Access GED Program Model

LEARNING FOR LIFE BEYOND THE TEST

NYC ™
Department of Education

Office of Multiple
Pathways to Graduation

Dear Colleagues:

As part of our Children First reforms, and with the generous support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Department of Education created the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG) in October 2005 to address the needs of New York City's over-age, under-credited high school students. Over the past two years, we have created programs and developed models to better serve these students—who are most at risk for dropping out of school. From the start our aim has been to create a portfolio of schools and programs tailored to meet the needs of our students and designed to help them achieve New York State graduation standards. It is my pleasure to share with you the Access GED Program Model. This comprehensive guide describes our innovative, full-time GED program that integrates academics and youth development in a school setting.

Before we created the Multiple Pathways office, we studied our target population and learned that in New York City, nearly 140,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 are over-age and under-credited. This means that they are at least two years behind where they should be to graduate on time. With this information in mind, we designed Multiple Pathways as a multi-pronged approach to increase the capacity of the system to serve over-age, under-credited students. We have created programs that offer differentiated pathways to a high school credential and meaningful post-secondary education and careers.

We developed this model to fill the crucial niche role for GED in the Multiple Pathways portfolio. The City's current GED system has the potential to serve a large number of students, especially those students for whom the GED may be the most viable credential due to their age. In order for the GED option to be a high-quality option that meets student demand, it must be a true pathway to post-secondary opportunities and must integrate an academically rich curriculum with post-secondary planning for future education and employment opportunities.

The full-time Access GED Program Model sets out to meet our goal of academically rigorous programs that prepare students for the challenges they will meet in the future, both inside and outside the classroom. It offers students not only test preparation, but also an enriched academic experience and an opportunity to reengage with school and the opportunities it creates.

Sincerely,

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education

NYC
Department of Education

Introduction

A high school diploma is the minimum requirement for students to advance in post-secondary education, employment, and occupational training, yet many students struggle to experience success in a traditional high school setting. Because the New York City Department of Education (DOE) is deeply committed to increasing the graduation rate and lowering the dropout rate, it has charged the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG) with developing a portfolio of options for students to earn a high school graduation credential and develop meaningful post-secondary plans. One of these options is the Access GED Model. For students at risk of "aging out" of the system, a GED could well be the last option for a high school credential. It must therefore be a *real* option. The Access GED Model provides students with vital preparation and access to post-secondary options that most students receive in a traditional setting.

Historically, GED programs have been viewed—by GED staff, high school counselors, and even GED students themselves—as test preparation. Today, in light of research about the economic outcomes of students who receive a GED, many view earning the GED credential as the first step in a young person's transition to college, employment, or post-GED training—rather than an end in itself.

The Access Model supports the principle that GED students must do more than simply pass the GED exam to succeed in life. The program is structured so that nearly every Access student can use the GED as a springboard to training, college, and/or access to employment.

The New York City Department of Education uses this guidebook to implement the full-time GED program model for over-age, under-credited young people. The structure of the Access program is outlined here for educators, administrators, and other practitioners to use as reference when implementing new programs and reinventing existing programs. Critical components of the model are explored in greater depth, with practical examples, throughout the guidebook.
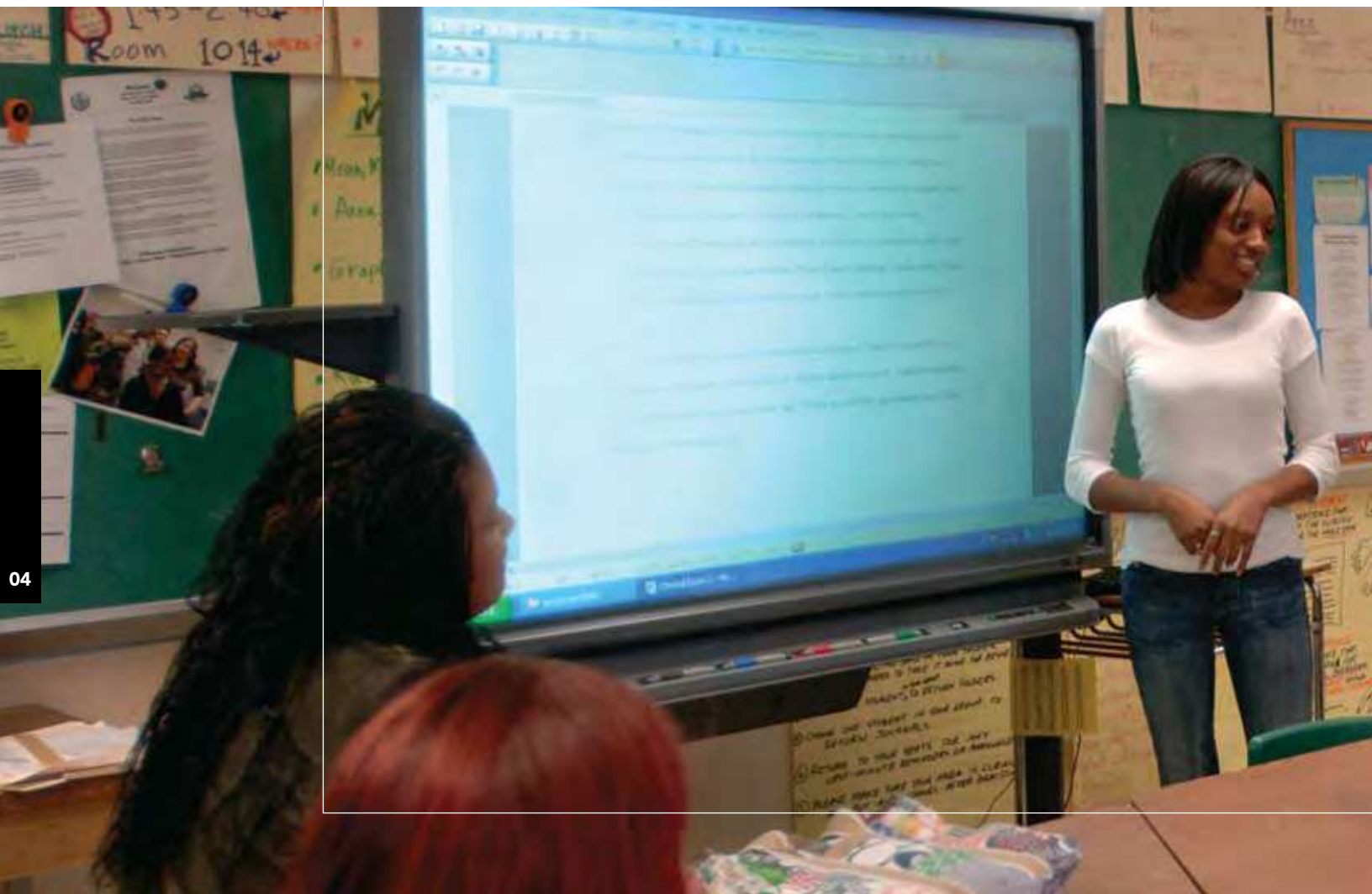
The GED must be seen as preparation for life beyond the test, rather than as an end in itself.

We hope that the information in this book inspires you to build or cultivate a GED environment in which young adults thrive and discover new post-secondary opportunities.

Highlights of the Access Model

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

Youth Development is a perspective that emphasizes providing young people with opportunities and support to enable them to grow, develop their skills, and become healthy, responsible, and caring youths and adults. This philosophy informs all aspects of the Access Model, promoting student engagement through leadership, advisory, and service learning opportunities, small student-teacher class ratios, a personalized learning environment, and individualized programming based on students' needs

PRIMARY PERSON MODEL

Pairing up each student with an advisor, the Primary Person Model encourages students and their advisors to set goals, assess performance, and access services. Their connection begins when the student enters the program, grows through all program phases, and continues after the student graduates.

PROGRAM PHASES

The Access program is divided into five phases, from Intake to Commencement. Students progress through these phases, each of which has distinct requirements. These phases are unique for a GED program because they provide a formalized structure for advancement, reinforcing the students' sense of progress as they prepare to take the GED Test and develop post-secondary plans.

SIX-WEEK CYCLICAL SCHEDULE

The academic year is divided into six-week cycles that promote continuity of instruction and increase opportunities for reflection and assessment. The Access cyclical calendar improves the program's capacity to address issues that permeate many GED programs—

We've structured the Access Model to empower students to use the GED as a springboard to new opportunities.

rolling admissions and changing student population—and preserves the integrity of existing classes, provides multiple points of entry for new students, and fosters meaningful dialogue between students and educators.

COHORT MODEL

Students progress through Access in cohorts, which are established in the initial phases of the program. Cohorts are communities within the Access community and are especially important to students who may have experienced alienation and/or loss. Upon their entry, we make front-end investments in students and the program, building capacity and concentrating resources where they will be most effective. Early in the program, students learn about themselves and the GED through inquiry-based activities, and develop integrated academic, career, and post-secondary plans.

CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

All students learn to work individually and in teams, develop critical reading and thinking skills, present portfolios, and use technology to access information and communicate. For example, the student portfolio incorporates academic, workplace, and post-GED planning, and daily classes integrate workplace competencies, college preparation, and civic awareness.

PORTFOLIO PROCESS

Students create, compile, and present portfolios that showcase their academic, workplace, and life skills. The portfolio also serves as a tool to develop post-secondary transition plans and detailed, achievable career, academic, and personal goals. Building portfolios allows students to acquire and demonstrate the competencies required of college students and workers. Portfolios are the personal property of students; resources, achievements, and autobiographical statements serve post-program needs.

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Assessment tools include standardized tests, progress reports, student inventories and reflective essays, interviews, portfolios, and achievement of interim benchmarks. Assessment tests include the Test of Adult Basic English (TABE) and Official Practice GED Tests from the American Council on Education.

READERS/WRITERS WORKSHOP MODEL

To meet the needs of students reading below grade level, the model implements a structure that provides teachers with the core components of literacy instruction:

- A mini-lesson used to model literacy and learning strategies and skills;
- A period of independent work, in which students practice using the concepts and strategies from the mini-lesson;
- A wrap-up, in which students reflect on their learning and thinking processes.

LEARNING TO WORK PARTNERSHIP

The Learning to Work (LTW) component of the GED program is operated jointly by Department of Education (DOE) staff and a community-based organization (CBO) with staff located at the program's site. The program provides students with support services that enable them to earn a GED diploma and transition successfully to post-secondary training, college, or a career path. Services include career exploration/development, individual and group counseling, academic support, subsidized internship placement, and college preparation and counseling.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Access also serves as a professional development hub for New York City GED educators, and its laboratory environment encourages reflective teaching and peer observation. Initiatives include a weekly professional development series, coaching to support individual teachers' growth, and combined training for DOE and CBO staff to promote teamwork and clarify roles.
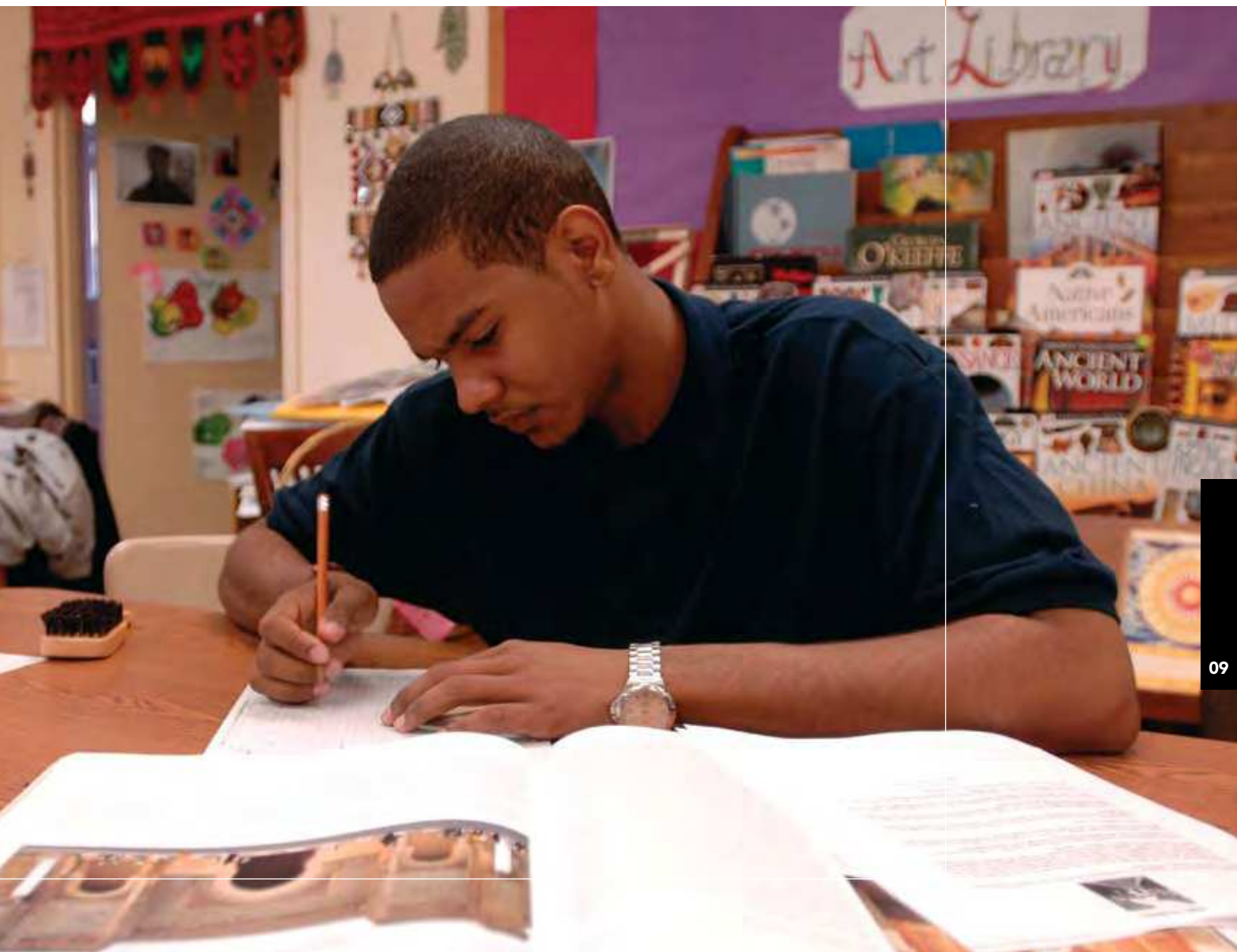
Access GED Program Model for Over-age, Under-credited Youth

MISSION

The Access GED program model creates a nurturing educational environment in which GED students develop the skills and competencies they need to make the transition to meaningful post-secondary education or careers. As a secondary goal, Access is a laboratory school and professional development hub for the larger GED community, which informs teaching and learning, raises standards, improves pass rates, and provides a forum for advocacy.

OVERVIEW

Access is a full-time program for 200 students, ages 17-21 years old, all of whom have experienced no—or very limited—success in other academic settings. In collaboration with a Learning to Work Community Based Organization, students, teachers, and advisors cultivate an appreciation for lifelong learning, plan internships, and engage in ongoing assessment and inquiry. The youth development model, intermediate benchmarks, and six-week cycles empower students to build upon their successes and develop a portfolio of academic and career-related projects, skills, and competencies. Ongoing support services provide continuity of relationships, facilitate graduates' transitions to post-secondary life, and foster success outside the program.

A central goal of the program is for students to take ownership of their learning—to become lifelong, self-directed learners and assume responsibility for achieving their academic objectives. Engaging, exciting courses integrate content area knowledge, foundation skills, workplace competencies, and contemporary themes. Many students who complete high school do not succeed after graduation because their reading skills are underdeveloped. All Access coursework incorporates critical reading strategies, including vocabulary development, language fluency, text comprehension, and structural analysis of science, mathematics, history, and non-fiction texts.

Access gives students the opportunity to take ownership of their learning and experience success.

Students use reading, writing, the arts, and technology to explore topics of interest and necessity, including parenting, part-time employment, efficient study habits, college exploration, current events, and consumerism. We weave all topics into interdisciplinary, thematic units that address and include GED-based questions, a variety of charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, constructed responses, and problem solving.

We've divided the Access academic calendar into six-week cycles governed by overarching themes. Each cycle is long enough for students to explore topics in depth and build academic endurance, yet short enough for them to see units of study to completion. Academic subjects integrate workplace competencies, life skills, and post-secondary contexts. We emphasize communication skills, technological proficiency, information gathering, and critical thinking skills. Students demonstrate mastery through attainment of intermediate benchmarks, portfolio development and presentations, performance on standardized tests, and teacher-made assessments. Intermediate benchmarks, the building blocks of our academic program, are competency-based indicators of student achievement.

Crucial to students' sense of accomplishment is the creation of products in their coursework that have real world applications. Student portfolios include academic, workplace, and life skills documents. When students create, compile, and present their portfolios, they demonstrate the competencies and communication skills required of college students and workers. Portfolios are the personal property of students: resources, achievements, and autobiographical statements serve their post-program needs. Portfolios provide students with work samples to present during job interviews, a list of accomplishments to incorporate into college applications, and writing samples to use in employment applications.

GED Tests come with extremely high stakes. After all, the GED Test may be the final opportunity for students to earn their high school credential. Access provides constant formative assessment via written and conversational feedback on student assignments, projects, and presentations, as well as a summative assessment at the completion of each cycle. Students complete self-evaluation inventories, a process that underscores their learning and teaches them necessary meta-cognitive strategies (the ability to learn and analyze how one learns). Students evaluate their own work and participation using

Six-week cycles allow students to explore topics in depth and see their studies from start to finish.

rubrics and receive progress reports from their teachers. Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) post-tests, GED Official Practice Tests (OPT), and, ultimately, GED transcripts provide quantitative data to evaluate students and the program.

End-of-cycle activities, portfolio presentations, and award ceremonies define and reinforce school culture and provide contexts for reflection. At the conclusion of each cycle, students meet with advisors to select program options consistent with their portfolios. Course offerings, themes, and clubs vary from cycle to cycle and are developed in response to evolving academic needs and interests.

Like our students, our educators reflect upon their practice during and after each cycle—at weekly team meetings and through professional development, coaching, and peer observation. We constantly review our curricular decisions, methodologies, and assignments to ensure students' needs are met.

"When I went to orientation here, I really felt it. These teachers are really concerned about me. My math teacher has my phone number. If I don't show up, she'll call to see if I'm alright.

Circular diagram: At the center is **student**, surrounded by concentric rings reading WITH SUPPORT FROM · PARTICIPATES IN · TO DEVELOP · TO PREPARE FOR THE GED AND SUCCEED IN.

Inner ring: professional community · instructors · other students · portfolio development · advisor/primary person · learning to work seminar · internships

Middle ring: SAT/ACT preparation · academic courses · GED Institute & practice exams · portfolio of achievements · career plan · work readiness · career experience

Outer ring: college admission · literacy & numeracy fluency · technology skills · civic engagement · job placement · career experience · SAT/ACT readiness

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL ENSURES STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORTS

The Department of Education/Community-Based Organization collaboration creates a seamless web of youth development, academic, and career services, ensuring that over-age, under-credited students graduate from Access prepared for civic and community life, workforce participation, and post-secondary education and/or training. As illustrated in the figure above, all services, supports, and opportunities are integrated into the Access student-centered model.

Phases of the Access Program

PHASE 1 OF 5: **INTAKE PHASE**

A three-day process, the Intake Phase welcomes prospective students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to the program. This process enables applicants and program staff to make informed enrollment decisions, identifies needed supports and services, and provides baseline data for programming and assessment.

During the Intake Phase, all applicants
- Meet with Department of Education and Community-Based Organization staff;
- Speak with current Access students;
- Visit classrooms;
- Take academic assessments;
- Participate in engagement interviews.

Access is a full-time, academically rigorous program designed to prepare students for post-secondary education and/or employment. As such, it is best for students whose goals are consistent with the mission of the program. During this phase, prospective students learn that Access is not a good option for students interested exclusively in test preparation or a half-day program.

Day 1: Open House
Open House is our first opportunity to learn from and with our potential applicants. It is a transparent forum for building relationships, exchanging information, and learning about the program's philosophy, standards, supports, services, and opportunities.

The Principal and the CBO Director present an overview of the GED Test and discuss our student-centered, integrated academic/career services, preparation for GED and post-secondary options, and youth development philosophy. In addition to touring the school and meeting with current students, prospective students learn about academic cycles and phases, internships, and work/study opportunities.

The Intake Phase gives students the opportunity to get to know teachers and vice versa.

Length of stay in the program varies from student to student. The standards for demonstrating readiness to take the GED are clearly articulated in the student handbook. Presenters read relevant excerpts, carefully describe requirements, and explain how the standards are linked to preparation for life beyond the GED. *(Please refer to the appendix for referral standards.)*

Students who enter the program reading between the 6th and 8th grade levels should expect to remain in the program for at least three semesters. Students reading at the 9th grade level or higher may be able to complete the program within six months. To enter the program, students are required to achieve a score of 6.0 on the reading comprehension section of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). For students in need of intensive academic remediation (i.e., do not read at the 6th grade level or above), we provide counseling, support, and referrals.
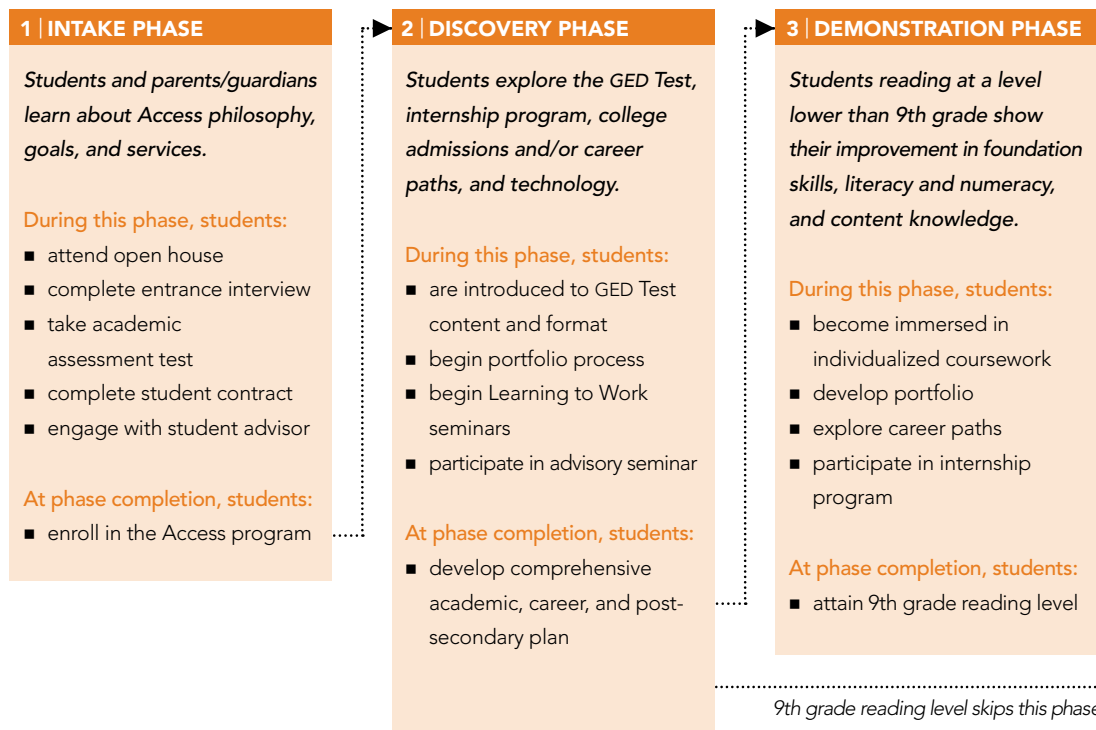
We welcome questions, and staff members are available to meet with parents/guardians/students to discuss individual concerns. The two most frequently asked questions are
- How long will it take to complete the program?
- What are the requirements for referral to take the GED Test?

At the end of the day, participants complete a survey to assess the effectiveness of the Open Houses.

Day 2: Academic Assessments: *TABE* and Writing Samples

Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) are administered and scored on the second day of the intake process. These tests measure reading comprehension, math calculations,

1	INTAKE PHASE	2	DISCOVERY PHASE	3	DEMONSTRATION PHASE

1 | INTAKE PHASE

Students and parents/guardians learn about Access philosophy, goals, and services.

During this phase, students:
- attend open house
- complete entrance interview
- take academic assessment test
- complete student contract
- engage with student advisor

At phase completion, students:
- enroll in the Access program

2 | DISCOVERY PHASE

Students explore the GED Test, internship program, college admissions and/or career paths, and technology.

During this phase, students:
- are introduced to GED Test content and format
- begin portfolio process
- begin Learning to Work seminars
- participate in advisory seminar

At phase completion, students:
- develop comprehensive academic, career, and post-secondary plan

3 | DEMONSTRATION PHASE

Students reading at a level lower than 9th grade show their improvement in foundation skills, literacy and numeracy, and content knowledge.

During this phase, students:
- become immersed in individualized coursework
- develop portfolio
- explore career paths
- participate in internship program

At phase completion, students:
- attain 9th grade reading level

9th grade reading level skips this phase

and applied problem solving. Scores are reported as grade equivalents in mathematics and reading comprehension, and item analysis informs instruction. The tests provide baseline data for assessment of student progress and later serve as an evaluation of the program.

A writing sample provides a window into the goals and thoughts of the applicants. It will be included in students' portfolios and will be elaborated upon in the engagement interview.
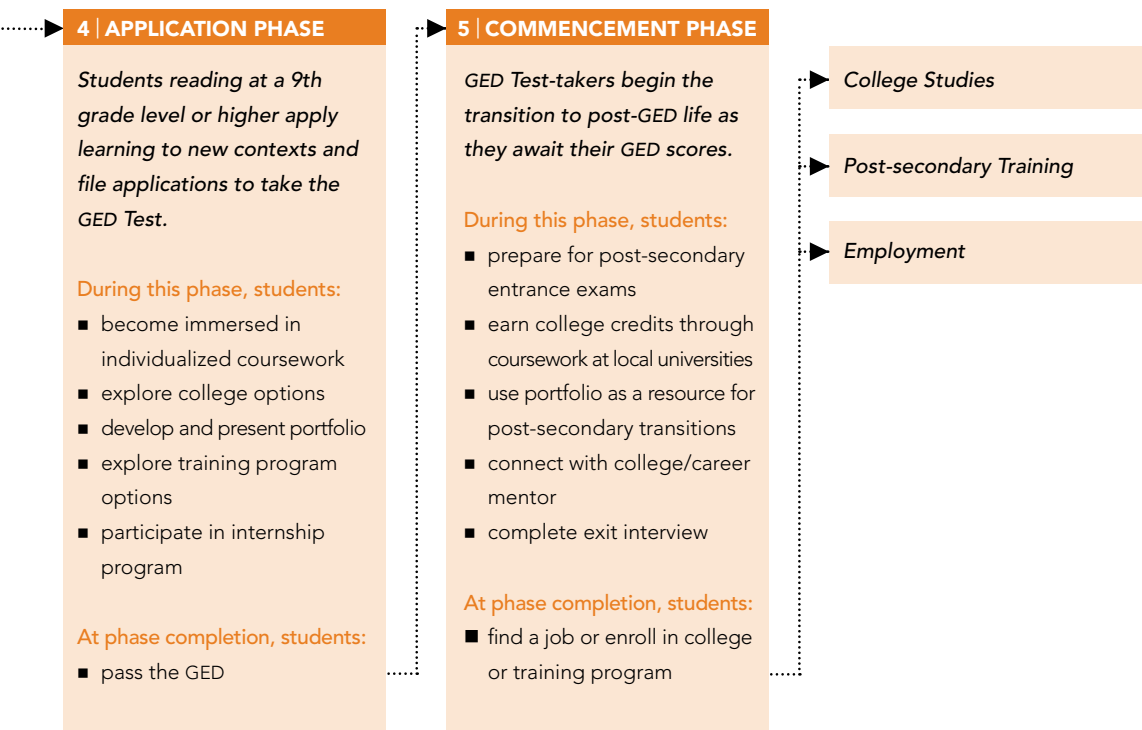
Day 3: The Engagement Interview

The Primary Person conducts an in-depth interview with each candidate and assesses the best ways to meet his or her needs. Students' lives are often wrought with serious issues, including juvenile justice proceedings, parenting, foster care placements, poverty, and various medical conditions. The engagement interview identifies barriers that may prevent students from attending school, establishes the bond between the Primary Person and the student, and improves conditions for learning.

At the end of the interview, we
- Initiate the portfolio process with the student;
- Develop a plan that integrates post-secondary academic and career goals and outcomes.

Each student accepts the tenets described in our handbook, signs an enrollment contract, and provides the admission documents required by the Department of Education. Students are then introduced to their advisors and enrolled in the Discovery Phase. Current Access students provide peer support and mentoring to ease the transition.

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4 | APPLICATION PHASE

Students reading at a 9th grade level or higher apply learning to new contexts and file applications to take the GED Test.

During this phase, students:
- become immersed in individualized coursework
- explore college options
- develop and present portfolio
- explore training program options
- participate in internship program

At phase completion, students:
- pass the GED

5 | COMMENCEMENT PHASE

GED Test-takers begin the transition to post-GED life as they await their GED scores.

During this phase, students:
- prepare for post-secondary entrance exams
- earn college credits through coursework at local universities
- use portfolio as a resource for post-secondary transitions
- connect with college/career mentor
- complete exit interview

At phase completion, students:
- find a job or enroll in college or training program

College Studies

Post-secondary Training

Employment

Students work individually and collaboratively, taking ownership of their learning.

Every student participates in the Discovery Phase, which introduces our inquiry-based activities, school culture, and a successful path for GED preparation, college education, the workplace, and citizenship. During this phase, students re-learn how to learn, connect with advisors, form a cohort group, and redefine their concepts of school.

The Discovery Phase

- Establishes a community within a community with students working in cohort groups;
- Improves student preparedness, attendance, and retention;
- Emphasizes teamwork and synergy;
- Promotes continuity of instruction;
- Facilitates the flow of incoming students.

Discovery Phase: Sample Student Schedule

8:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Morning Meeting
8:45 a.m.	"The GED and You" Curriculum
10:00 a.m.	"GED and Media"	Advisory Meetings
10:45 a.m.	Learning to Work Seminar
12:15 p.m.	Applied and Instructional Technology
1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:50 p.m.	Tutoring	Research	Special Projects	Test Preparation
2:45 p.m.	Day Ends
	After school, students participate in extracurricular activities, including school clubs. Many also have part-time jobs.

During the Discovery Phase, students engage in structured inquiry-based activities that incorporate Official Practice Tests to improve their understanding of the content, structure, and skills embedded in the GED Test. The Access Model uses "The GED and You" curriculum to guide students through a self-reflective process that focuses on critical competencies essential for student success. With this curriculum, students analyze their reading, test-taking, and study habits, and create action plans. They take ownership of their learning, work individually and collaboratively, and present their findings to the class. In any career or future academic endeavors, students will apply the competencies strengthened by their work in the Discovery Phase. *("The GED and You" curriculum is part of the "GED as Project," funded by the Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education. It is available at **www.valrc.org**.)*

Preparing students for 21st-century education and careers requires intensive exploration of technology and media. The "GED and Media" course acquaints students with GED formats and content through print and broadcast media outlets. In the Learning to Work Seminar, students explore career interests, the contributions they can make in the workplace or community, and the culture of work. In the Applied and Instructional Technology course, students compose autobiographical PowerPoint presentations, create e-mail addresses, and utilize instructional software programs.

By the completion of this phase, each student will have
- Compiled an initial resume;
- Earned a calculator mastery certificate;
- Obtained a library card;
- Received a progress report;
- Presented a PowerPoint autobiography.

These pieces make up the beginning of a student's portfolio.

Students who enter Access reading between a 6th and 8th grade level move from the Discovery to the Demonstration Phase at the end of the Intake Phase. Students reading at a 9th grade level or higher move from the Discovery to the Application Phase. During the last week of Discovery, all students meet with advisors to select program options consistent with the post-secondary plans outlined in their portfolios.

During the final week of the Discovery Phase, students meet with their advisors to select program options.

"A lot of kids in our classes are focused, and when you're around people who are focused, it makes you focused, too."

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PHASE 3 OF 5: **DEMONSTRATION PHASE**

In the Demonstration Phase, students register for courses based on their individual needs and receive support from advisors and peer mentors. Students demonstrate gains in foundation skills through their achievement of intermediate benchmarks, their work on individual projects, the continued development of their portfolios, and their performance on teacher-made assessments and standardized exams.

During the Demonstration Phase, students in need of intensive academic remediation work on building skills. Improvement of reading comprehension, the primary academic goal of this phase, helps students achieve higher scores on standardized tests and advance to the Application Phase. Students can also explore additional opportunities for careers and post-GED education. Reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary development, content area concepts, and writing are addressed across the curriculum.

"Leadership class has changed my attitude. It's a start… I'm looking for a job for when I finish school, and my counselor helped me write a resume for the first time."
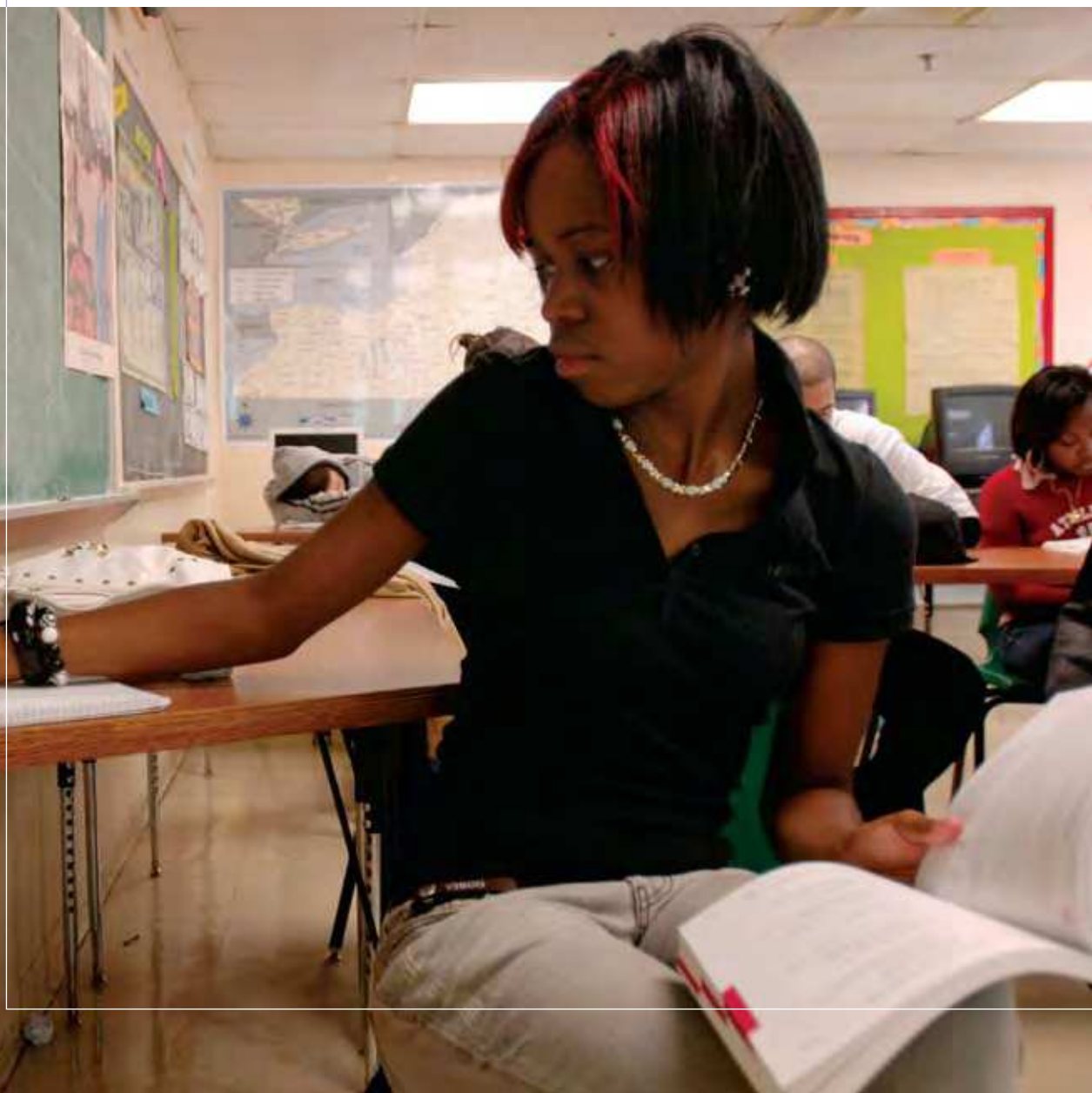
For many students, math is a constant challenge, a source of anxiety, and a disconnected stream of numbers. At Access, we build understanding, concept development, and application through problem-solving and inquiry activities.

Real world contexts, especially consumerism and financial literacy, frame most of our math discussions. The GED Test is designed for adults. Our students are 17-21, and the use of reality bridges experiential gaps. Skills classes, tutorials, and computer-assisted instruction provide remediation.

Demonstration students actively develop their portfolios and submit them for review as part of the exit criteria for this phase. In consultation with teachers and advisors, students select for their portfolios projects, processes, and products that exemplify the internalization of their learning. Students write about thinking and learning in reflective statements that accompany their portfolio selections. The portfolio review process includes self-assessment and evaluation by committee.

For students to succeed in college, the workplace, and society, they must be able to assess their own progress. Students receive feedback about their meta-cognitive strategies and critical thinking skills through ongoing discussions with peers and teachers.

By the end of the Demonstration Phase, each student will have
- Used technology to increase their knowledge in each subject area, conduct job searches, refine their post-secondary plans, and develop their portfolios;
- Earned a certificate in financial literacy;
- Participated in Learning to Work employability workshops;
- Attended college and/or trade school seminars conducted by school representatives and/or former students;
- Improved reading comprehension to the 9th grade level or higher;
- Demonstrated achievement through portfolio development and review.

Demonstration Phase: Sample Student Schedule

Time	Activity
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Morning Meeting
8:45 a.m.	Academic Period 1
10:00 a.m.	Leadership	Student Clubs
10:45 a.m.	Academic Period 2
12:15 p.m.	Academic Period 3
1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:50 p.m.	Tutoring	Research	Special Projects	Test Preparation Advisory Meetings	LTW Workshops	LTW Internships
2:45 p.m.	Day Ends
	After the school day ends, students participate in extracurricular activities including school clubs, and many work at their internships during this time.

PHASE 4 OF 5: **APPLICATION PHASE**

Most Application Phase classes emphasize research, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. As such, they look and feel like college. During this phase, students

- Explore new contexts for their learning;
- Complete online and print job applications;
- Apply to take the GED Test.

Students enter the Application Phase after the completion of one of two phases:

- The Discovery Phase (for students who entered the program reading at a 9th grade level or higher);
- The Demonstration Phase (for students who have progressed to a 9th grade reading level and meet the required criteria to continue beyond the Demonstration Phase).

During the Application Phase, students participate in Learning to Work workshops, internships, and training programs, explore interdisciplinary projects, research colleges and career information, register for College Exploration (a course designed to aid the GED graduate in college selection), and compose reflective essays about what they have encountered in our program.

LTW workshops include

- Dress for success events;
- Mock interviews;
- Resume development.

Components of College Exploration include

- College searches;
- The college essay;
- The college application process;
- College visits;
- Overview of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) guidelines.

We administer Official Practice Tests once per cycle. Teachers evaluate student readiness and discuss with students and advisors. When students achieve a score of 2400 or greater (with scores of 450 or higher on all subtests) on the Official GED Practice Tests (OPT), they have the option of presenting their portfolios. A committee then considers their candidacies for the GED Test, reviewing student performance (based on teacher-made assessments and predictor test scores), portfolios, and the student's attendance record.

Next, the candidate will take a final OPT under simulated test conditions. Performance on this test is task-analyzed by content area and type of question to develop a diagnostic prescriptive profile—an assessment of the student's strengths and weaknesses in each test area and a "prescription" for what they need to develop in order to be successful on the Test.

When students meet conditions for referral and decide, in consultation with their advisors, that they would like to take the next available GED Test, we assist them in filing an application. Candidates must provide evidence of pending full-time employment, or applications to college or technical schools.

"I'd like to go to college by the spring term. I'm taking the career/college class here to help me figure out where to apply."

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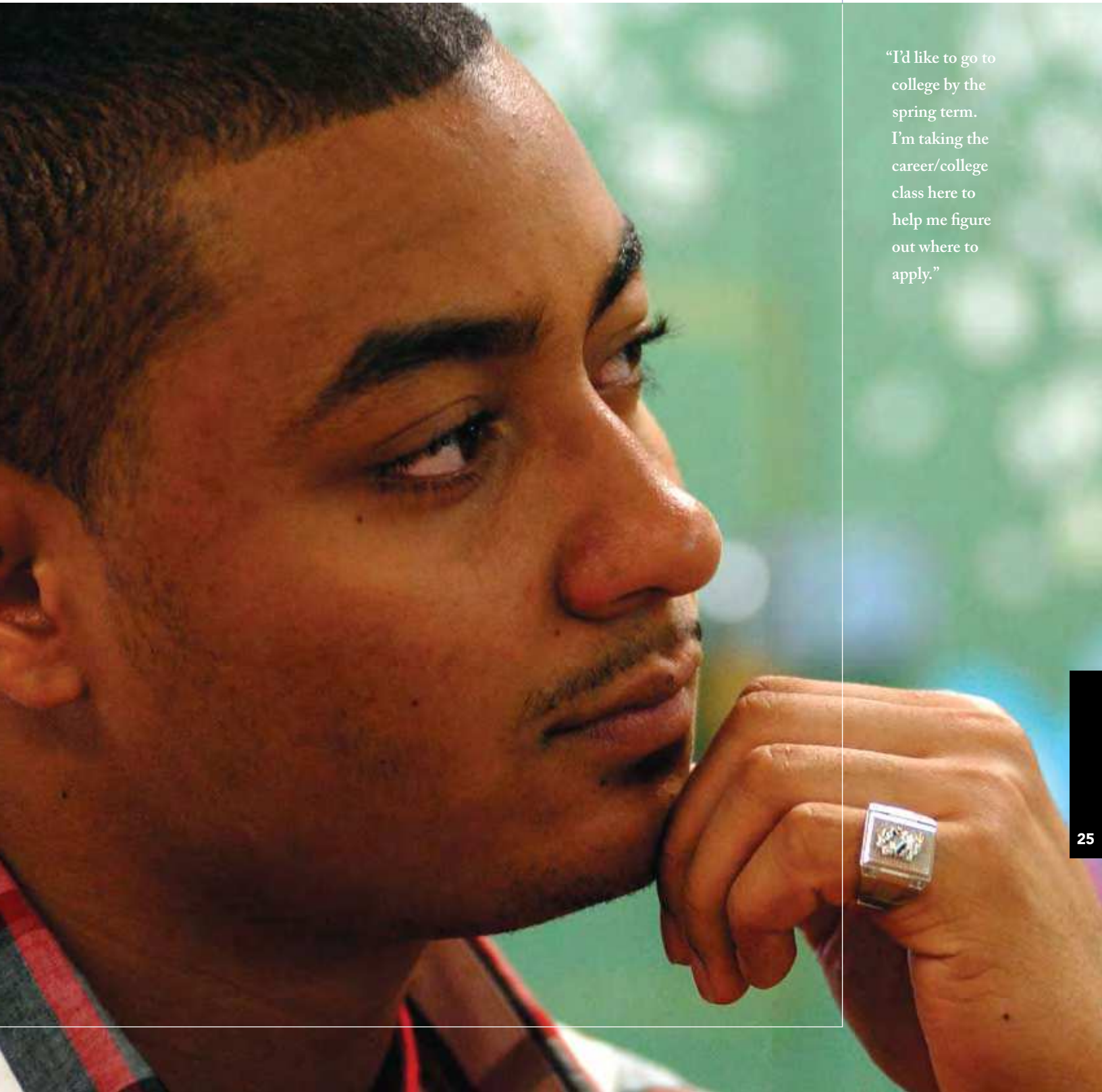
Students preparing for the Test participate in the GED Institute.

Approved candidates participate in the GED Institute, a two-week intensive featuring relaxation techniques, test-taking strategies, and visual literacy skills. In the GED Institute, students

- Compose and revise two essays;
- Receive extensive practice in math (including alternate format and formula-based questions);
- Interpret graphs;
- Review directions;
- Test vocabulary.

Computer-assisted instruction reinforces classroom experiences.

Access encourages those who show exceptional academic progress (OPT scores of 2800 or higher) to continue this phase until their Practice Test scores exceed 3000, the score required for acceptance at senior City University of New York and private colleges.

During this phase, students continue to access supports from program staff, including college and career advisement and other counseling services.

Application Phase: Sample Student Schedule

Time	Activity
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Morning Meeting
8:45 a.m.	Academic Period 1
10:00 a.m.	Leadership	Student Clubs
10:45 a.m.	Academic Period 2
12:15 p.m.	Academic Period 3
1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:50 p.m.	Tutoring	Research	Special Projects	Test Preparation Advisory Meetings	LTW Workshops	LTW Internships
2:45 p.m.	Day Ends
	After the school day ends, students participate in extracurricular activities including school clubs, and many work at their internships during this time.

The schedule of the Application Phase mirrors that of the Demonstration Phase, but during this phase students immerse themselves in more intensive coursework, test preparation, and advisement.

Students who show strong academic progress continue Test preparation until they can score high enough to be accepted at CUNY schools.

Advisors keep in touch with their students to offer support as they enter their new schools, training programs, or places of employment.

In addition to providing students with unprecedented pathways to college, post-secondary training, or employment, Access provides follow-up support to GED recipients for one additional year after they take the GED Test.

In New York City, students generally enroll in approved GED preparation programs, and once they've been referred to take the GED Test, they stop attending classes. Then, once they take the Tests, they are discharged.

Although we recognize that some of our students will follow this path, we seek to create a supportive environment that encourages students to attend classes until they have received official notification of passing scores. We also hope they will continue to access support and guidance services afterwards. These students contribute to our community, build their resumes, and bolster their college applications by serving as mentors and peer tutors to less experienced Access students.

To help students place out of remedial courses, we offer preparation for CUNY assessments on-site, including high-quality college courses. We also encourage students applying to colleges to take SAT/ACT preparation classes, if those tests are required. In addition, we work with college personnel to ensure that our students take advantage of the support services available in their new academic homes (e.g., assistance with registration, college mentoring, and tutoring).

During the Commencement Phase, students review and amend their portfolios and post-secondary plans, participate in exit interviews, and leave with portfolios in hand. Advisors stay in touch with their students to remind them of the services and support provided by Access, their new schools/training programs, or places of employment.

After thirty days, Transition Counselors use computer surveys and phone interviews to contact GED recipients not participating in on-site Commencement activities. We assess their transitions and provide support as needed to sustain employment and address academic concerns. We continue to support students enrolled in local colleges through individual or group tutoring sessions.

After two months, we request that students return to the Access program site to meet with their advisors for a focus group. These follow-up procedures continue for one year.

CONTEXT FOR COMMENCEMENT PHASE

Although further education is a strong motivator for pursuing a GED, most students that take the GED Test do not end up pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities. Two-thirds of GED examinees in 2000 indicated that they wanted to earn the credential in order to pursue further education. Just about one-third of those who pass the GED, however, actually obtain any post-secondary education. Only five to ten percent complete at least one year of post-secondary education, and very few stay long enough to earn even an associate's degree.

These rates fall short of expectations because the existing GED process was designed as an end in itself, rather than as a transition to additional education or training. In high school, students are immersed in a culture that emphasizes college enrollment and provides specific mechanisms to connect learning with the next steps in preparing for a career. We created the Commencement Phase to give these supports and pathways to GED students as well.

During the Commencement Phase, we offer students high-quality, on-site college courses.

"Being here has helped me realize what I want to do. I'm diabetic and now I realize that I want to go to nursing school. My counselor is helping me find RN programs to apply to after I take my GED, and she's helping me look at the requirements I need."

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Appendix

TEST OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assesses performance in reading comprehension, calculations, and problem solving. The following TABE administrations are used in Access:

- TABE Pre-test administered to all students during the Intake Phase, including TABE Locator and three parts of the TABE Complete Battery;
- TABE Post-test administered to all students after they have received 150 hours of instruction.

NOTE: The New York State Education Department System of Accountability for Student Success (SASS) requires TABE post-tests for all students who enter the program with reading or math levels below 9th grade.

GED TEST

The GED Test consists of five subtests: Language Arts, Writing; Language Arts, Reading; Social Studies; Science; and Mathematics. To pass the test, students must achieve a minimum total score of 2250, with scores of at least 410 on each subtest. The GED Test is administered throughout the year at testing centers citywide. We reserve seats for Access students and create a schedule of GED Test dates for the program.

Referral to take the GED Test

To be referred to take the GED Test, Access students must demonstrate test readiness to a committee. Criteria for test-readiness include

- Performance on Official Practice and Simulator Tests, with a minimum total score of 2400 and at least 450 on each subtest;
- Portfolio presentation and review, including evidence of pending full-time employment, college enrollment, or technical school application;
- Examination of school records, including teacher-made assessments, progress reports, and satisfactory record of attendance.

Official Practice Tests

The Official Practice Tests (OPTs) are commonly known as Predictors because they predict performance on the actual GED Test. GED Testing Service data rate the accuracy of the Official Practice Tests as within 150 points of the candidate's total score for the five subtests. To date, seven Official Practice Tests have been released (PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF, and PG). The Predictors are half the length of the GED Test, in number of questions and time allotted. Each of the seven OPTs is available in paper and pencil format and computer version.

Access uses tests PB through PG to predict students' performance on the GED Test and assess their readiness. Because PA is widely available through commercial publishers, we use it for instructional purposes only.

As stated in the school handbook and student contract, students are eligible to take the OPT during the Application Phase. New students who score 9.0 or higher on the TABE Reading Test take the OPT while they are in the Discovery Phase. Access creates a schedule for OPT testing sessions for the Discovery and Application Phases.

A GED Simulator is a combination of two OPT forms administered under GED Test conditions. The purpose of the Simulator is to get students used to test conditions, improve their performance on the actual GED Test, and build academic stamina.

CYCLES AND SCHEDULES

The academic year is comprised of six cycles, between 26 and 32 days long, punctuated by two weeklong mini-cycles. Each cycle includes special events days, such as college and career fairs, field experiences, and family celebrations.

Sample Calendar (actual dates vary)

Cycle 1	September 5 – October 13
Cycle 2	October 16 – December 1
Cycle 3	December 4 – January 19
Mini-Cycle A	January 22 – January 26
Cycle 4	January 29 – March 16
Cycle 5	March 19 – May 4
Cycle 6	May 7 – June 15
Mini-Cycle B	June 18 – June 28

Daily Student Schedule

8:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Morning Meeting
8:45 a.m.	Academic Period 1
10:00 a.m.	Leadership/Clubs
10:45 a.m.	Academic Period 2
12:15 p.m.	Academic Period 3
1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:50 p.m.	Tutorials	Research	Special Projects	Test Preparation Meetings with Advisor	LTW Workshops and Internships
2:45 p.m.	Day Ends

Sample Courses: Essays and Activism, Economics and the Environment, and Counting on a Small Planet (math and population studies).

Examples of Student Clubs: Desktop Publishing, Dance, Web Design, Chess, Scrabble, Entrepreneurship, Cooking & Nutrition, Student Government.

All students participate in a full academic day, which may take place entirely on-site or as a combination of on-site classes and Career and Technical Education (through local vocational programs), internships, or college experiences, as determined by the student's plan. Adult members of the community facilitate Leadership and Club activities to ensure the lowest possible adult-student ratio. Access students choose electives/clubs so that they take ownership of, and leadership over, the activities and proceedings.

Daily Teacher Schedule (for sample teachers A–H)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
8:00 a.m.	Teachers' Common Administrative Period							
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Morning Meeting							
8:45 a.m.	HUM	HUM	HUM	MATH	MATH	MATH	PREP DISC	DISC PREP
10:00 a.m.	Clubs							
10:45 a.m.	PREP HUM	HUM PREP	HUM	PREP MATH	MATH PREP	MATH	HUM A HUM B	MATH D MATH E
12:15 p.m.	MINOR	MINOR	PREP	MINOR	MINOR	PREP	MINOR	MINOR
1:00 p.m.	Lunch							
1:50 p.m.	Tutorials	CBO Meetings	Advisory	Special Projects Test Preparation	Internships			
2:35 p.m.	Day Ends							

On Fridays, classes end at 12:15 p.m. On these afternoons, teachers and staff participate in professional development activities, outlined in the professional development section of this manual.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

The instructional leader of Access is a principal who works well with students, parents/guardians, members of the Access staff, other principals, and district personnel. The Access leader is equally at ease chairing a faculty meeting or facilitating an interdisciplinary class. The ultimate goal of the leadership is to nurture students, teachers, and staff members, so that they can excel in their current settings as they prepare for the next levels in their educational journeys and/or careers.

PROGRAM STAFF

Staffing is based on a demonstrated ability and desire to connect with over-age, under-credited students, the wish to be a part of a lab school, technical competency, flexibility, and versatility. The faculty works together to offer engaging courses that integrate relevant content, academic rigor, formative and summative assessment, and meta-cognitive strategies.

For the target enrollment of 200 students, Access staff includes
- one principal;
- one lead teacher/professional development coordinator;
- seven teachers;
- one guidance counselor;
- one secretary;
- four paraprofessionals;
- two school aides;
- one family paraprofessional for attendance follow-up;
- School safety agents.

Community-based Organization staff includes:
- one Program Director (full time);
- four Advocate Counselors (full time);
- one Internship Coordinator (half time);
- one Job and Career Specialist (half time);
- one Administrative Assistant/Data Specialist (hourly).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Intensive professional development activities commence in July and continue through August, encompassing the following areas:

- Team-building within and among DOE and CBO staff members;
- Incorporating a Youth Development philosophy into GED, career, and post-secondary education;
- Implementing GED curricula for the 9th grade reader;
- Demonstrating and implementing specific strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy to adolescents;
- Planning for academic cycles, modules, and special classes, such as advisory, leadership, and technology;
- Identifying individuals' professional development needs and tailoring options in response to those needs;
- Supporting students before, during, and after the college admissions process.

During the academic year, teachers and staff participate in capacity-building activities on Friday afternoons, when classes end at 12:15 p.m. The afternoons are divided into two sessions:

- 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.: DOE and CBO staff members meet jointly for updates, case conferences, and collaborative planning.
- 2:00 – 3:35 p.m.: Professional development series for educators covers best practices, content and skills training, and cycle planning.

INTAKE FORM AND STUDENT CONTRACT

Please see samples on the following pages.
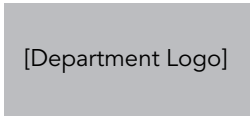
Access GED Program
STUDENT ADMISSION FORM

[Your Principal's Name]
Principal

[Your City Department of Education]

[Your CBO Director]
Director

_____   _____ ⋮ _____ ⋮ _____
Name of Staff Member Completing this Form   Today's Date

STUDENT INFORMATION

_____   _____ ⋮ _____ ⋮ _____   ☐ M   ☐ F
Student ID # (SSN)   Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

_____   _____
Student First Name   Student Last Name

_____   _____
Address   Apartment

_____   _____   _____
City   State   Zip

_____   _____
Home Phone #   Emergency Phone #

HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

_____   _____
Name of Person Student Resides with   Relationship to Student

_____
Name of Parent or Guardian

_____   _____
Ethnicity   Language Spoken at Home

Health Alert: ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Unknown   Health Insurance: ☐ Covered   ☐ Not Covered
                                                                                    ☐ Send Info   ☐ Unknown

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EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

_____
Name of Last School Attended

_____
Location of Last School Attended

Educational Plan (Reading Level):   ☐ GED (9th grade +)   ☐ GED Prep (6–8th)   ☐ Literacy (below 6th)

Transportation Needed to/from School Site: ☐ Yes   ☐ No

_____   _____
Teacher Signature   Date
This form will not be accepted unless signed by a teacher at the program site.

FOR OFFICE USE

_____
Proof of Birth

_____
Birth Certificate #

_____
Place of Birth

_____
Admission Code

_____ ⋮ _____ ⋮ _____
Start Date

_____
Current Grade

_____
Reading Level

Special Education?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Access GED Program
STUDENT AGREEMENT

[Department Logo]

[CBO Logo]

[Your Principal's Name]
Principal

[Your City Department of Education]

[Your CBO Director]
Director

COMMUNITY POLICIES

Welcome to Access GED!

We look forward to helping you achieve your academic, career, and personal goals. You will be joining a community where respect for oneself and others is important in maintaining a positive and accepting environment for everyone. While you are a student at Access, there are community policies that everyone must follow to ensure your safety and the safety of others. All students are asked to sign a Student Agreement that will reflect your commitment to practicing and implementing these policies.

Dress: Appropriate attire is an important part of becoming a professional and attaining career goals. Please dress in a manner that is reflective of that. Baseball caps, hats, durags, gang affiliated beads and bandanas (flags), provocative clothing, and low pants that show underwear do not reflect that professionalism.

Language/Behavior: Access is a diverse community that encourages students to be who they are. We promote acceptance and do not tolerate language or behavior that discriminates against anyone based on race/ethnicity, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, religion, class, disability, age, or any other basis. Access is a safe zone for everyone.

Attendance: Being present and on time is critical in all areas of life. Access stresses the importance of being punctual and accountable for your actions.

- Being late to school 3 times or cutting 3 classes will automatically equal one absence.
- If you must be absent or late due to sickness, appointments, or an emergency, please call the school and inform us.

We also believe that with hard work, there are rewards:

- Students who have at least 80% attendance will earn the right to take Predictor tests sooner.
- Students with perfect or near perfect attendance (95% or higher) will be honored at an end of cycle recognition ceremony and be entered into raffles for different prizes.

## STUDENT AGREEMENT

I Agree to:

- Arrive at Access on or before the start time every day and attend all scheduled classes.
- Contact the Advocate Counselor, Guidance Counselor, or school if I will be absent or late.
- Demonstrate honesty, punctuality, positive attitude, proper dress, and a willingness to learn.
- Come prepared to class and keep all electronic devices off and stored away.
- Work with the Teachers, Advocate Counselors, Guidance Counselors, and Community-Based Organization staff to achieve my academic, career, and personal goals.
- Promote a safe and caring environment for everyone.
- Follow all rules and regulations.
- Behave appropriately at all times when in school and on-site at an internship.
- Meet with the Advocate Counselor and Internship Coordinator regularly to discuss progress.

I commit to fulfilling my role and responsibilities as outlined in this agreement. I have read and discussed this document with an Access GED staff member, understand and agree to follow the community guidelines to the best of my ability. I will seek help if I am struggling to follow these guidelines.

_____

Student Name *(please print)*

_____   _____

Student Signature   Date
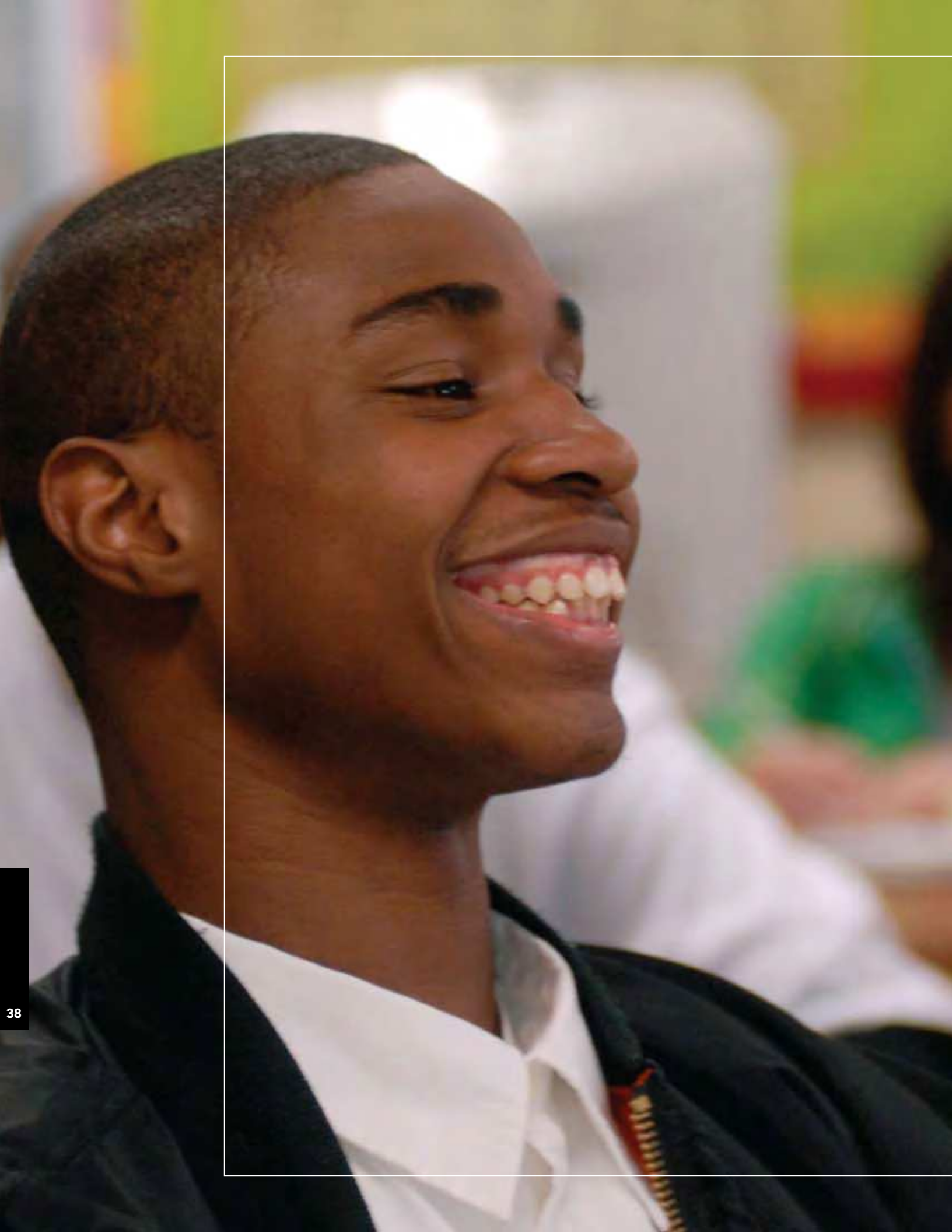
Conclusion

The Access GED Model is a pilot program, lab school, and professional development hub. Our professional development center is available to all New York City GED teachers, and includes a state-of-the-art technology center, professional library, and media center. To recognize and replicate good practice, our center offers a presenters' institute to those who wish to formally share their work with colleagues throughout the Department of Education.

Access teachers and administrators constantly review teaching methods and practice, refining approaches to meet student needs. Our transparency enables students to understand that learning is a process that requires real effort before mastery is achieved. We invite teacher-interns to fulfill their observation and student-teaching fieldwork components in our classrooms.

Our environment encourages highly qualified student-centered educators to join our community. We promote retention and foster professional growth in our model. Engaging disconnected youth in GED programs and transfer schools takes professional inspiration. We therefore seek corporate sponsorship, foundation support, and university partnerships to provide grants to pay for masters and doctoral level courses for staff members.

Notes