

high school equivalency credential

THE **PATHWAY** FOR OUR U.S. WORKFORCE

In the United States, despite low unemployment rates, many families, including those with working heads of households, are still struggling with insecurities in areas such as food, housing, transportation, childcare, and healthcare. One program stands out to help low-wage workers increase their skills and earn higher salaries: the federally funded adult education system that **serves nearly 1,000,000 adult learners nationwide** [i].

COABE



NASDAE
National Association of State
Directors of Adult Education



Trusted Advisors: The Adult Education System

Adult education programs in the United States are funded through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (AEFLA/WIOA), a federal law that aims to provide funding for various workforce development programs, including adult education that serves as a pipeline to the community college system for students.

services

- Basic Education
- English Language Instruction
- High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation
- Transition to Postsecondary
- Job Training
- Digital Equity Services & Skills Building

providers

- Community Colleges
- School Districts
- Adults Secondary Schools
- Community-based Nonprofits





Upskilling through the **High School Equivalency (HSE)** Credential

HSE

The AEFLA/WIOA adult education system is highly effective in helping adult learners complete a **High School Equivalency (HSE)** credential and move into additional pathways that give adult learners options to upskill and improve their workforce opportunities.

Integrated Education and Training (IET), an educational program model utilized nationwide in the WIOA/AEFLA system, combines academic coursework with workforce preparation and skills training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. These include work-based education and training classes offered in partnership with employers, English language and basic skills instruction, and certifications.

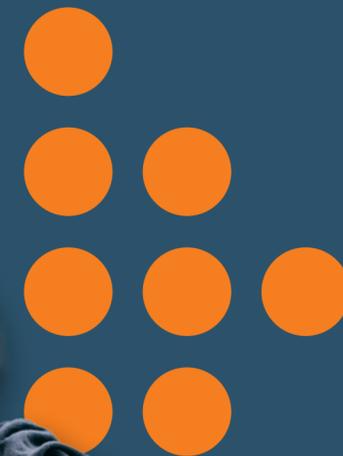
HSE Credential Equates to Employment & Earnings

The AEFLA/WIOA system provides services to those individuals most in need of adult education, including English language learners and students entering with academic skills far below the secondary level, as well as those who enter with secondary level skills.

This system is cost efficient at serving students seeking a high school credential and/or skill development for the purpose of successful transition to postsecondary/training and employment.



AEFLA/WIOA Program Data Fiscal Year 2022



81,213

Adults Served Entering with 9th Grade Level or Higher in Reading, Math & Language Arts

73,607

High School Credentials Awarded [i]*.

In 2022

Workers without a high school diploma had median weekly earnings of \$682, while workers with a diploma made \$853 per week [iii].

45%

Graduates enrolled in postsecondary education within three years of graduation [vi].

90%

Learners re-enrolled from one semester to the next – compared to 29 percent before 2014 [vi].

86%

Employers that were surveyed had a requirement for a high school diploma or HSE credential. [vii].

*For comparison, the national high school graduation rate was 87% [ii].



Evidence-Based Impacts that Count

Funding for the **AEFLA/WIOA system** is hard at work helping individuals through comprehensive wrap-around services to improve their skills, increase their job opportunities and wages, and contribute to the overall economic growth and stability of the country.

The AEFLA/WIOA system is highly accountable under WIOA with a vast amount of reliable and relevant data being collected and validated nationwide.

However, there are important data that could be considered in addition to the federal performance metrics to provide a better understanding of how adult education programs and HSE attainment are positively impacting students and local communities.

These include:

1. Count all high school credentials issued as performance outcomes (current federal performance standards only count high school completion if other outcomes are achieved in addition to receipt of a high school credential).
2. Widespread implementation of the Integrated Education and Training (IET) models.
3. The revision of national high school equivalency assessments to align with current high school graduation standards.
4. Addition of numerous state-designed secondary credential options making HSE credentials more relevant over the past decade.

HSE Testing Changes

Significant changes have occurred with High School Equivalency measurement and credentialing since 2014 [iv, v].

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY EXAMS:

1. Undergo regular review and revision to ensure content and skills reflect the current high school curriculum.
2. Are normed and fully aligned to leading college- and career-readiness content standards, measuring both high school equivalency and college- and career-readiness.
3. Certify that candidates' academic knowledge and skills are equivalent to those of high school graduates.
4. Have passing standards that are based on high school graduation standards.
5. Measure proficiency in core subject areas, e.g., reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, as applied to life and work situations;
6. Assess test-taker critical thinking, problem solving, and computer skills ("constructed response") required for college- and career-readiness.
7. Are accepted by nearly all colleges and employers; and
8. Offer postsecondary institutions a record of skills a graduate demonstrates and the meaning behind the scores to better understand accomplishments.



RIGOROUS:

Since 2014, HSE tests have been aligned to college and career readiness.

AEFLA/WIOA Innovations for Adult Learners

To learn more about **AEFLA/WIOA innovations** taking place across the nation for adult learners go to:
www.COABE.org/ImpactsThatCount



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CITATIONS

- i. [NASDAE Adult Education Fact Sheet: PY 2022.](#)
- ii. IES: National Center for Education Statistics [COE - Public High School Graduation Rates](#)
- iii. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (May 2023). [Education pays, 2022: Career Outlook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)
- iv. [HISET.](#)
- v. GED Testing Service. [GED](#)
- vi. GED Testing Service Press Release. [GED® GRADUATES MAKE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN COLLEGE ENROLLMENT](#)
- vii. Coalition on Adult Basic Education. Survey of 754 Employers. 2022