Maria Madrigal): Okay. Thank you.

Nicole Chestang: You're welcome.

Good questions.

Marco Davis: Great. Yes. Let's take one more.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from the line of Ms. Angela Long.

Ma'am, your line is open.

Angela Long: Yes, Nicole. It's nice to talk with you. I just wrote a book, "America's Forgotten Student Population." And thank you so much for endorsing that book.

We haven't talked on the phone yet. But it's very nice to hear your voice and hear the work that you guys are doing. So thank you.

I just had a quick question. Do you have any data that points to the increase either in a surge of test takers or has there been a decline since these changes have taken place? Do you have any information on that?

Nicole Chestang: Not quite ready to talk about that yet because we're only six weeks in. I will tell you that there was a giant surge at the end of 2013, as you would expect, and that happens every time a new GED test is introduced and that's happened five times in the history of the test. And we tested more than 1 million test takers last year.

But, you know, what we expect to see happen is, you know, a little bit of diminution in, you know, test taking, you know, over these initial couple of months. And then what typically happens in the introduction of a new test series is that, you know, levels off, you know, sort of six to eight months later and we're back at the levels that we expect. And...

Angela Long: Okay.

Nicole Chestang: ...you know, what I can tell you now is that, you know, we're beginning to do some initial, you know, looking and, you know, people are passing the test, even achieving some of the GED passing score with honors. So, you know, it seems to be working well and pretty soon we'll be able to share some of that information with you and the community.

Angela Long: Outstanding. Thank you so much.

Marco Davis: Great. So what we're going to do now I think is move to our second presenter.

But I do want to let folks know first that if you have a question that we're unable to get to, if you want to email it to our email address, we can try to get them over to Nicole for answers to you, which is at whieeh@ed.gov. It's the email address that you RSVP'd to for this Webinar. So hopefully you have it still.

And also obviously, as I mentioned at the beginning of this call, we will be having an additional - at least one additional Webinar discussing the high school equivalency and some of the other offerings. And so you may be able to ask - if you have more general questions, you may be able to ask your question as part of that dialog.

But for now, we're going to move to our second presenter who, as I mentioned at the top of the call, is from St. Augustine College, which is based in Chicago, Illinois. St. Augustine College offers GED preparation classes in English and Spanish to a largely Hispanic population.

And so we're, in fact, very fortunate to have the president of the college, Mr. Andrew Sund, here with us.

And so I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Sund.

Andrew Sund: Well, good afternoon, everybody.

I'm very happy to be here. I am, as Marco mentioned, Andrew Sund, the president of St. Augustine College.

And I have a bit of a confession to make. It's actually the very first time in my life that I participate in a Webinar as a presenter. So please bear with me as I try to adjust to this new way of presenting information.

But again, I'm very happy to be part of this Webinar today and to be able to share a little bit about what we've been trying to do at St. Augustine College. And as that leads to some ideas that we can develop as a group, those participating here, maybe I will learn something, too.

If we can move to the next slide, please.

A little context of who we are at St. Augustine College. As colleges go, we're relatively new institution. We were only founded in 1980. But we are an institution that was created with the purpose of providing access to the Latino population, to the Hispanic population here in the Chicago metropolitan area.

That's who we are from the very beginning and what identifies us and why the GED program is such an important part of our mission.

We are a private, nonprofit institution and we are an accredited institution by The Higher Learning Commission which is the body that accredits most colleges and universities in the Midwest.

Additionally, as a Hispanic-serving institution, we'd been very active members with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, HACU, that maybe some of you are familiar with. We are, in fact, the founding member. We were one of the institutions that started HACU. And we have also been recognized by HACU as an outstanding Hispanic-serving institution only last year in 2013 in a conference here.

The next slide, please.

The way we try to serve the Latino community while there's many nuances to how we do it but predominantly we have four locations that are in neighborhoods. We're in the north side of Chicago. We're in the Little Village neighborhood. We're in the Humboldt Park area. And we're in the east side of the city. These are neighborhoods where our community lives and we're very much part of that community. We'll live and breathe where the community does.

We also offer a bilingual curriculum at the collegiate level, aside from the GED, but at a collegiate level, we offer a bilingual curriculum where immigrant students who do not dominate English well can actually begin taking classes, content classes in Spanish such as introduction to psychology, American history, mathematic sequence and others in Spanish at the same time that they are developing their English so that by the time they graduate, they could hopefully have both: A good command of English language as well as a credential at the associate degree level or bachelor's degree level.

We have equivalent morning and evening sessions. We mean that exactly the same classes that we offer during the day are also available at night for people that work. And we offer variety of other services to help our population have access to college, in particular some examples are we have a childcare program that is a very low cost for all parents who wish to study very intensive advising, free parking, cafeteria that has Hispanic food and many other things that are very - make our community a very welcome one.

Also, our tuition is very low. In fact, it's so low for a private institution that students have qualified for financial aid in the form of Pell grants. And in the state of Illinois, we have an additional award which is the MAP award. With

those two scholarships, they can pretty much cover tuition and do not have to use student loans. Hardly any of our students use student loans which means they can graduate without any debt.

We offer several associate degrees. That's what we do most. So in some respects, we're actually a little more similar to a community college in our student population but we are a private, nonprofit institution, as I mentioned.

We also have a bachelor's degree in social work and have several others in development and early childhood education, psychology, hospitality management, business management and several others which hopefully will be up and running within the next year.

If we could have the next slide, please.

We have about 1600 students in all our locations. And we're about 87% Latino in our student population. Seventy-eight percent of our students are women. And the average age is 29. So we're very much a adult-serving institution. And about 90%, sometimes a little higher, of our students are the first generation in college.

We have an open door admission policy, which means that anybody that has completed a high school degree or an equivalent to a high school degree in any other country is immediately admitted and also, of course, if they have completed the GED and have the GED credential, which is the high school equivalency use of the state of Illinois, we accept that, too. And that's why this program is so important to us.

And we can have the next slide.

Moving on to our GED program at St. Augustine, as I mentioned, it is one of the ways and one of the most important ways in which our students access our collegiate program. So we've been offering GED classes for many, many years - GED preparation classes for many, many years since the 1980s. And in fact, until last year, we were also a testing center, an actual testing site here in Chicago where students could come and do the GED test in English and Spanish. With the new system, we're still evaluating whether that's going to be feasible for us to do or not.

However, as I mentioned in this slide, it was only in 2012, about a year and a half ago, that we received significant funding from the Illinois Community College Board, which funds adult education programs in the state of Illinois, to expand the GED program that we already had for many years.

So now we are training far more people than we did before. And our GED program is - its purpose is very simple. We wanted to be a tether to the collegiate program, hopefully ours but not necessarily, people obviously can attend any college of their choosing once they obtain the credential and it's also an opportunity for our community, the Latino community, to be able to earn this credential that can make a big difference in their ability to obtain employment. And we want that to be - to do that for our students in both English and Spanish.

Next slide, please.

So our program has a capacity to serve up to 600 students now. We have about 450. And we offer English and Spanish sessions.

In order to enter our program -- we officially have two programs that I'll discuss in a minute but -- our regular GED classes, there is a TABE testing

process which is what's followed by many institutions in Illinois receiving funding by ICCB and they need to be tested at the 9th grade level to enter what we call an eight-week intensive program in either English or Spanish that it's 140 hours of instruction. And we do this both morning and evenings and at all our locations, the four locations I mentioned throughout the city of Chicago.

For those students that are - do not meet the 9th grade level and the TABE testing, we are often separately but that's not really funded by the Illinois Community College Board, it's really just our own institutional funds, what we are calling a pre-GED program which is really to prepare the students to go to this next level and we've actually been quite successful at doing that with many students to be able to complete the GED.

But our goal is to have an intensive program that, in eight week, students will move and attempt to take the test.

The next slide, please.

Additionally, some of the - what we believe are important aspects of our program that we're trying to keep and in some ways mirrors what our academic program is, is that we are offering students very intensive advising. Every student meets with an advisor in a weekly basis, sometimes more than that.

And we're also - have full-time instructors dedicated solely to the GED program. And those instructors play an important role in shaping how we present the material. And obviously right now a lot of what I'm commenting on right now really relates to the last test. And currently the faculty of the GED program is adjusting to the new test and creating new and different ways

to present the materials including a module on computer skills for those students that do not have them.

We also have tutoring available to all students in addition to the class time. And we're trying to create what we call a bridge curriculum so that it includes some college preparatory work as well as developing computer skills in addition to just being able to take the test but a few more details in that in that area.

And perhaps one of our most, I would like to think, innovative things that we've done, although I'm sure maybe other people have thought about in other parts of the nation, is that those students that successfully complete the program and passed the exit test -- we provide everybody with an exit test as an internal version of the GED test -- we offer them the incentive to attend one course college for free.

They can take one collegiate course at St. Augustine College and hopefully that will encourage people to continue with a collegiate education, again, whether that is with us or they go to another institution. But we obviously make the offer for the free course only with us. We cannot talk for other people.

Right now some of our results are that we have about a 75% retention rate in the program. And our exit test passing rate, meaning that the internal test we give, there's two measures for it as the state of Illinois does it.

First is, if you're looking at my slides, it says that the test passer rate is 65%. That's from everybody who began the course. But unfortunately, we do have some attrition. So the 80% number that you see, 80% passing rate, those are the students that actually complete the four course and take the test that we so

far see 80% and it is my understanding that it's a figure we want to improve on but it compares well in the state of Illinois.

We have about - since this semester we have 55 participants in the incentive program, meaning they're taking a class, a collegiate class for free during the spring of 2014, taking advantage that they were successful in completing the GED sequence last semester. And there are currently - although I think this figure is low, we're trying to revise it and see if we missed some. There are 17 full-time students of the college from last year who actually took the incentive class in the past 18 months and now were actually full-time students at the college.

We believe that this is an exciting, new development for us to have this incentive class particularly as a way of trying to bridge people into a collegiate education and we hope to continue to be able to expand on this and to report more of this.

So we could have the next slide.

Again, I would like to, well, thank the White House Initiative for the opportunity to be here. And though these are just some of the basic things we're trying to do with our GED program, I'm sure many of the listeners have experiences in other programs throughout the nation that I would be happy to learn about through questions.

Also, please feel free to communicate with me. My email address is there, my phone number, if you would like to have more information regarding the GED program at St. Augustine College or how we approach education for the Latino community in the Chicago area in our bilingual settings.

Thank you very much. And I look forward to your questions.

Marco Davis: Thank you very much, Andrew.

And so now (Brian) will give instructions for folks to get in the queue for Q&A.

Coordinator: All right, sir. Again, participants, if you have any questions, please press Star and then 1. Please unmute your phone and record your name when prompted.

Marco Davis: And as that's getting started, also I wanted to let you know that you might have noticed on the presentations and that you should all have received the PDF version both Nicole's contact info and Andrew's contact info are on the presentation so that you can also reach out to them directly with any questions or follow-up, collaboration, all those kinds of good things.

Coordinator: Our first question comes from the line of Ms. (Claudia Eratu).

Ma'am, your line is open.

Marco Davis: Hello?

(Claudia)?

Coordinator: Ms. (Claudia), please check if your phone is on mute.

Should we move on, sir?

Marco Davis: Yes. (Claudia)?

Yes, it sounds like she's not able to talk. So let's try another caller and maybe she'll get back in the queue.

Coordinator: All right.

Our next question comes from the line of (Robin Tracey).

Ma'am/sir, your line is open.

(Robin Tracey): Actually my question was answered in the last round of questions. But thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from the line of Mr. (Rafael Ramos).

Sir, your line is open.

(Rafael Ramos): Hi. Thank you.

I just wanted to ask a little bit about the previous presentation but on this one right now I had a question about how the ability to be able to get people to be able to come in through the program and actually how intensive is the program because mine we're kind of making it in a very short amount of time to be almost comparable with what our employer would like their employees to do. So I wanted to ask Mr. Sund how long is this intensive program?

Andrew Sund: Well, our program is 140 hours long and it lasts for eight weeks. So it is indeed very extensive. It's about 3-1/2 to 4 hours every day both in the morning and the evening and there's additional homework and other activities and support in the form of tutoring. So it's a very, very intensive program. But so far, we believe this is actually serving people that qualify for it very well.

I think we all have had experience with GED populations that oftentimes it's really a quick review of concepts that they knew in the past that need to be refreshed in people's minds and that has worked well for us.

So part of your question was this. I mean, how long it is? It is eight weeks long and it's about 140 hours.

You also mentioned how we attract students. Well, we actually have a very big marketing arm of St. Augustine College where we promote all our programs on - I mean, on the - throughout the community, agencies, on television, on radio as well as accessing high schools and churches and a variety of areas. And so far, we're actually working pretty close to capacity this year. So the word is getting out about our program and we're trying to continue with this very intensive model of eight weeks.

(Rafael Ramos): Okay. Okay. Thank you very much. And that was something I wanted to know.

Marco Davis: Great. Thank you.

Next question.

Coordinator: Our next question comes...

((Crosstalk))

Marco Davis: Yes, go ahead.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from the line of (Dallas Chatelin).

Ma'am, your line is open.

Marco Davis: Hello? We're ready for your question.

Coordinator: Ms. (Chatelin)?

Excuse me, Ms. (Dallas)?

Marco Davis: That might have also been a person queued up for the earlier Q&A session perhaps, (Brian).

Coordinator: All right, sir.

Marco Davis: Let's go on to the next one.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from the line of (Claudia Eratu).

Ma'am, your line is open.

Marco Davis: Hello, (Claudia)?

Coordinator: (Claudia), could you please check if your phone is on mute, ma'am.

Should we move on, sir?

Marco Davis: Yes. Before we do, just FYI, folks, I'm really sorry we're having this trouble. If folks who are on the line aren't able, if your phones are muted or you're not able to speak, do remember that - we apologize. And certainly if you're not able to get back on, do try and email us with your question. Again, we'll try to

get them to the presenters. Or again, alternatively, you can reach out to the presenters directly to get your question answered.

But let's try for another, (Brian).

Coordinator: All right, sir.

Our last question on queue is coming from the line of (Margarita Garayzarco).

Ma'am, your line is open.

(Margarita Garayzarco): Thank you very much.

Well, my question was for the last presenter but that's fine if you can't answer. I really appreciate. I just would like to know what kind of paperwork does the students today have to present in order to take the test, like birth certificate or an ID or Social Security number, passport. What are the documentations that they have to present in order to take the GED test?

Andrew Sund: Yes. I don't believe I could officially answer that question. My understanding is that any form of ID that they can prove their identity is welcome. It doesn't require Social Security number. But again, I'm not the official body that does this and it may even vary from location to location. So I rather not comment on that.

I would like to make an additional comment that came out earlier about materials in Spanish that for the new test and we are also struggling with that at St. Augustine College that there are insufficient materials in Spanish because our publishers have also told us, just like the previous speaker said,

that they're still working on them, that it's going to take a while. And we worry that we don't have the proper materials to train students in the new version of the test.

So we actually started a task force where we're developing our own materials at St. Augustine College and are actually hiring some people to do that. And if anybody listening to this is interested in learning more about that, please feel free to contact me and I would put you in contact with the people doing that and perhaps we have something to offer in that area as a group, I mean.

(Margarita Garayzarco): Thank you very much.

Marco Davis: Wonderful. Do we have any new callers in the queue, (Brian)?

Coordinator: Yes, sir. Our next question comes from the line of (Francisco Hurtado).

Sir, your line is open.

(Francisco Hurtado): Thank you.

Do you believe that your rate of success with your GED program is contributed to the amount of time that the students spend in the class? Because as I understand, you give students 140 hours which ends up being eight weeks. And do you feel that it is - the students can afford to pay for that type of hours because where I am right now we only have the students take 40 hours and they pay \$130. So is your cost for your 140 hours close to that amount or does it exceed the \$140 that we...

Andrew Sund: Yes. Thank you for your question or two questions.

First, in terms of what I attribute our rate of success, I obviously do believe the amount of hours presented in an intensive way is part of the success rate we have but I hope to believe that it's a combination of things and I also hope that we're able to keep it up and continue to grow. We're never quite finished analyzing ourselves with how we do at work.

I believe that having full-time instructors that are dedicated to this project is very important. I also believe that being able to offer a variety of other services is also an important aspect to being able to be successful.

I have to say, though, that currently our classes at - GED classes at St. Augustine College are free because we have received funding from the Illinois Community College Board to provide this, which is sort of the adult education arm in the state of Illinois that provides funding to some - to a variety of organizations including the community college system to provide GED classes.

That was not always true, as I mentioned on my presentation. In the past, we did not have that. And it was obviously significantly harder. So I understand fully what you're saying our possibility of offering an intensive program. In fact, being able to receive this funding and having the classes for - offered for no cost is what allowed us to make it more intensive. It used to be closer to a 40-hour program that we had in the past that only met on Saturdays actually. So we are privileged that we were able to secure external funding that covers the cost of this program and being able to offer to our community at no cost. And we hope to be able to continue to receive that funding. But I cared anything else is contingent on the state's ability to do it.

(Francisco Hurtado): Okay. Thank you very much.

Marco Davis: All right. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our last question comes from the line of Ms. (Claudia Eratu).

Ms. (Claudia), your line is open.

(Claudia Eratu): Thank you so much. And now I'm here.

Just I want to let you know that I have a program, GED program for Spanish-speaking population here in Virginia. That is, like, a volunteer job. We got 90 students last year and 68 of these students passed the test and get the credential. That for me is awesome job. I'm very excited about it.

But now I just wanted to know that many of them are looking for a college opportunity and that's why I'm interested to hear about you and the Illinois college or another college that can give to these students more opportunity to go to the college studies.

So just I want to get more information about the institution that recruits all of them. Well, that's my question. How can I approach the college ready to get my students?

Andrew Sund: Yes. Well, first of all, (Claudia), congratulations on your program. And I'd like to say that I really understand what you're doing because I'm a college president now but my first job out of college was volunteering giving GED classes here in Chicago. So I understand very much where you're coming from. And I think it's a wonderful work that you're doing.

One of the advantages we have at St. Augustine College that not very many other institutions have nationwide -- in fact I can only think of one or two

examples -- is that we have a bilingual curriculum. So people at here do their GED test in Spanish and that credential alone allows them to be admitted to St. Augustine College and there's no issue with the limited English knowledge because they will acquire English through the collegiate program. That's something that's not available elsewhere. And I'm not really sure what options are there in Virginia.

I would be happy, (Claudia), to talk with you more or exchange emails. If you can get my email there, you can write to me and we can explore possibilities, we can research more what's available in Virginia. I understand Virginia to be one of those states in the East Coast where the Latino population is growing and needs a bounce in obviously educational services a crucial element for them to be able to succeed in that area.

So who knows? Maybe there's even opportunity for us to collaborate and offer those opportunities to people in Virginia.

(Claudia Eratu): Thank you so much. I'll share my email with you.

Andrew Sund: Thank you.

(Claudia Eratu): Thank you.

Marco Davis: Thank you so much.

Now, (Brian), is there - we can have time for just one more if there is one. If not, we'll wrap up.

Coordinator: At this time, sir, we have no further questions on queue.

Marco Davis: Great. So...

Nicole Chestang: Marco, if you don't mind...

Marco Davis: Yes.

Nicole Chestang: ...if I could answer the question on ID just...

Marco Davis: Oh certainly.

Nicole Chestang: ...because people might...

Marco Davis: Yes. Thank you.

Nicole Chestang: ...- more people might want it.

There was a question about what kinds of IDs are required on test day. And every test taker needs to present a government-issued, non-expired ID. And that can include anything from a passport, driver's license, learner's permit, any kind of national state or country identification card, any other form of government-issued ID both national and foreign. But what it has to possess is a name, address, a birth date, a signature and a picture.

Marco Davis: Great. Thank you so much, Nicole. Hopefully that's helpful for folks to clarify it a little bit.

So at this point, I think we're at time and I want to be respectful of folks' time. We appreciate everybody joining us on this Webinar.

I want to thank our presenters, Nicole and Andrew. We think you've provided really valuable information and we greatly appreciate it.

And to all our callers, as I mentioned, if you have a question that you want to route through us, be sure to email us at whieeh@ed.gov. It's the same email you used to RSVP for this Webinar.

And the contact information for our two presenters is available on the presentation slides that they shared.

Finally, I want to mention and remind folks this is part of our monthly Webinar series that takes place. This is our fifth monthly Webinar. Look out for our next Webinar which will take place next month.

And also, as I mentioned at the top of this call, this is just one of a series of Webinars we're having specifically on the high school equivalency. As of January 1st I believe of this year, the GED is no longer the only option and it varies by state. You'll need to check with your state authority to find out which high school equivalency test or assessment is being used at your state. But we'll be having followup Webinars to discuss those other options for folks who are in states where those are offered and who are interested in learning more about them and to answer questions about those - about that subject. So look out for that also. We will be sending those - that email invitation out to folks shortly.

With that, once again, I want to thank you all for joining us and spending time. This is Marco Davis.

Everyone, have a good afternoon. And we will see you all again soon.

Andrew Sund: Thank you.

Nicole Chestang: Thank you.

Thank you.

Coordinator: Participants, the call has ended. You may now disconnect.

END