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## **A Short History of the Evolution of the GED**

The GED program was launched in the early years of World War II. The purpose of the exams was to certify that veterans returning from the war “without a conventional high school diploma had the skills to take advantage of the postsecondary education benefits provided by the GI Bill” (Tyler, 2003, p. 371). The first GED tests were given in 1943. In 1947, New York State allowed dropouts, who were not veterans, to take the GED tests; other states began to do so as well. In 1954 about 42,000 people in the U.S. and Canada took the GED; by the 1980s this number had risen to about 700,000 (Tyler, 2003).

In the early 1990s the number of youth taking the GED increased significantly; toward the end of the decade the number stabilized: between 1997 and 2007 the number of GED testers between 16 and 19 held steady around 41% of all GED test takers. Reasons for this increase are varied, but many researchers have agreed on four factors that have contributed (Zhang, Han & Peterson, 2009):

- Standards for high school graduation increased, attributed to educational reform movements;
- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act allows adult education programs in some states to be “viable alternatives of youth;”
- Youth may lack the understanding that passing the GED Tests requires more than basic literacy and math skills. GED Tests are not a quick fix for young dropouts;
- Finally, few alternative programs have been created to serve the special needs of young dropouts.

There have been four editions of the GED test battery: 1942, 1978, 1988, and 2002. The 2002 U.S. edition, reflects “the standards developed at the national and state levels and those recommended by panels of experts representing the core academic disciplines of language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics The next edition of the GED, a computer-based GED, is currently being developed by The American Council of Education, in partnership with Pearson, a nationwide education and testing company, and will begin January 1, 2014 (Lewin, 2011).

The GED exams are normed on a random sample of graduating high school seniors, and the passing standard is set so that about one third of the norming sample would not meet the passing threshold. It does not necessarily follow, however, that successful GED candidates have stronger cognitive skills than one third of all graduating high school seniors, since (a) members of the norming sample have little incentive to try their hardest on the tests and (b) a nontrivial percentage of successful GED candidates require more than one attempt to pass the exams (Tyler, 2003, p. 372).

## Statistics: Literacy, Education and Labor

Taken from The Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, <http://www.willread.org/what-is-literacy.html> and the 2011 GED Testing Program Statistical Report.

**A mother's literacy level is one of the most significant predictors of a child's future literacy** - more significant than income level and employment status (Pennsylvania State Literacy Survey, Education Testing Service, 1995).

According to the 2000 Census, **about 18 percent of the entire adult population does not have a high school diploma**; that's 39 million adults aged 16 and older in the US who "lack a high school credential and are not enrolled in any educational program" (GED Testing Program, 2011, p. 1).

Workers 18 and over with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$27,915; **those without a high school diploma average \$18,734**. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

**Children of adults who participate in literacy programs improve their grades and test scores, improve their reading skills, and are less likely to drop out of school** (National Institute for Literacy- NIFL).

**A rise of 1% in literacy scores leads to a 2.5% rise in labor productivity** (The Economist, August 28, 2004).

American businesses currently spend more than \$60 billion each year on employee training, much of that for **remedial reading, writing, and mathematics** (ProLiteracy Worldwide).

**Six of the ten fastest growing occupations listed by the US Department of Labor in its employment projections through 2012 require an associate's or bachelor's degree** (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2004).

In 2003, adults with lower levels of literacy, particularly of prose and document literacy, "**were more likely to report their reading skills limited their job opportunities than were adults with higher literacy levels**" (Kutner et al., 2007).

The ethnic distributions of GED candidates have remained relatively stable during the 2002 series of the GED test. Of all candidates who indicated ethnicity when they tested in 2010, 49.0 percent were white, 25.4 percent African American, 20.2 percent Hispanic, 2.4 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, 1.9 percent Asian, and 0.9 percent Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. **The percentage of African-American test-takers has increased from 20.6 percent in 2003 to 25.4 percent in 2010** (GED Testing Program, 2011, p. 1).

### What are the types of literacy needed in a community?

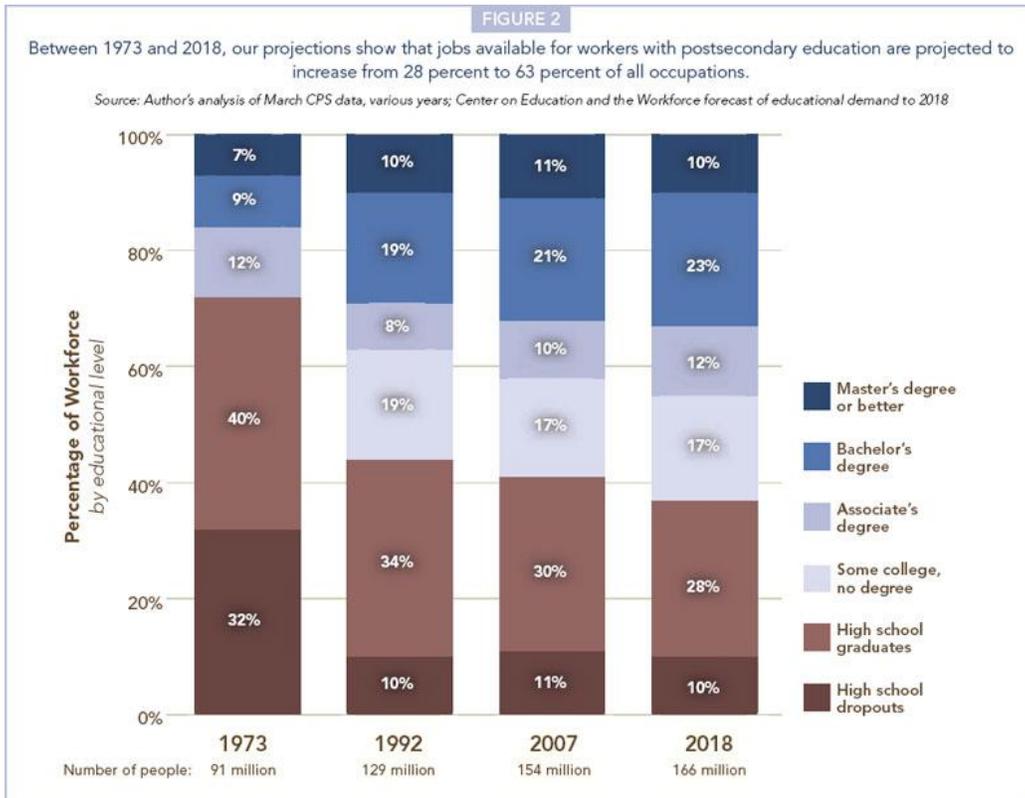
- Basic reading skills and GED preparation
- English for speakers of other languages
- Health literacy
- Family literacy
- Workforce literacy (pre-employment preparation)
- Workplace literacy (supporting incumbent workers)
- Financial literacy
- Computer literacy

<http://www.willread.org/what-is-literacy.html>

### Additional Data

In 2008-2009, 2.4 million adults were served in federally-funded adult education programs. Of that group, 36% of students were between 16 and 24 years of age, while 64% were over 24 years of age. Overall adult education “program enrollment figures show that 44% were enrolled in English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), 42% in Adult Basic Education (ABE), and 14% in Adult Secondary Education (ASE)” (Zafft, Goodman, Hewett & Kallenbach, 2010, p. 5):

- One noticeable difference between GED learners who were younger than 40 years old and learners 40 – 70 years old: the older candidates were “less likely to take the GED Tests to enter a four-year college than were younger candidates: (George & Schaefer, 2002, p 12).
- However, regardless of age, adults who come through adult education to postsecondary education are the least represented students in college;
- Most adults in adult education enter with literacy skills below the high school level;
- In 2010, 750,000 people took one or more of the five subject tests;
- One-quarter of those who take the test are 16 to 18; however, the typical GED candidate is 26 years old, has completed the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and has been out of school for nine years (Zafft et al., 2010; Gewertz, 2011).
- By 2018, jobs will increasingly demand postsecondary education:



(Carnevale, Smith & Strohl et al., 2010, p. 14)

### Why students do not finish high school

Research that focuses on identifying the factors impacting students to drop out of school are often organized around comparisons of students who do and do not drop out. Such research typically groups risk factors into three categories:

- (a) **social background** (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status [SES], family structure, inner-city residence);
- (b) **academic background** (e.g., ability, test scores, grade-repeating history); and
- (c) **academically related behaviors** (e.g., engagement with school, school grades, course completions and failures, truancy, school disciplinary encounters);”

When researchers frame dropping out as a function of student background and behavior, the implication is that students themselves are at fault for taking such unwise actions. By framing explanations this way, leaving school before graduation is seen as a bad decision that individual students make, often based on a pattern of unwise behaviors and low commitment to school. (Lee & Burkam, 2003, p. 354)

Perin, Flugman, and Spiegel (2006) studied four urban ABE programs and concluded that 16- to 20-year-olds in these programs were likely to have disabilities, social and behavioral challenges,

and court or mental health mandates to participate. Hayes (2000) interviewed many adult educators and found that young dropouts have a very negative image among the public. They were described as teens with academic, emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems. They also were perceived as directionless and thought to have poorly defined educational and career goals. (as quoted in Zhang, Han & Peterson, 2009).

It is less common for explanations to focus on the schools that these students attend, but this concern is beginning to be considered (Lee & Burkam, 2003). Simply blaming the individual students fails to take the institutional impact of the schools on students.

### **Why do adults decide to take the GED tests?**

The top reasons for taking the GED (GED Testing program, 2010):

Educational Reasons	63.5%
Personal Satisfaction; Positive Role Modeling	52.6%
Employment Reasons; Getting a Better Job	50.8%

### **Outcomes for Learners In Adult Education**

Adult Basic Education addresses a variety of learner goals. ABE helps learners to:

- Attain employment and/or better their current employment;
- Achieve high school equivalency (at MLC, the GED);
- Attain skills necessary to enter post-secondary education and training;
- Exit public welfare and become self-sufficient;
- Learn to speak and write the English language;
- Master basic academic skills to help their children succeed in school;
- Become U.S. citizens and participate in democratic society; and,
- Gain self-esteem, personal confidence and sense of personal and civic responsibility  
(<http://mnabe.themlc.org/>)

## **Orientation Goals**

We want learners to succeed and meet their educational goals. We are here to partner with learners in their journey to achieve their GED credential. Orientation and this guide were developed to help learners along the journey.

Orientation will give learners a glimpse of the big picture and the resources available to them at the MLC. There are also many resources available to help them throughout the greater Twin Cities community and online.

### **Orientation will allow the MLC to:**

- Learn about learners' educational background.
- Learn about learners' current, short-term educational goals.
- Learn about learners' long-term goals for their education and career.
- Communicate what resources learners' have to reach their goals.
- Describe our GED Program, policies and classroom expectations.

### **Orientation will allow LEARNERS to:**

- Create and further define their goals, for taking the GED and beyond.
- Learn about the FIVE tests on the GED and what will be tested on the exams.
- Meet other students in the MLC GED community.
- Begin using online tools to study.
- Become familiar with classroom and program expectations.
- Provide their with an Orientation Guide for future reference, which includes where to take the GED, several online sites for study and practice tests, and strategies for being successful in their studies.

The pressure points that suggest this training is necessary include nation-wide and state-wide budgets reductions. To avoid cuts within the organization, of programs or staff, or cut-backs that may not support the current level of services, current and additional funding sources must be exploited. To this end, student attendance is directly tied to financial support and viability for further support. Additionally, student success will positively affect overall outcomes for the MLC and positively impact grant funding applications.

### Learning Theories Used in the Orientation Design

The learning theories that best describe how the orientation was developed and through which learners will learn are Social Learning Theory, Goal Theory and Need Theory.

**Social Learning Theory:** Social Learning Theory emphasizes that “people learn by observing other persons (models) whom they believe are credible and knowledgeable;” this theory “also recognizes that behavior that is reinforced and rewarded tends to be repeated” (Noe, 2010, p. 143); “learning occurs in social settings, that is, in so-called *communities* of practice. From this perspective, learning is viewed as an inevitable part of participating in social life and practice” (Elkjaer, 1999, p. 75). For these reasons, the orientation allows for new learners to observe the modeling of not only the instructor but also other students with similar goals. The orientation is the first step in developing the learner’s community of practice.

**Goal Theory:** “Goal setting theory assumes that behavior results from a person’s conscious goals and intentions. Goals influence a person’s behavior by directing energy and attention, sustaining effort over time, and motivating the person to develop strategies for goal attainment” (Noe, 2010, p. 145); goal theory assumes “that goals are cognitive representations and that they are potentially accessible and conscious (Pintrich, 2000, p. 103). Brainstorming and then goal setting will be included in each orientation. Also, veteran learners will share and celebrate experiences and achievement of goals with the group.

**Need Theory:** A need is “a deficiency that a person is experiencing at any point in time” and needs motivate “a person to behave in a manner to satisfy the deficiency” (Noe, 2010, p. 146). Malsow (1943) said there are at least five sets of goals or needs. They are “briefly physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization” (p. 394); there is a hierarchy of needs, meaning that the lowest need will be met first, before someone can even consider a higher level need. Learners have a *need* for achievement or success in their education; some have needs for building and maintaining relationships and some have a need to establish power over their lives (Noe, 2010). There are also conflicts, or lower level needs, that must be addressed by learners, such as child care and transportation. Through the completion of various activities that connect to the higher level needs, as well as additional knowledge on how to manage the lower level needs, the learners will be more motivated to learn and achieve their goals.

### GOAL SETTING

Long-term goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Short-term objective #1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do I need to DO to achieve #1?	What ACTIONS will I take to accomplish #1?	I will accomplish this by (date):	I accomplished this on (date):

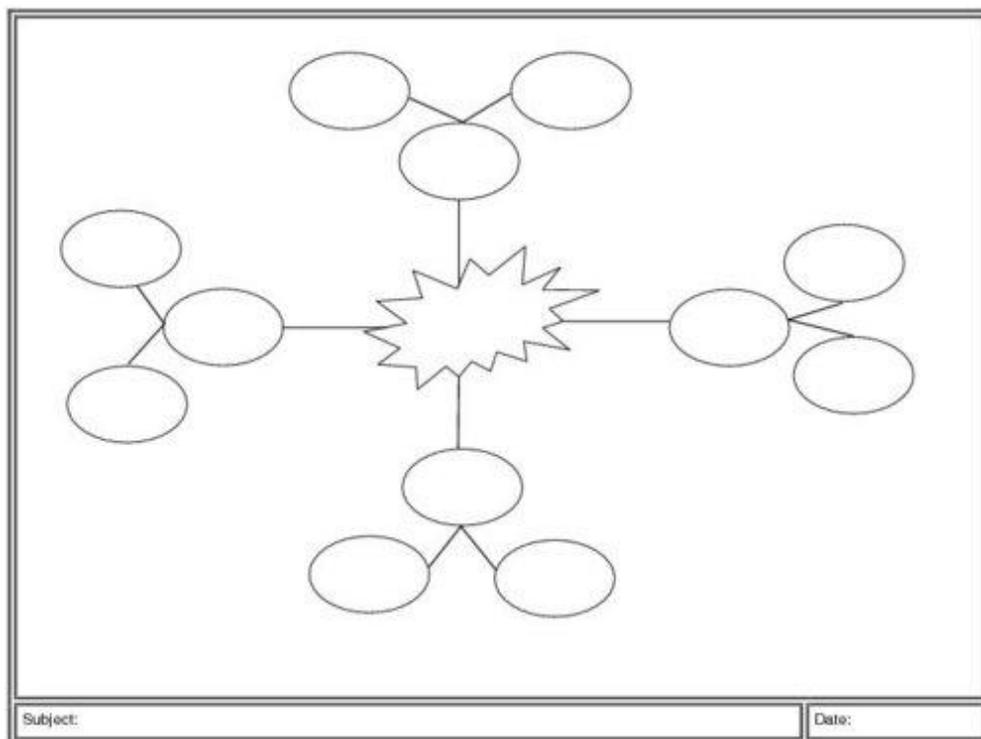
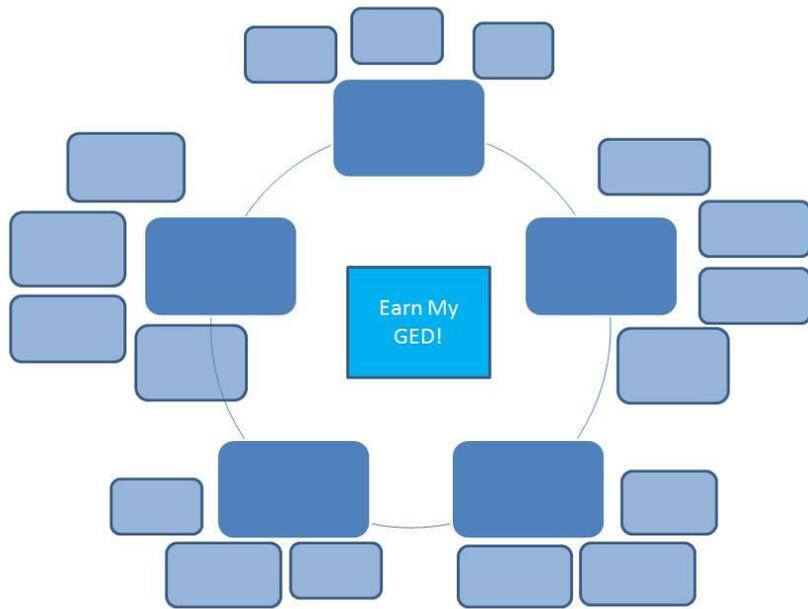
Short-term objective #2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do I need to DO to achieve #2?	What ACTIONS will I take to accomplish #2?	I will accomplish this by (date):	I accomplished this on (date):

### Goal Mapping

Concept maps can be used to help learners create long-term memory (Noe, 2010), visualize connections, cross-links and cause and effect relationships (Novak & Canas, 2008). There are many ways to format a concept or mind map; one was created with PowerPoint, the other was found through an internet search; templates and free software are available to download from the internet.



## ORIENTATION LESSON PLAN

**9:45 AM (15') 1. Greet New Learners**      *\*\*Hand out Orientation Guide, pens/pencils*

*Learners will have already completed the Initial Assessment Form at Registration.*

**10:00 AM (15') 2. Introductions**

**Ice Breaker:** Introduce yourself.

Go around the room to let learners introduce themselves:

Name

Where they live in the Twin Cities

Why they are there: pursuing GED, prepare for Accuplacer, etc.

**10:15 AM (20') 3. Orientation Guide Review**      *\*\*Page numbers for Learner Guide*

Basics of the GED – p. 11

Program and Classroom Expectations – p. 6

Point out other resources in the Guide and how to use it

**10:35 AM (15') 4. Goal Setting**      *\*\*Handout Goal Setting sheets*

Refer to Goal Setting in Learners Guide – p. 8

Help Learners start to articulate their long-term and short-term goals

**10:50 AM (15') 4. Writing Notebook Creation/Preparation**

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**11:15 AM VETERAN LEARNERS JOIN THE GROUP**

**Ice Breaker:** Ask learners to share learning goals and accomplishments:

(10') 1. Pair Share – try to pair a new learner with a veteran learner:  
Name, How long learner has been at MLC, Goals working toward  
or achieved.

(10') 2. Group Share:  
Same as above.

(15') 3. Veterans share overall experience at MLC

(10') 3. Wrap-Up  
Encourage everyone to return to Goal Setting sheets – modify &  
note achievements.  
Evaluation Survey of Orientation.      *\*\*Hand-out Evaluation*

### Orientation Evaluation

Please read each statement below. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale provided here:

Strongly Disagree = 1    Disagree = 2    Neither = 3    Agree = 4    Strongly Agree = 5

1.	The course met all the stated objectives.	
2.	I clearly understood the stated objectives.	
3.	The way the course was delivered was an effective way to learn.	
4.	The course content was logically organized.	
5.	There was enough time to learn the course content.	
6.	I felt comfortable asking the instructor questions.	
7.	The instructor was prepared.	
8.	What I learned in this course is useful for my participation in the program at the MLC.	
9.	Overall, I was satisfied with the instructor.	
10.	Overall, I was satisfied with the Orientation.	

Additional Comments:

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