New GED Exam Offers Students More Options

Three High School Equivalency Tests Based on Common Core Standards Will Be Offered Here in January

Adapted from Aerin Curtis, Wyoming Tribune Eagle

Cheyenne– Wyoming students seeking a high school equivalency certificate will soon have three testing options instead of just one. In January, the state will start offering all three of the newly created tests, said Troy Tallabas, manager of the high school equivalency certificate program with the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC).

The options include the new GED; the High School Equivalency Test, or HiSET; and the Test Assessing Secondary Completion, or TASC. “Each of them brings something to the market” he said. “Not everyone learns the same way, and not everyone tests the same way.”

Members of the WCCC voted recently to offer all three. Tallabas is now working on what testing center will offer each tests, he said. “There is going to be access across the state for all three, but I don’t know how distributed (it will be),” he said. He has also been starting conversations with possible alternative sites in some locations so several tests can be offered.

We definitely would like to have all three offered in Cheyenne and major campuses, if “we don’t force them just facilitate the The group expects to early November Willmarth, program career and education system. The curriculum offered likely will be the same, regardless of what test is picked-it will all be based on the Common Core State Standards, so the difference would be the practice test.

Though they all will eventually align to the same standards, the tests are different, Tallabas said. The new GED exam will only be offered on computer and is already aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The two other vendors are going to ramp up to the Common Core over a course of a couple of years, he said.

Students wanting the certificate can take the current GED exam through December, Willmarth said. According to leadership at GED, if students can pass the old GED, then they shouldn’t have any trouble passing. They claim if you pass this year’s, you can pass next years as well, said Tallabas.

Additionally, a longtime rule with the current GED exam has been lifted, he said. Students many now retake failed sections of the test, even if they’ve exceeded the current limit for retakes -if they haven’t seen the test in at least 60 days. “They’re trying to get people to the ability to complete the test this year,” he said.
Giving Thanks - a note from the Director, Terri Dawson

During this holiday season, there is much I have to be thankful for. First and foremost, I am thankful for my family. This last year has been another year of changes for us and I am thankful my family is healthy and happy. Due to some health issues and our desire to get our son Ted in closer proximity to family members, we moved him from a nice apartment Laramie with supports and a fulltime job with the University of Wyoming to Cody, WY where he was unemployed and without housing. In less than a week, we were able to find him a nice apartment with lovely neighbors where he is close to both of his sisters. And, through his sister’s ingenuity and persistence, he is now employed. I am thankful for Big Horn Cinema for taking a chance on his delightful personality and giving him a part time job in a position he enjoys. I am thankful for all the educators and friends in Ted’s home town of Buffalo WY, who supported him through his life to become a smart, funny and thoughtful young man who is an independent thinker.

I am thankful for a system of support through the WY Developmental Disabilities Waiver where he has the opportunities and ability to live on his own. I am especially thankful for the kind folks of Cody who welcomed him into the church of his choice, and where they have helped him become an active member by providing transportation to church services and other community events.

I am thankful for his case manager, and Ted’s sisters Heather and Dale who are creative and innovative with ideas to find natural supports for Ted that make sense and keep him active and healthy.

On a broader national level, I am thankful for strong advocates and Legislators like Tom Harkin, (D) Iowa, who had the tenacity and foresight to fight for strong Special Education Laws (the IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and other legislation that allow our children and adults with disabilities more opportunities with a better quality of life while being provided individualized, free appropriate public education. This summer, I had the chance to meet Senator Harkin at a reception in Washington DC. He was honored for his long-time leadership on disability rights. He will be not be running for re-election in 2014, and I am thankful he served our country for 28 years in the US Senate and 10 years in the US House of Representatives.

Last but not least, I am thankful I live in Wyoming, where we have easy access to our Governor, legislators and other policy and decision makers. I am thankful we can voice our opinion, respectfully, on changes to legislation and policy (like the DD Waiver Redesign – see page 9 of this newsletter) to effect change in a meaningful way for all of our children.

Happy Thanksgiving to All!

Join Us! PIC Parent Conference on disAbilities
Jan 18 & 19, 2014 in Casper, featuring nationally recognized speaker Jo Mascorro. Register today at www.wpic.org!
Wyoming's Statewide Assessment System

Wyoming's assessment system measures students' progress toward the Wyoming Content Standards. It is used to enhance teaching and learning, support school improvement, and to provide data for accountability to help ensure the effectiveness of schools, programs, and staff. When used in conjunction with a school district's annual assessment program, statewide assessments provide the information needed to develop and implement strategies for improvement of student performance.

PAWS and SAWS Assessment Design: The Wyoming Statewide Assessment System is comprised of:

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Elementary and Middle Grades Assessments (grades 3-8)
- The Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students, PAWS, is a summative assessment in reading, mathematics, and science. The PAWS in reading and mathematics is administered once a year in grades 3-8. The PAWS science assessment is given in grade 4 & 8.
- The PAWS-Alternate (PAWS-ALT) is given once a year to students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and 11 in reading and mathematics and in grades 4, 8 and 11 in science.
- The Student Assessment of Writing Skills, SAWS, is a summative writing assessment administered once a year in grades 3, 5 & 7.
- SAWS-ALT is for students with significant cognitive disabilities and is administered in grades 3, 5, 7, & 11.

High School Assessments (grades 9-12)
- EXPLORE is the initial assessment of the ACT College and Career Readiness System. It assesses students' achievement in English, math, reading, and science. This assessment was administered to all 9th graders for the first time in the spring of 2013.
- PLAN is the second assessment of the ACT College and Career Readiness System, and it is administered once a year to all 10th graders. It assesses students' achievement in English, math, reading, and science.
- ACT Plus Writing is the capstone of the ACT College and Career Readiness System. It measures students' general learning outcomes in English, math, reading, writing, and science. This assessment is given once a year to all students in the 11th grade.

Continued page 5
Betty— a “Breath of Fresh Air”
retires after 15 years

After 15 years of providing information and support to families of children with disabilities in the Powell area and across the state, Betty Carmon has hung up her advocate’s hat.

More than 20 years ago, Betty recognized that some of her son’s development was not quite right—he didn’t like to be held, had stopped speaking, and would not hold eye contact with her. Betty took her son to the doctor, who told her he would most likely grow out of it. That did not happen. After further testing through the school district and later the Child Resource Center, the diagnosis finally came. Autism.

Betty did not take that diagnosis lying down. “Everyone goes thru some sort of shock and a grieving process” Carmon said after hearing the diagnosis. “It’s devastating because this beautiful life of your child is not what you expected. It changes everything.”

She immediately started to gather information and research the diagnosis of Autism. At the time, the statistics of having a child with Autism was 1 in 450, and the prevalence was not as large as it is currently. This was before the time when information was readily available on computers and the internet was not yet a household word. Information was harder to come by. However, that did not stop Betty.

The Governor’s Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities had started a network of families of children with disabilities, called the Family Support Network. At the same time, the Parent Information Center had gotten their first grant and had hired 14 “Pilot Parents” across the state to provide support groups in their individual communities. They partnered with the Family Support Network to hold quarterly trainings and meetings with these support families to come together and share ideas and resources for their children of all ages with all types of disabilities. Betty was one of those support families.

About the same time, she started a statewide newsletter on Autism and sent it to approximately 50 families on topics related to Autism.

When PIC had an opening for an Outreach Parent in the Big Horn Basin in the summer of 1998, Terri Dawson, PIC Director called Betty. Terri had worked with Betty through the Family Support Network for the prior few years. “I recognized a kindred soul in her quest for better services and supports for her son,” said Terri. “Betty was a spitfire who had a passion for working with other families, and exploring new opportunities for kids. I wanted her energy and knowledge of Autism to strengthen the support PIC provided to families!”

That energy did not wane over the years. Betty has traveled across the state, and the nation for PIC, providing training and supports for all children in regards to the special education law, the IDEA. Of course, her favorite topic is still Autism and Sensory Disorders. She has driven hundreds of miles and attended countless numbers of IEP meetings with families. Some of the families and educators Betty has worked with in the past had this to say about her and the workshops and one-on-one support she provided over the years: “Betty gave me a much better understanding of Autism. I learned so many things that I didn’t know about the signs of Autism & why some people with autism do the things they do. Wonderful Job!”
“I found out more about my son that I didn’t understand why he did things he does.”

“Betty has been there and totally understands where I am. What a wealth of knowledge, experience, and information that has been provided.”

“Being able to hear real life stories & what worked with trial & error.”

“Betty can relate the information to her personal story. This is very powerful why to present information because you feel comfortable asking questions.”

“I loved Betty’s enthusiasm and passion about the topics of Autism/Sensory dysfunction. She is very knowledgeable about the topics. Very useful information!”

“The knowledge that there is a PIC liaison in our area. Betty is an amazing presenter. She is willing to listen to others and you can tell that she know what she’s talking about & very passionate.”

When asked what she liked most about the training Betty provided one educator said “Everything! Betty Carmon takes facts and information combines it with real life example making a truly good training.”

And another said “I learned so much, I am excited to take my notes & handouts to parents, community members, & other preschools so we can ALL be aware of what to look for & how to work on completing goals for the children.”

From another: “I think the way Betty explained everything was so easy to understand all that she was saying to us. I could really see some of the things she described about Autism/ or rather I could relate to some of the kids in my class and I can be more aware of when I’m observing.”

And from a parent: “Betty Carmon is just a breath of fresh air, & gives you a new positive outlook.”

We know that Betty will take her breath of fresh air and positive outlook into her next adventure of retirement, and add a breath of fresh air to decorating homes, gardening, catering or playing with her grandchildren. We thank her for the 15 years she has worked for children and their families in finding better supports and appropriate services to increase their school success, independence and quality of life.

Statewide Assessment System Continued...

*WorkKeys* is an optional assessment in grades 11 and 12 in 2013 and grade 11 in 2014, and is used to assess a student's job skills. In prior years, *WorkKeys* was available as a substitute to the ACT; however, it can no longer be substituted per state statute.

- **PAWS-ALT** and **SAWS-ALT** are given once a year to students with significant cognitive disabilities in grade 11. An alternate assessment will be developed for grades 9, 10 and 12.

- **COMPASS** is an optional computer-adaptive college placement assessment. Students are to be given the opportunity to take this assessment at least one (1) time during their senior year.

**English Proficiency Assessments**

- The **ACCESS for ELLs®** is required once a year with all students who are English language learners. It assesses students' progress in attaining English proficiency.

In addition to the statewide assessment system, Wyoming schools and students also participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, every other year. The next administration of the NAEP is in 2013. For more information on the NAEP, go to [www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard](http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard)
Parents and teachers often say “good job” as an automatic response to a child’s action. “You ate all of your peas. Good job!” “You did a good job putting away the toys.” A “good job” now and then is fine, but it doesn’t help children understand why what they did was good. Preschoolers need to know what they did, why it worked, or why it shows they are capable. Try the following suggestions to give preschoolers specific, detailed information that recognizes their achievements and encourages their learning.

1. Use sentence starters. Say “I see you,” “I hear you,” or “I notice,” followed by a description. “I noticed you sorted the leaves into two piles. These ones are from an oak tree and those ones are from a maple tree.” Or try openers like “Tell me more about” or “You worked really hard to.”

2. Notice and give feedback about efforts. “Jocelyn, you spent a long time figuring out where to put the last two pieces of the puzzle. You kept working until you were done!”

3. Invite children to talk. Children’s learning is enhanced when they talk about their explorations and creations. “That looks really interesting. How did you do that?” “You wrote a lot of words on your paper. Would you tell me what they say?”

4. Pay attention to details. When talking about a painting, tell the artist what shapes, lines, colors, textures, and forms you see in the work. “Look at all of the green polka dots in the sky! You mixed many shades of green and blue to paint this picture.”

5. Say “thank you.” When children are helpful, thank them. “Thank you for opening the door for me. While you held the door, I could use both hands to carry our bag of balls into the classroom.”

6. Identify a goal before responding. Ask yourself: Do I want to acknowledge a positive behavior, an act of kindness, or use of problem-solving skills? To encourage self-regulation you might say, “How kind you are. You helped Jorge zip his coat, even though you wanted to run and play.”

7. Give nonverbal feedback. A gentle pat on the back, a smile, a wink, or a fist bump tells a child, “I see you are learning.” This is especially appropriate for children who are dual language learners.

8. Use mirroring. When a child goes up and down the slide on her own for the first time, notice her smile, then smile back with a specific comment. “Look at what you did! Just yesterday you asked me to help and now you can do it on your own.”

9. Highlight children’s work. Invite children to help find a place to hang a painting. Plan a time when children can share their work with classmates. Include photos that demonstrate children’s efforts and accomplishments in a blog or a family newsletter. “Petra and Janine, please help me choose some photos for our weekly update. I’d like all the families to see how you worked together to make a book about our trip to the nature center.”

10. Encourage next steps. After a child has one positive experience, suggest something that he or she can do that leads to another accomplishment. “The boat you drew has two masts and lots of portholes. What materials could you use to build it?” (Note the introduction of a new vocabulary word—portholes!)

Learn more at NAEYC online at www.naeyc.org
Hyper-sensitivity Effects Individuals with Asperger’s Syndrome

Asperger Experts describe how the hyper-sensitivity that individuals with Aspergers experience effect their overall well-being and lead to other challenges. The concept is described below:

**Sensory:** Individuals with Aspergers experience hypersensitivity to smell, noise, bright lights, touch, and other stimulations. Danny Raede, co-founder of AspergerExperts.com, argues that these hypersensitivities are the root cause of the social deficit issues experienced by individuals with Aspergers as they may retreat inside themselves, affecting their awareness.

**Awareness:** Due to these hyper-sensitivities, individuals with Aspergers isolate themselves from the outside world through a 'Sensory Filter'. This may be expressed by an individual appearing clueless to his or her surroundings and may not even appear to be entirely conscious of their actions.

**A.D.D.:** To cope with the isolation, an individual with Aspergers might become hyper-focused on one thing or subject. This may manifest itself in an obsession with one activity that is carried out hours a day, such as playing video games or an obsession with automobiles. This hyper-focused outlook can also cause an individual with Aspergers to take hours with tasks that may take typically developing individuals a fraction of that time.

**Social Skills:** This obsession with one interest may lead to isolation and can cause an individual with Aspergers to fail to learn appropriate social skills. Without these social skills, they fail to make friends.

**Emotions:** The lack of social skills caused by a lack of human interaction can result in emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety, and stress. See more at: http://nationalautismnetwork.com

Thumbs Up to all racers at Wyoming Families for Hands and Voices “Hear on the Range” Fun Run earlier this fall in Casper. The 360 racers made approximately $4,000 to help support families of children with deafness or who are hearing impaired! To find out how else to help, email: wendy@wyhandsandvoices.com

Early Intervention Council Members Attend Reception on the Hill in DC

Members of the Wyoming Early Intervention Council, a statewide advisory council on services relating to infants and toddlers with disabilities, attended a reception on Capitol Hill late this summer. The reception was sponsored by PACER Center and the National Coalition of Parent Centers and co-sponsored by 40 national disability organizations. Nearly 300 people were on hand, including senior leadership from the US Department of Education, numerous Senators and Representatives, national disability organizations and parent center staff. The purpose of the event was to recognize members of Congress for the work they do to support children with disabilities. This year, Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa was honored for his work on disability rights over the years.
New WY Disability Resource Center

SW-WRAP has received a federal grant from the US Dept of Health for a statewide center on disability and aging. Called the Wyoming Aging and Disability Resource Center (WyADRC), it provides Information & Referral, Options Counseling, and assistance in connecting people to resources for long term care services and supports. Assistance is directed toward those citizens aged 55 years and older as well as those living with a disability over the age of 18, their families, friends, caregivers and healthcare providers.

The WyADRC Program is managed by SW-WRAP and administered by the WY Department of Health.

Who Is Eligible?
- Wyoming citizens 55+ years of age
- Wyoming citizens 18+ years of age who are living with a disability
- Family, caregivers, and healthcare providers of eligible citizens

Their Mission: “To provide a comprehensive and coordinated system of information and assistance for older Wyoming residents and adults with disabilities.” For more info contact:

Wyoming ADRC in Green River at 1-877-435-7851 wyadrcinfo@swwrap.com

Register for “Expectations - No Limits!” Parent Conference

The Parent Information Center is hosting a conference for families of children with disabilities Jan 18 & 19th, 2014 at the Parkway Plaza in Casper. Other sponsors include the WY Department of Education, the Governors Council on Developmental Disabilities and WDE’s Deaf-Blind Project

Expectations – No Limits! Parent Conference on disAbilities will feature national speaker Jo Mascorro, and many other terrific speakers on topics such as Autism, Dyslexia, Bullying and more!

Registration costs:
- Parents / Family Members of children with disabilities: $50 each or 2 for $75 (includes Sat lunch & Sunday continental breakfast)
- Educators / Service Providers / Others $100 each

Register today at www.wpic.org or call PIC at 307-684-2277

Parkway Plaza block rooms available for $65, call the Parkway at (307) 235-1777 and ask for the PIC Parent Conference

Jo Mascorro provides motivational training throughout the nation in areas specific to behavior intervention practices, effective communication, parenting skills and programming for students with severe disabilities. Child care or respite not provided. STARS available

Register for “Expectations - No Limits!” Parent Conference
During last year’s legislative session, the Wyoming Legislature made a major decision about the current waiver programs and passed Senate Enrolled Act 82 in March 2013. This new law required the WY Department of Health, Behavioral Health Division (referred to as “Division”) to develop a way to serve more eligible citizens (also called participants) currently on the waiting lists by using existing funds and providing better services. This new law also required the development of two new waivers, a Supports Waiver and a Comprehensive Waiver to replace the current Adult and Child Developmental Disability (DD) waivers.

The Division has had multiple public forums over the past 6 months for input and to inform families, participants and providers about the new waiver programs. As a result of that input, the decision was made to move all current participants onto the new Comprehensive Waiver, unless an individual participant/family chooses the Supports Waiver. Some of the changes to the waiver redesign are as follows.

**Framework of Two New Waivers**

The Comprehensive Waiver has been designed to provide funding for eligible citizens with a higher level of assessed needs. Individual budgets will be based on assessed needs using a new Individual Budget Amount (IBA) methodology. Rates for services are based on the rates effective October 1, 2013. There are many new service options to choose among as well as the same services in current waivers, like residential habilitation and day services.

The Supports Waiver has been designed to provide some funding for eligible citizens on the waiting list. Funding the wait list will begin once there have been cost savings incurred in the waiver redesign or if new funding is appropriated to the waiver from the legislature. This waiver has two budget levels, and the funding amount is determined by age. For ages 0-21, the budget is $12,500. For ages 22 and older, the budget is $16,500. Case management services are not included in the assigned budget; this amount will be added separately.

The Supports Waiver offers more service flexibility within the limited budget. As long as service definitions are followed and families/participants stay within their budget, they can purchase as many units of a particular service as needed. Also, if a participant does not need residential services, he/she has the option to switch from the Comprehensive Waiver to the Supports Waiver! The case manager can help make this change.

**Offering New and Better Services**

The two new waivers will provide many familiar services and supports, but a few new and better services have been added to provide greater opportunities and flexibility to meet your unique needs. These include:

- **Supported Employment Pathway of Services** to help identify, find, and maintain a job in the community.
- **Transportation Service** to offset the cost of community integration or employment where other waiver supports are not needed.
- **Adult Day Service and Community Integration Services** (formerly Day Habilitation) depending on the participant’s preference for relaxing at a day center or more active community integration.
- **Behavioral Support Service** focusing on assisting families and providers with developing positive behavior supports to manage difficult behaviors.
- **Crisis Respite Service** for an immediate need for family relief or while an individual is in crisis transition. Transition Timeline and Important Dates

All participants currently being served on the Adult DD Waiver will begin transitioning to the new waivers in February 2014 and must all be transitioned to the new Comprehensive or Supports Waiver before June 30, 2014. Participants on the Child DD Waiver will need to transition to the Comprehensive Waiver before June 30, 2015.

For more information on specifics of the waivers and timeframes, families/participants should contact their case manager or a Participant Support Specialist for each county, or contact the Division at (307) 777-6494 or toll-free at 1-800-510-0280.
ABOUT US:

Parent Information Center (PIC):
Outreach Parent Liaisons (OPL) provide information and support to families of children with disabilities, on their rights under special education law, IDEA. PIC can attend IEPs with families to help empower them to partner with schools effectively and/or provide workshops on IDEA, IEPs, and specific disabilities such as attention disorders and autism.

For more info check out our website at www.wpic.org or call PIC at (307) 684-2277:

Terri Dawson, Director, tdawson@wpic.org (307) 217-1321
Serves the entire state

Juanita Bybee, jbybee@wpic.com (307) 684-2277
Serves Buffalo & Sheridan

Janet Kinstetter, jkinstetter@wpic.org (307) 756-9605
Serves Moorcroft, Gillette, Sundance & Newcastle for phone support only. Janet no longer attends IEPs or provides workshops

Tammy Wilson, twilson@wpic.org (307) 217-2244
Serves Green River & Rock Springs

Parent Education Network (PEN):
PEN currently has no active, staff however, our fact sheets are available at www.wpen.net. In English and Spanish Some titles of fact sheets available are:

PEN Notes
- Progress Monitoring
- Universal Design for Learning
- Activity Overload
- Cyberbullying

Education Extras
- Title 1
- Highly Qualified Teachers
- School Wellness Programs

Thoughts for Tots
- Teachable Moments
- Bedtime Battles
- Tempering Temper Tantrums

TOGETHER We Make a Difference!
Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.

President John F Kennedy
Register Today!

Parent Information Center
Parent Conference on disAbilities
Expectations - No Limits!

January 18 & 19, 2014 in Casper at the Parkway Plaza

Registration: $50 Registration for parents,
$100 for Educators and other providers

Register at www.wpic.org