

Your Question:

You asked alternatives to the high school diploma and GED/HiSET/TASC, specifically:

- An adult diploma model
- Retroactive high school diploma upon attainment of postsecondary degree
- National External Diploma Program
- Wisconsin Competency-Based High School Equivalency Diploma, and
- Minnesota pilot competency completion model.

You asked which other states have adopted these (or similar) models, and for criteria by which these alternatives might be evaluated (pros/cons).

Our Response:

As they consider avenues for adults to earn a high school diploma, states need to be mindful of specific program components that may pose either benefits or challenges to individuals in terms of diploma completion.

Additional data & links

[GED, HiSET and TASC Test: A comparison of high school equivalency assessments](#) (ECS, 2016)

[Beyond the GED: State Strategies to Help Former Dropouts Earn a High School Diploma](#) (ECS, 2008) While an older report, the state policy components that can facilitate diploma completion remain valid.

[Creating a Third Pathway: Minnesota’s State Adult Diploma](#) (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, August 2014) Walks through the development of the new state adult diploma, including the work of the task forces, legislative points, and implementation issues.

Details on Minnesota pilot competency completion model included in “Adult High School Diploma” section below.

	Adult high school diploma	Retroactive HS diploma upon attainment of PS credits	National External Diploma Program	Wisconsin Competency-Based High School Equivalency Diploma
Cost	Little to no cost	May be substantial if student lacks financial aid. Student with GED eligible for federal financial aid.	<i>Additional research necessary</i>	<i>Additional research necessary</i>
Scheduling	May vary by program cross-state or within a state	Standard postsecondary schedule	Flexible (self-directed, computer-based). Per promotional materials , Eligible participants can	

	Adult high school diploma	Retroactive HS diploma upon attainment of PS credits	National External Diploma Program	Wisconsin Competency-Based High School Equivalency Diploma
			complete the program in 4-12 months.	
Flexibility of means to earn credit or demonstrate competency	May vary by program cross-state or within a state	Subject to institution or state policies, students may earn some credits via prior learning assessments ¹	Applied web-based performance assessments	
Level of academic rigor/postsecondary and workforce alignment			Aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards; evaluates workforce readiness skills	
Recognition by employers	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Cross-state portability	Yes	Yes	Yes	

The section that follows provides additional details about each diploma attainment model.

Adult high school diploma model

A number of states have established an adult diploma option (not a diploma for completion of GED or other equivalency exam). The specifics of what applicants must do to earn a diploma vary somewhat by state, but generally speaking, allow students to fulfill competencies and skills via coursework or alternative means (including by demonstration of competency gained through life experience).

The table below provides examples of state adult high school diploma programs, including eligibility criteria and means by which individuals may complete credits or program requirements. Additional details on these and other state programs available by request.

State	Name of diploma	Eligibility criteria	Ways individuals may complete credit/program requirements
CT C.G.S.A. § 10-69(b) - (d)	Adult education diploma	<p>Participation eligibility: Adult education participant</p> <p>Award eligibility: Completion of at least 20 adult education credits, including at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 in English • 3 in math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential learning, incl. not more than (A) 2 nonrequired credits for military experience, including training; (B) 1 vocational education nonrequired and 1 required or not more than 2 nonrequired credits for occupational experience, including training; and (C) 1 nonrequired credit for community service or avocational skills • Courses successfully completed for credit at state-accredited institutions, including public and

¹ Defined by American Council on Education (ACE) to include workplace training; military training and service; independent study; professional certifications; examinations [national exams such as AP, IB, CLEP, DSST, Excelsior College, and UExcel exams; departmental exams]; civic activities; and volunteer service.

State	Name of diploma	Eligibility criteria	Ways individuals may complete credit/program requirements
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 in social studies, incl. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 in American history .5 in civics and American government 2 in science 1 in arts or vocational ed. 	<p>private community colleges, technical colleges, community-technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities and approved public and private high schools and technical high schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfactory performance on subject matter tests demonstrating prior learning competencies (max. 6 credits) Independent study projects (max. 3 credits, incl. no more than 1 credit per subject area)
MN M.S.A. § 124D.52 , <i>Subd. 8, 9</i>	Standard adult high school diploma (includes competency based approach)	<p>Participation eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not eligible for K-12 services Do not have HS diploma <p>Award eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully complete an adult basic education (ABE) program of instruction Demonstrate competencies, skills and knowledge reqts. in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language arts (incl. reading, writing, speaking, listening) Math Career development and employment-related skills Social studies Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior experiences, including K-12 courses and programs, postsecondary courses and programs, ABE instruction, and other approved experiences Knowledge and skills as measured/demonstrated by valid and reliable high school assessments, secondary credentials, ABE programs, and postsecondary entrance exams ABE instruction and course completion <p>A MNABE draft document identifies measures by which individuals may demonstrate competency in each subject area.</p>
OH R.C. § 3313.611 ; OAC 3301-43-01 and <i>ff.</i>	Adult education diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident of the district Over age 21 and has not received HS diploma Meet exit exam requirements District board determines applicant has attained sufficient HS credits, incl. equivalent credits (by means described at right), to qualify as completing curriculum required by district for graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work or volunteer experiences Completion of academic, vocational, or self-improvement courses offered (1) to persons over age 21 by a public or nonpublic school, or (2) by an organization, individual, or educational institution other than a chartered public or nonpublic school Other life experiences the state board considers to provide knowledge and learning experiences comparable to those gained in a classroom setting

Noteworthy components (includes pilot programs not highlighted in table above):

Minnesota:

Counseling component: At the time a student applies for admission to an adult high school diploma program, the program provider must work with the student applicant to:

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- (1) identify the student's learning goals, skills and experiences, required competencies already completed, and goals and options for viable career pathways;
- (2) assess the student's instructional needs; and
- (3) develop an individualized learning plan to guide the student in completing adult high school diploma requirements and realizing career goals identified in the plan.

To fully implement the learning plan, the provider must provide the student with ongoing advising, monitor the student's progress toward completing program requirements and receiving a diploma, and provide the student with additional academic support services when needed. At the time a student satisfactorily completes all program requirements and is eligible to receive a diploma, the provider must conduct a final student interview to examine both student and program outcomes related to the student's ability to demonstrate required competencies and complete program requirements and to assist the student with the student's transition to training, a career, or postsecondary education.

Uniform: Competencies and other program requirements must be uniform throughout the state.

College and career ready: Competencies and other program requirements must be rigorous, and align to Minnesota academic high school standards applicable to adult learners and their career and college needs. Participants must demonstrate the competencies, knowledge, and skills and, where appropriate, English language proficiency, sufficient to ensure that postsecondary institutions and potential employers view persons a standard high school diploma and persons with a standard adult high school diploma as equally well prepared and qualified graduates.

Ensuring quality: An eligible and interested adult basic education consortium must apply to the commissioner of education for approval to provide an adult high school diploma program. An approved consortium must annually submit to the commissioner the longitudinal and evaluative data, identified in the consortium's application, to demonstrate its compliance with applicable federal and state law and its approved application and the efficacy of its adult high school diploma program. The commissioner must use the data to evaluate whether or not to reapprove an eligible consortium every fifth year. At the commissioner's discretion, s/he may reevaluate the compliance or efficacy of a program provider sooner than every fifth year. The commissioner may limit the number or size of adult high school diploma programs based on identified community needs, available funding, other available resources, or other relevant criteria identified by the commissioner.

Best practice: Statute directs the commissioner of education to identify best practices for adult basic education programs and develop adult basic education recommendations to assist approved consortia in providing an adult high school diploma program.

Ohio: Pilot:

Equipping graduates with approved industry credential or certificate: [R.C. § 3313.902](#) (2014, amended 2015) establishes the Adult Career Opportunity Pilot Program (a.k.a. Adult Diploma Pilot Program), which allows an eligible student to complete the requirements for obtaining a high school diploma that are specified in rules adopted by the superintendent while also completing requirements for an approved industry credential or certificate. The program includes career advising and outreach, as well as opportunities for students to receive a competency-based education.

Texas: Pilot:

Equipping graduates with industry certificate: [V.T.C.A., Education Code § 29.259](#) (2013) directs the commissioner of education to establish an adult high school diploma and industry certification charter school pilot program as a strategy for meeting industry needs for a sufficiently trained workforce within the state. Participants simultaneously work towards completion of requirements for a high school diploma and CTE courses leading to an industry certification.

Retroactive high school diploma upon attainment of postsecondary credits

Some states have created processes for individuals to be awarded a high school diploma upon completion of postsecondary credits. For example, Washington State explicitly authorizes postsecondary institutions to award high school diplomas, while Wisconsin authorizes individuals to apply to the state superintendent for a high school diploma upon completion of at least 24 postsecondary semester credit hours.

Specifically, **Washington State** regulation ([WAC 180-51-053](#)) establishes processes for a community or technical college district to award a high school diploma to individuals over age 18, as well as to individuals under age 18. In both instances, applicants must meet the same credit requirements (number and type) as traditional high school students.

Individuals 18 and older may satisfy course requirements via any of the following methods:

- Actual completion of courses regularly conducted in high school
- Technical college
- Community college
- Approved correspondence or extension courses
- Supervised independent study
- Testing in specific subject areas.

A high school diploma must be granted each individual who meets the requirements for high school completion.

Wisconsin ([Wis. Adm. Code s PI 5.07](#)) directs the state superintendent to award a high school equivalency diploma to an individual who meets eligibility requirements set in PI 5.03 and who has earned at least 24 postsecondary semester credits, including credit in each subject in which the person did not complete the high school credits required in statute for high school graduation, except physical education. The applicant must submit high school transcripts to verify completion of high school credits, and postsecondary transcripts to verify completion of postsecondary credits.

National External Diploma Program

Administered by the California-based nonprofit CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) and, the National External Diploma Program assesses reading, writing, math and workforce readiness skills of participants in life and work contexts. [NEDP materials](#) indicate participants are assessed on [competencies](#) in the following core subjects and context areas, and on self-efficacy skills:

Foundation Skills and Core Subjects	21 st Century Themes in Context Areas	Self-Efficacy Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Math • Information and Communication Technology • Listening/Speaking • Media Literacy • Geography and History • Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st Century Workplace • Cultural Literacy • Civic Literacy and Community Participation • Health Literacy • Financial Literacy and Consumer Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Assessment • Learning to Learn • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Self-Direction • Goal-Setting and Time Management • Working Independently

The program has been adopted in [eight jurisdictions](#) – California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Indiana, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia.

Wisconsin Competency-Based High School Equivalency Diploma

The Wisconsin Competency-Based High School Equivalency Diploma has its basis in Wisconsin regulation ([Wis. Adm. Code s PI 5.09](#)), which permits a technical college system district, college, university, community-based organization, federal job corps center or the department of corrections to submit a plan to the state superintendent requesting approval of a program for determining high school equivalency. The program must be designed to determine whether a person has attained the knowledge and skills generally associated with graduation from high school, including employability skills, career awareness, citizenship, and each of the subject areas.

A plan submitted by an applicant entity must include:

- A description of any courses, training, and counseling which will be included in the proposed program, including the number of hours of instructional time, if any; and a description of the methods of evaluation or assessment that will be used to determine the person's knowledge and skills.
- The qualifications of the professional staff members who will be involved in the program
- A description of any groups, such as older adults, minorities, displaced homemakers or displaced workers, which might be effectively served by the proposed program, and a description of how the program will meet the special needs of these groups
- A plan for evaluating the proposed program to determine its effectiveness in assessing high school equivalency.

The state superintendent may authorize a program for an initial period, not to exceed one year. Programs are subject to annual renewal.

Regulation ([PI 5.03](#)) requires that eligible individuals applying for the high school equivalency diploma to verify they:

Are:

- A Wisconsin resident (or have lived in state at least 10 days, be a migrant worker or child of migrant worker)
- At least 18 ½ years old (or 9th grade cohort has graduated from high school)
- Not high school graduates or enrolled in a public or private high school

Have:

- Completed a counseling session (regulation specifies who may provide) that includes:
 - Assessment of the person's reading level and career interests and aptitudes.
 - Discussion of the individual's options regarding high school completion, the high school equivalency diploma, and the certificate of general educational development, and the requirements, expectations, benefits and limitations of each option.
 - Developing a plan for completion of one of the options discussed, and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career or occupation.