

# BUILDING STUDENT SUCCESS: *GED ILLINOIS*

*A Collection of Best Practices  
and Classroom Models for Adult Education Programs and  
Instructors Using GED Illinois to Enhance Student Success*



*Building on Success: GED Illinois*  
223 Leadership Grant  
William Rainey Harper College  
Adult Educational Development Department



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*Special Thanks  
to All Members and Students  
of the Adult Educational Development Department*

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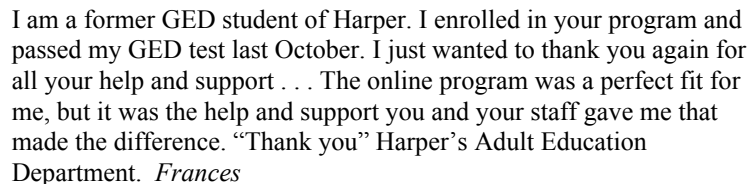


# Building Student Success: *GED Illinois*

A Collection of Best Practices and Classroom Models for Adult Education Programs and Instructors Using *GED Illinois* to Enhance Student Success

## Introduction

### Philosophy, Policy, and Practice



I am a former GED student of Harper. I enrolled in your program and passed my GED test last October. I just wanted to thank you again for all your help and support . . . The online program was a perfect fit for me, but it was the help and support you and your staff gave me that made the difference. “Thank you” Harper’s Adult Education Department. *Frances*

The development of *GED Illinois* created a powerful instructional tool for Adult Education programs throughout Illinois. This flexible, instructional tool supplements and complements traditional classroom education, allowing programs to align it with most existing practices and structures. Nevertheless, effective course design models, prepared and informed teachers, knowledgeable staff, and efficient and supportive Adult Education programs must accompany the implementation of this extensive online delivery system. This handbook will provide a valuable compilation of recommendations, strategies, and guidelines for teachers using *GED Illinois*. The handbook reflects the best practices that emerged from careful and deliberate exploration, experimentation, and implementation of the use of *GED Illinois* to promote student success.

### Background

William Rainey Harper College has been providing quality Adult Education programs and services for nearly 30 years. As a comprehensive community college, Adult Education is central to the College mission. Harper’s Adult Educational Development (AED) department under the auspices of the Dean of Academic Enrichment and Language Studies has seven full-time faculty, 15 permanent staff, and approximately forty adjunct faculty who provide the educational leadership required to maintain a responsive, forward-looking curriculum and to deliver a valuable, comprehensive learning experience for our students. Harper College was among the first providers in Illinois to offer computer-aided instruction, EL/Civics, and GED online instruction.

Harper College continues to expand this history of leadership and innovation through practice and research using multiple models of *GED Illinois* delivery and by producing this collection

of *GED Illinois* best practices. As always, the true effectiveness of our educational program is measured by the success of our students who improve their literacy skills in our classes each year. The AED department is pleased to share our collective insights and the useful information gathered from our experiences in developing a significant, effective online instructional component for our Adult Education program.

In 2004, the AED department explored possibilities and gathered information regarding best practices for the effective use of *GED Illinois* by programs and instructors. The department participated in an online instruction project that had two components. The first component was to provide a resource of successful classroom management strategies compiled by faculty who have taught *GED Illinois*. The resulting handbook includes guidelines and suggestions on such areas as strategies for teaching each content area, orientation of students, communication loops, assessment, and recordkeeping. The second component was the development of implementation models with recommendations for courses. Three kinds of courses involving *GED Illinois* were implemented: (1) basic Tech Prep courses at the pre-GED level introducing online skills in conjunction with subject area skills; (2) Blended sections combining traditional face-to-face classroom instruction and online learning; and (3) Solely Online courses emphasizing increased contact with online students.

In particular, information gathered was assessed in order to address the following two questions:

1. How can students at the GED level who choose to take online courses in preparation for the GED Test be *best supported* to facilitate their success?
2. How can students who are not yet at the GED level be *best prepared and equipped* to take online courses if they choose to do so at some point?

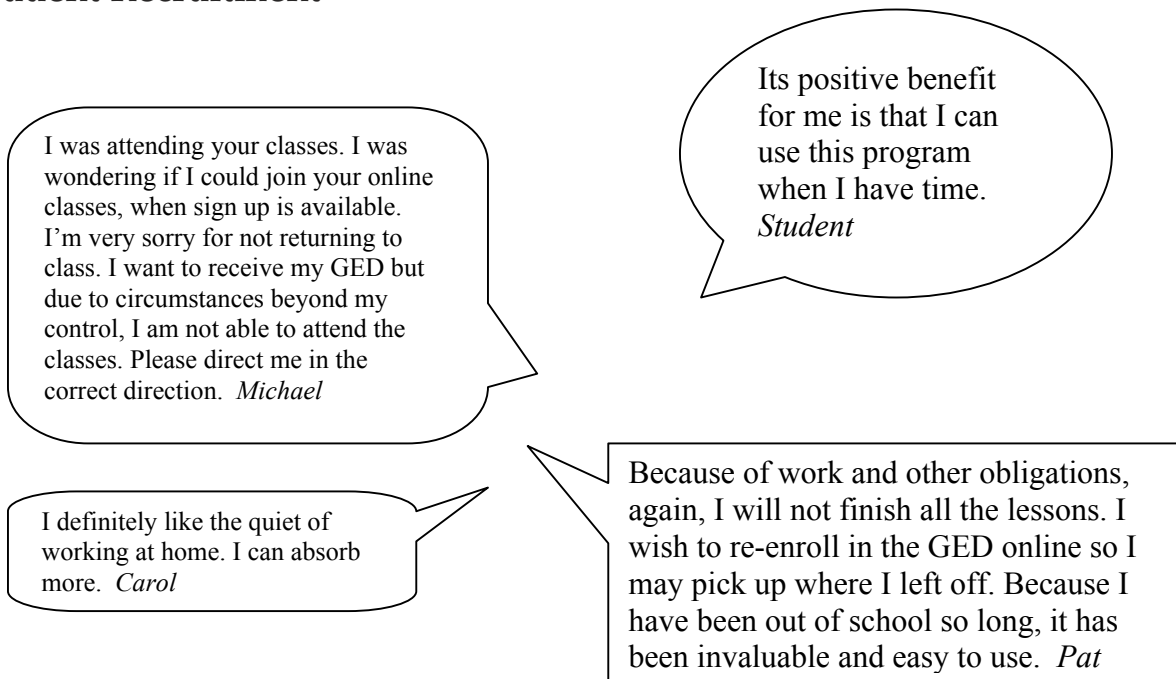
In general, this handbook was designed to accomplish two objectives;

1. To facilitate online classroom management, including orientation and communication strategies, to enable instructors to use *GED Illinois* effectively.
2. To promote the use of *GED Illinois* as an effective teaching tool by describing implementation models, including Tech Prep pre-GED workshops and Blended delivery and Solely Online classes that can be adopted by Adult Education programs.



## Support Services and Procedures

### Student Recruitment



In preparation for the student recruitment process, teachers and staff work together to gather information from current and previous students to determine their familiarity with computers and technology and their experience with online learning. This is accomplished through a technology survey (Appendices A & B) distributed in current classes and/or a focus group to discuss online learning experiences attended by previous online students (Appendices C & D).

Collection of data on online students can be used to help recruitment efforts (Appendix E). By combining this information with the student surveys and student focus group information, the GED program gains realistic resources to use in student recruitment planning.

Each semester a press release is placed in the suburban newspaper that briefly describes all of the GED programs, including the *GED Illinois* offerings. Households and businesses in the College district are mailed course schedules for the GED classes which are included in the schedule of all classes the College offers. Brochures and flyers are sent to all the neighboring libraries every semester (Appendix F). A Web page highlighting GED online classes is in the early stages of development, but it is anticipated to be up and running in the near future.

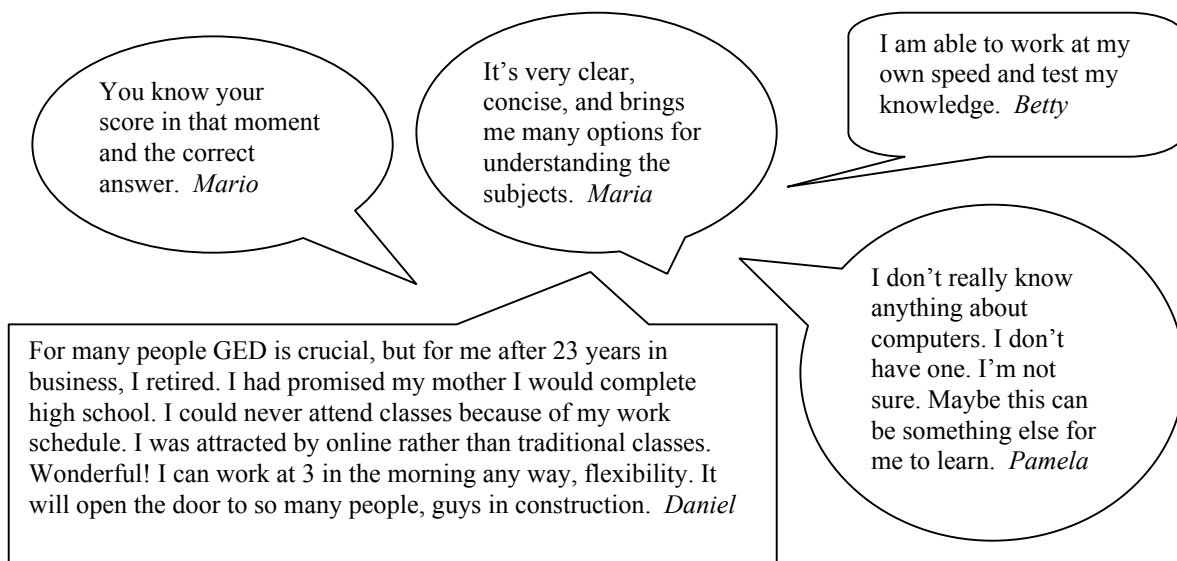
Prior to the beginning of each eight-week session, the College marquee displays GED registration information, and flyers and brochures for all GED programs, including *GED Illinois*, are distributed to businesses surrounding the main campus, the Police Neighborhood Resource Center, the Northeast Palatine Community Center, and Harper College Northeast Center. Due

to a very diverse population, targeted locales range from small grocery stores and laundromats to park district community centers, apartment complexes, and churches.

Sometimes teachers and office staff contact former students who did not complete previous classes due to personal inconveniences to let them know about the online learning format and the new resources available to them. Currently enrolled students who stop coming to classes are sometimes called by instructors or office staff and informed about online instruction as an option. The online option is sometimes a viable solution to problems, such as work schedule changes, that the student has encountered which has prevented attendance in the traditional class.

Be prepared for some surprises with recruitment efforts. For example, beyond the obvious appeal to students with schedule, transportation, or childcare difficulties, online classes are very attractive to older adult students. These students, who often are not very skilled or experienced with technology, seek out online instruction because they appreciate the greater privacy and control the program allows them.

## Student Registration, Testing, and Placement



Harper College has open registration. Thus, a student may call to make a registration appointment anytime before or during the semester. When students call, they are set up with registration and testing times on the main campus or the Northeast Center. During the registration process, students may be specifically recruited for a Tech Prep workshop and/or *GED Illinois* coursework if the information they provide indicates that online learning is a tool that will help them accomplish their GED goals. Flyers about the Tech Prep courses are available at registration (Appendix G).

At registration, all potential adult education students are given the TABE Reading Locator Test and the TABE Math Locator Test. On the basis of these scores, students are placed in appropriate English, reading (social studies and science), and math classes and Tech Prep workshops.

The enrollment criteria for GED-level courses are as follows:

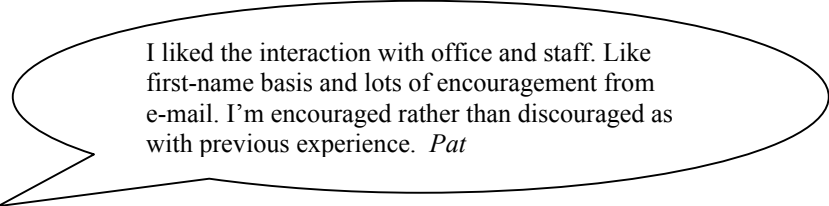
- GED Reading- (Social Studies and Science) and English-Level Requirements
  - TABE Reading Locator Test
  - Scale Score – 569 and above
  - Grade Equivalent – 9.0 and above
  
- GED Math-Level Requirements
  - TABE Mathematics Locator Test
  - 19 or more correct out of 25 problems

During the placement process, student options are explained. Harper College offers traditional Basic, pre-GED, and GED-level classes; Blended GED classes in English, reading, and math; and Solely Online GED classes. A student makes a choice on the basis of location, times, class availability, and types of classes. At this point, the students often volunteer information about lacking transportation, time restrictions, childcare concerns, and work schedule conflicts. The online and Blended classes are explained as viable options in such situations. Further consideration must also be given to home computer availability, Internet access, previous computer experience, and learning styles.

Additionally, Tech Prep workshops are offered to pre-GED-level students. These workshops emphasize basic computer skills not only for everyday life but also to enhance the successful use of the *GED Illinois Online* program as the students are moved into GED-level classes. Students generally register for the Tech Prep workshops in addition to their pre-GED English, reading, and math classes. These workshops are offered in various formats, including one or two sessions totaling eight hours in the week before other classes start, one hour added-on to eight class sessions, or two additional four-hour class sessions.

Students placed in Solely Online and Blended courses are also registered for e-mail accounts. An orientation conference is set up with Solely Online teachers (Appendices H & I).

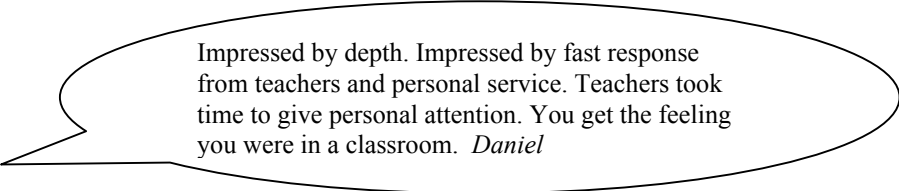
## Staff Roles and Responsibilities



I liked the interaction with office and staff. Like first-name basis and lots of encouragement from e-mail. I'm encouraged rather than discouraged as with previous experience. *Pat*

All members of an Adult Education program should be familiar with what online offerings the program has available, how students go about enrolling, and who the contact is for specific information. As much as possible, online students should be provided the same services as students in traditional classes. Both the student advisor and tech specialist should make contact with online students via e-mail. The student advisor and tech specialist serve as additional resources for online students and alternative sources of communication. The student advisor can e-mail program newsletters or other information at least one time per session. The tech specialist can provide some tips for navigating the *GED Illinois* program, leaving technical problems to the *GED Illinois's* support@cait.org help desk. A communication network helps to address the isolation of online learning.

## Teacher Orientation



Impressed by depth. Impressed by fast response from teachers and personal service. Teachers took time to give personal attention. You get the feeling you were in a classroom. *Daniel*

Experience with adult education students provides knowledge (and hopefully) understanding of the needs, backgrounds, and life situations students have. One of the challenges of online instruction is retaining a personal contact and somehow establishing some rapport via electronic technology. Therefore, choose instructors who have already been teaching in adult education classes and are best qualified to use *GED Illinois* in any capacity with adult education students.

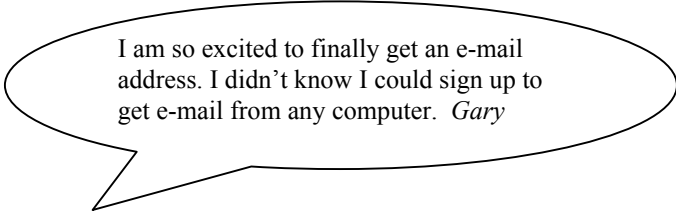
Initially, teachers are oriented to *GED Illinois* by meeting with the program administrator who enters the instructor into the *GED Illinois* program. An institutional e-mail or hotmail account should be opened for instructor use. During this meeting, teachers are shown how to log on and begin exploring the program. They are also given copies of course curriculum. Each instructor is then paired with another experienced instructor who serves as a resource and mentor. Additionally, instructors who are new to *GED Illinois* are encouraged to attend training on the use of *GED Illinois* from the regional service center in the area.

Instructors should familiarize themselves with *GED Illinois*. A teacher technology survey can be used to assess teacher readiness to work with online instruction (Appendix J). They can

practice entering a student and completing that form, take the Pre-Survey to better understand the format, go through lessons as a student, and take the Post-Survey. In addition, it is helpful to review the OASIS website. It can be accessed through the student center. The website contains the Learning Styles Inventory and the Study Skills Survey which assess student readiness to use *GED Illinois*.

For information and to encourage teacher participation, an introduction to *GED Illinois* should be given periodically at in-house staff development sessions; however, student interest in online instruction is often the most effective means of encouraging teacher involvement in *GED Illinois*. Students who have previously used the program in one class will later request another section with an instructor who uses *GED Illinois* in class. Their inquiries about access to the *GED Illinois* program prompts instructors to familiarize themselves with the program and incorporate its use within the class or as homework.

## Technical Support



I am so excited to finally get an e-mail address. I didn't know I could sign up to get e-mail from any computer. *Gary*

### *Hotmail Tips*

Hotmail is free and easy to use. It has many good features for use with *GED Illinois*.

It is recommended that instructors not use personal e-mail accounts for *GED Illinois* instruction. Free hot mail or professional accounts are recommended for teachers.

For students without personal accounts or for students who choose not to use personal accounts, free hotmail accounts are recommended. It is convenient to structure naming the hotmail accounts to save class time. For instance, account names can use a department's initials, student's first name, and part of the student's last name. This eliminates multiple tries by the student or staff to find a name that hasn't been used.

The same password is initially used to open all accounts. The student has the option to change it later.

Students should print out the first hotmail messages. This is information regarding their accounts. Passwords and secret questions are noted, so students have a record of their information.

Students are advised to check the box (if they are using a public computer), *Do not remember my email address for future sign-ins*.

In hotmail, under *Options, Personal*, it is suggested students choose to end their session expiration after two or eight hours. Under *Options, Personal*, they could change their passwords, too.

Students should be reminded to sign out when they are closing their accounts.

Free e-mail accounts have a limit on storage, so accounts can fill up quickly. Ask students to check their accounts. Also, request that students keep their accounts active by checking in at least once a week. If the accounts became inactive from non-use, the students can quickly reactive them.

### ***Introducing Hotmail***

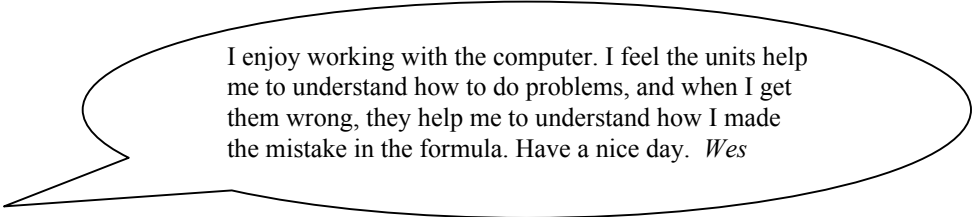
The following are steps for introducing Solely Online and Blended course students to their new hotmail e-mail accounts:

- Go to [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com).
- Go to *email address box*.
- Type in the account name:  
Example: aedjudyname@hotmail.com
- Tab down to *password* and enter the password: school.
- Click on *Sign In, OK, Yes*.
- After accessing the account, click on *Options* tab to change the password.
- Go to *Your Information*.
- Click on *Password*. (Passwords are a minimum of six letters to a maximum 16 letters.)
- Click on *Contacts* tab, then click on *Groups, School*.
- One can e-mail a message to the group if desired. Add or remove names at this screen. If changes are made, click *OK* when finished.
- To add a name to *Favorites*, click on *New Contact* box. Fill in the "Quickname" space. There is no need to fill out all the information on this form. Quickname, e-mail address, and completion of primary e-mail are required. Click *OK* when finished.
- *Inbox* tab shows messages one receives. Read and delete messages here. This is a free account, so there is not much storage space. Clean out the account often.
- To send a message, go to the *Compose* tab. Notice that the group, *School*, is in the favorites contacts box.
- When exiting e-mail, be sure to sign out. The *Sign out* box is located at the top of the screen.

### ***Keyboarding Skills***

Recommend students practice keyboarding skills online at [www.senselang.com](http://www.senselang.com).

## *GED Illinois Website*



I enjoy working with the computer. I feel the units help me to understand how to do problems, and when I get them wrong, they help me to understand how I made the mistake in the formula. Have a nice day. *Wes*

The sample lessons on the *GED Illinois* site are instructional tools that can be used for Tech Prep classes, orientation sessions, and Blended classes. These sample lessons do not require the student to be registered in *GED Illinois*. The amount of feedback from the sample lessons varies.

Some students may request a new e-mail account even though they already have a personal e-mail account. They can use the hotmail account just for schoolwork.

Free e-mail accounts have a limit on storage, so accounts can fill up quickly. Ask students to check their accounts.

Remind students to make sure their caps lock key is not active and their number lock is on. Some students don't check, and then they can't log in to the *GED Illinois* when they are at home.

Inform students that they cannot have the survey or lesson on their computer indefinitely because it will time out. Advise them that there may be a wait before they can start their lessons.

Suggest that the students become familiar with the *Student Center*. Student Center gives them access to the Modules, Portfolio, Help Desk, Cyber Café, e-mail, and Discussion Board.

Have students check their portfolio, which lists work submitted, status (approved), and comments from instructors. Immediate access to the portfolio is available by clicking on *Portfolio* located on the top right-hand side of the screen. The portfolio can also be reviewed from the student center.

Suggest that students make good use of the *Portfolio* information. *Portfolio* lists work submitted to instructors, status, and comments from the instructor. The green dot is the instructor's comment. Also, immediate access to a student portfolio is available within the lessons and is located on the top right-hand side of the screen.

*Cyber Café* provides an option to send an e-mail directly to the instructor.

*Help Desk, Support, Option 3* offers a link to [www.cait.org/osrc](http://www.cait.org/osrc), which is similar to frequently asked questions. This section provides troubleshooting information about common problems.

*Help Desk, Support* is helpful to instructors, too. One example is when AOL users are having difficulty accessing the program. AOL members need to access AOL, minimize AOL, click on IE, type in the *GED Illinois* Web address, and follow the steps for signing on to the site using their login and password.

*Help Desk, Support, Option 1* provides a direct link to the Online Instruction Help Desk at [support@cait.org](mailto:support@cait.org).



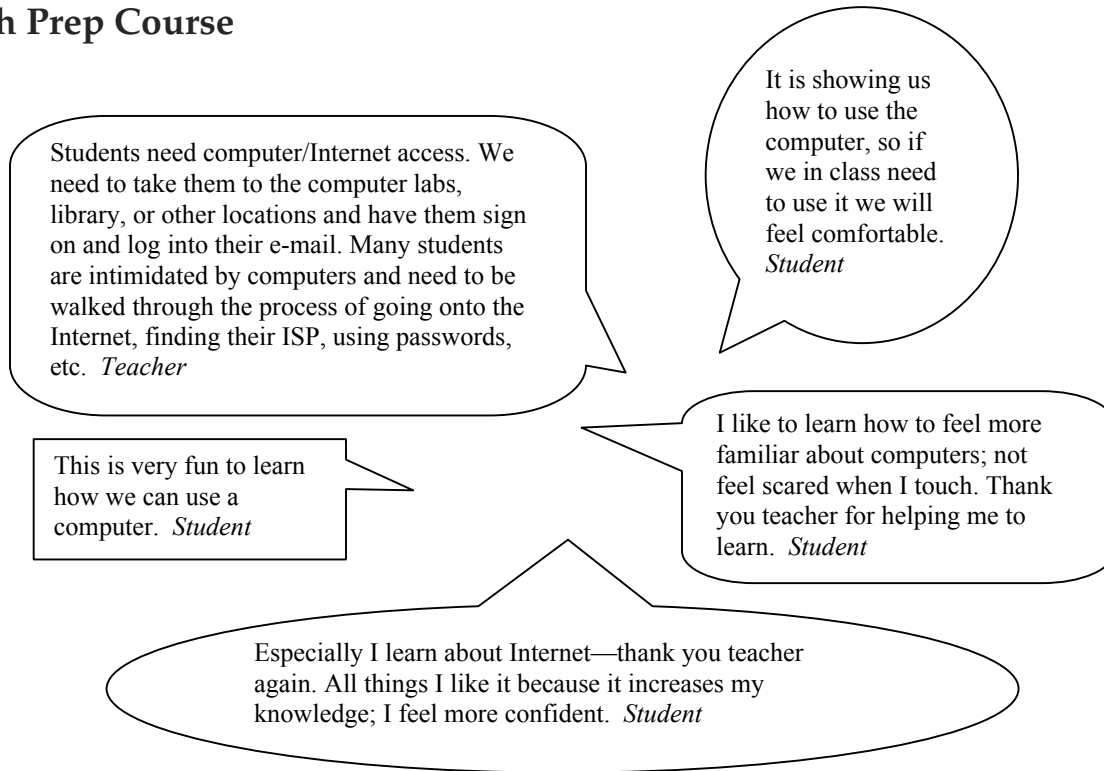
## Curriculum Development and Class Models

*GED Illinois* can be used in several different ways in the adult education classroom. The class models are described in the graphic below. The Tech Prep course uses *GED Illinois* as a basis for instruction in computer and online skills. The Blended courses use *GED Illinois* in the traditional face-to-face classroom as either a software type supplement during class time or as a hybrid extension of the class through homework. The Solely Online course uses *GED Illinois* exclusively as the content- and skill-based model for GED preparation.

### Course Models for Using *GED Illinois*

	<b>Tech Prep</b>	<b>Blended</b>	<b>Solely Online</b>
<b>Course Design</b>	Introduces technology and online skills in conjunction with GED subject areas	Blends traditional face-to-face GED classroom instruction with online learning	Offers GED Test preparation using <i>GED Illinois Online</i> instruction
<b>Levels</b>	Pre-GED, GED	GED	GED
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General computer skills</li> <li>• <i>GED Illinois</i> core skills in English, Reading, and Math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts Writing/ Language Arts Reading</li> <li>• Social Studies and Science</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts Writing/ Language Arts Reading</li> <li>• Social Studies and Science</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery Model</b>	Workshop	Supplemental or hybrid	Solely Online course
<b>Access Site</b>	Onsite classroom and computer lab	Onsite classroom and computer lab	Computer at home or at another computer site such as a library

## Tech Prep Course



### Description

The Tech Prep courses are instructional models purposely constructed to help students gain the technology and online learning skills necessary to use *GED Illinois* appropriately in preparation for the GED Test. These courses are designed specifically for students at the pre-GED level, but students at the GED level often benefit from them. *Tech Prep in Math*, *Tech Prep in English*, and *Tech Prep in Reading* are three courses designed to emphasize content area technology skills. The curriculum for each course contains two sections: (1) a set of general computer and technology skills relevant to all subject areas such as using a computer and navigating the Internet; and (2) a set of content-specific skills or information for each subject area such as Internet sites to improve reading skills or using the calculator in math. The sample lessons of *GED Illinois*, which provide some introduction to the system, have served as a useful resource.

This curriculum can be taught in various modes of instruction: an 8-hour workshop in one subject area (.5 credit hours), an hourly attachment to existing subject-matter classes (.5 additional credit hours), and a 24-hour combined Tech Prep class in reading, English, and math (1.5 credit hours).

### Management Strategies

- Meet in a computer lab and maintain a small class size for optimum interaction with the students. Be sure that students have a hands-on experience.

- Encourage students to think of ways that computer skills and technology can be used in their lives and why good English, math, and reading skills are so necessary. For instance, in filling out job applications online, students have to use correct capitalization and punctuation before submitting the application.
- Recommend that students practice keyboarding skills at [www.senselang.com](http://www.senselang.com).

### *Assessment and Recordkeeping*

- Maintain a list of students, including names, e-mail addresses, passwords, etc.
- Take attendance.
- Use informal assessment rather than formal assessment. For example, if the goal is to send an e-mail and the student accomplishes the goal, record that information. Keep track of skill accomplishments.
- Administer the *Tech Prep Course Evaluation* to evaluate if the needs of the students were met (Appendix K).

## Tech Prep in English Course Outline

### I. General Skills

1. General introduction to computer use
  - a. Learn general computer terminology.
  - b. Turn on computer and monitor.
  - c. Use mouse to move cursor around screen, scroll, and select desired function by clicking.
  - d. Recognize icons and corresponding software programs.
  - e. Open software programs using *Start* (i.e., *MHC Interactive*, *Skillsbank*, *MS Word*).
  - f. Close programs using "X" or *file-close-exit*.
2. Navigating the Internet
  - a. Use Internet Explorer, Netscape, or other browser to access Internet.
    - (1) Understand that browsers are different and that American Online (AOL) doesn't configure properly with *GED Illinois*.
    - (2) AOL users must access the site in the following way:
      - (a) Sign into AOL the way one would normally.
      - (b) Minimize AOL by clicking on the (-) sign in upper right-hand corner of screen.
      - (c) Double click on Internet Explorer icon (or click on start, programs, Internet Explorer) and follow steps for access to *GED Illinois*.
  - b. Enter a URL address such as [www.gedillinois.org](http://www.gedillinois.org).
  - c. Use letter, number, and function keys on computer keyboard: *shift*, *enter*, *space bar*, *tab*, *delete*, *backspace*, and *arrow* keys.
  - d. Become familiar with *bookmark*, *favorites*, and pull-down URL address box on public computers vs. private ones.
  - e. Use *back/forward*, *maximize/minimize*, *open/close* buttons.
3. How to use e-mail (Appendices L & M)
  - a. Learn e-mail terminology.
  - b. Complete an online form (navigate within form using *mouse* or *tab* key); use *pull-down menu*; and understand *continue/submit* buttons.
  - c. Open initial e-mail account.
  - d. Enter e-mail account and read messages.
  - e. Write an e-mail and send.
  - f. Attach a document.
4. How to use the Discussion Board
  - a. Post a message to a topic.
  - b. Reply to a posted message.
  - c. Follow a "threaded" discussion.

### II. English Specific Skills

1. How to find information on the Internet
  - a. Understand and use links.
  - b. Evaluate information in terms of website source.

- (1) Understand the difference between .com, .gov, .edu, .net, and .org.
- c. Search for information, text, and image.
  - (1) Use Google and/or other search engines.
  - (2) Use reference tools: dictionaries and encyclopedias; online library catalogs; and online newspapers, journals, and magazines.
- d. Navigate sites visited.
- 2. Develop *Microsoft Word* word-processing skills.
  - a. Open and save a document.
  - b. Use function keys: *space bar*, *Enter*, *tab* to indent, *shift* to form capital letter, *arrow* keys to move around text, *backspace* and *delete* to delete text.
  - c. Highlight text.
  - d. Cut/copy and paste text.
  - e. Choose font, including size and style (italics, bold, and underline).
  - f. Use spelling/grammar check.
- 3. Use Internet sites to improve English skills.
  - a. *GED Illinois Online* English sample pages
  - b. [www/gedpractice.com](http://www/gedpractice.com)

### Communication Strategies

- On the first day of class, set up every student with an e-mail account and distribute the e-mail addresses among the students. Then, have students send e-mails to each other asking questions to which the other student has to send a “reply.” Icebreaker/interview questions can be used such as “Where do you work?” “Do you like your job and why or why not?” or “What’s one place you’ll always remember and why?”
- For homework, ask students to e-mail the instructor and ask a question that requires a response from the instructor. If an e-mail is received from the student, the instructor will know that the student has learned how to log into the hotmail account and send an e-mail. Upon receiving the e-mail, the instructor replies and asks another question to keep the communication moving forward. It is important to make the e-mailing activities meaningful and fun.
- In one session, have the students send an e-mail with an attachment of an essay or paragraph written in *Microsoft Word* to the instructor or to each other. After they read their e-mails and open the attachments received, have them reply to each other commenting on what was read in the attachment.

### Activities

- Assess computer skills using survey questions (Appendix N).
- Review parts of the computer with visuals and matching game (Appendix O).

- Review computer terminology vocabulary list, and then practice vocabulary with crossword puzzle and computer skills worksheet (Appendices P & Q).
- Set up hotmail e-mail accounts (Appendix L).
- Practice logging into hotmail e-mail accounts, sending e-mails, replying to e-mails, and logging off (Appendix M).
- Learn how to add a name and e-mail address to the *address book* and how to navigate the different screens on the hotmail page.
- Learn how to type a paragraph in *MS Word*, format the document, save on a disk, and attach to an e-mail.
- Practice English online using the *GED Illinois* website sample pages and other online websites with English practice.
- Tailor the class to meet the students' needs. Practice filling out an online job application. Use *Mapquest* or other interesting sites to tailor the activities to meet some student needs and pique their interest.
- For both keyboarding skills and *Microsoft Word*, have students type a sentence on the monitor answering the question, "Why are you taking this computer workshop?" This becomes the first document to practice the curriculum. At first, students focus on mechanics and usage accuracy. After reviewing these skills, they then learn how to stylistically change their document and/or reproduce it using copy/paste techniques. This takes a long while as they need time to focus on one skill at a time.
- For Internet navigation, explore predetermined sites that the teacher has visited prior to class time to find out if the site is accessible without passwords and is beneficial to the students.

## *Tech Prep in Reading Course Outline*

### I. General Skills

1. How to use a computer
  - a. Turn on computer and monitor.
  - b. Use the *mouse* to move the *cursor* around the screen, scroll, and select desired function by clicking; click and drag.
  - c. Use letter, number, and function keys on computer keyboard:
    - (1) *shift, enter, space bar, tab, delete, backspace, arrow keys*
    - (2) *copy, cut, paste (right click)*
  - d. Understand and use icons; task bars; maximize; minimize; and close, print, and print screen.
2. Navigating the Internet
  - a. Use Internet Explorer, Netscape, or other browser to access Internet; understand that browsers are different and that AOL doesn't configure properly with *GED Illinois* (see Tech Support).
  - b. Enter a URL address such as [www.gedillinois.org](http://www.gedillinois.org).
  - c. Become familiar with bookmark, favorites, and pull-down URL address box on public computers vs. private ones.
  - d. Use back/forward buttons, and scroll bars.
3. How to use e-mail (Appendices L & M)
  - a. Open initial e-mail account.
  - b. Enter e-mail account and read messages.
  - c. Create message; reply to a message and send.
  - d. Open and send attachments.
  - e. Understand that e-mail has limited privacy.

*\*Note: See application of above skills in Oasis Hotmail Tutorial.*
4. How to complete an online form
  - a. Understand who will receive form, and navigate within form using mouse or tab key.
  - b. Use pull-down menus.
  - c. Understand continue/submit buttons.
5. How to use the Discussion Board
  - a. Post a message to a topic.
  - b. Reply to a posted message.
  - c. Follow a "threaded" discussion.

### II. Reading Specific Skills

1. How to find information on the Internet
  - a. Understand and use links.
  - b. Evaluate information in terms of website source, and understand the difference between .com, .gov, .edu, .net, and .org.
  - c. Search for information, text, and image, using Google and/or other search engines.

- d. Use reference tools: dictionaries and encyclopedias; Online library catalogs; online newspapers, journals, and magazines; and *Mapquest*.
- e. Navigate sites visited.
2. Use Internet sites to improve reading skills.
  - a. Access and navigate [www.literacynet.org/cnnsf/archives.html](http://www.literacynet.org/cnnsf/archives.html).
  - b. Access and navigate [www.gedillinois.org](http://www.gedillinois.org):
    - (1) Sample lessons in Social Studies
    - (2) Sample lessons in Science
  - c. Access and navigate [www.gedpractice.com](http://www.gedpractice.com).

### Communication Strategies

- Use the Tech Prep Computer Survey (Appendix N) in a Line-Up Mixer.
  1. Students complete the survey individually.
  2. Count off by 2s; 1s and 2s form their respective lines facing each other; each individual should face a partner.
  3. For one minute, partners share their names and answers to question #1 on the survey.
  4. The line 2 individual at the far end; walks to the opposite end; everyone shifts over one place and faces a new partner.
  5. For one minute, new partners share names and answers to question #2.
  6. Continue this pattern until all answers to the questions are shared.
- Students open a hotmail account, read, send, and reply to messages using step-by-step instructions.
  1. Each individual opens a free hotmail account by reading and following step-by-step instructions on handout "How to Set up a Free Hotmail Account" (Appendix L) along with teacher assistance as necessary. Students should fill in the blanks on the handout for future reference.
  2. Students read and print "Welcome Message" from Microsoft.
  3. Each student writes their name and e-mail address on a 3x5 index card and then exchanges addresses with a partner.
  4. Students are asked to log-out of e-mail accounts.
  5. Students access [www.cgreetings.com/ecards](http://www.cgreetings.com/ecards) and send a greeting to the individual on the 3x5 card.
  6. Using the e-mail message, "How-To . . . Read, Send, & Reply" (Appendix M) and with teacher assistance, students log back into hotmail account and read/reply to mail.

### Activities

- Complete "Computer Vocabulary Crossword Puzzle" (Appendix O) individually, in pairs, or in small groups.



- In pairs or small groups, match pictures of computer components with names/descriptions (Appendix P). For a more kinesthetic experience, cut the pictures and descriptions apart, mix them up, and put them in a plastic zipper bag or envelope. Ask students to match the picture with the description. Also ask students to locate the components on actual computers. Make one set of matching pieces for every two or three students in class.

*Variations:*

- Students label actual computer parts with descriptions.
- Students visit “Learning about Computers” at [www.ivygreen.ctc.edu/avery/activities/activity.htm](http://www.ivygreen.ctc.edu/avery/activities/activity.htm), the source for computer pictures and descriptions. This site also contains many other introductory computer activities.
- Students use the *Mouseaerobics* website, <http://ckls.org/~crippel/computerlab/tutorials/mouse/page1.html>, to practice using the mouse to move cursor around the screen, to scroll, and to select desired function by clicking.
- Finding information:

Use “Geographic Extremes” Web scavenger hunt (Appendix R) to practice searching for information on the Web.

1. Through discussion, compare and contrast different types of websites: .com, .gov, .edu, .net, and .org.
2. Each student receives a hard copy of “Geographic Extremes” and accesses an electronic Word Document (read only). With teacher guidance and assistance, students follow the instructions on the top of the handout.
3. Depending on students’ ability levels and time constraints, the teacher may want to divide class into pairs and assign a few of the questions to each pair; then share answers.

*Variation:* If the typing and/or copy/paste functions are too challenging for some students, they may want to write information on hard copy.

## Tech Prep in Mathematics Course Outline

### I. General Skills

1. How to use a computer
  - a. Turn on computer and monitor.
  - b. Use the mouse to move the cursor around the screen, scroll, and select desired function by clicking; click and drag.
  - c. Use letter, number, and function keys on computer keyboard:
    - (1) *Shift, enter, space bar, tab, delete, backspace, and arrow* keys
    - (2) *Parenthesis, inequality, percent, equal, addition, and slash line* keys
  - d. Understand and use icons; task bars; maximize; minimize; and close, print, and print screen.
  - e. Use and understand keyboarding and the math symbols found in the *Microsoft Word* program.
2. Navigating the Internet
  - a. Use Internet Explorer, Netscape, or other browser to access Internet.
    - (1) Understand that browsers are different and that AOL doesn't configure properly with *GED Illinois* (see Tech Support).
    - (2) Understand e-mail (sending, replying, or attachments).
  - b. Enter a URL address such as [www.gedillinois.org](http://www.gedillinois.org).
  - c. Use back/forward buttons, and scroll bars.

### II. Mathematics Specific Skills

1. How to use the Casio fx260 solar calculator
  - a. Understand and use the calculator with basic computation skills.
  - b. Understand and use the calculator with word problems similar to the GED.
2. Use Internet sites to improve mathematics skills.
  - a. Access and navigate the following:  
<http://ali.apple.com/alisites/ali/exhibits/1000004/student.html>  
[www.math.com](http://www.math.com)  
[www.math.utep.edu/sosmath/algebra/fraction/frac1.html](http://www.math.utep.edu/sosmath/algebra/fraction/frac1.html)  
[www.mathcounts.org](http://www.mathcounts.org)  
[www.learner.org/exhibits/daily](http://www.learner.org/exhibits/daily)  
[www.206.152.229.6/GoFigure/html](http://www.206.152.229.6/GoFigure/html)  
[www.mathgoodies.com](http://www.mathgoodies.com)
  - b. Access and navigate [www.gedillinois.org](http://www.gedillinois.org) for sample lessons in Geometry—definition of angles.
  - c. Access and navigate [www.gedpractice.com](http://www.gedpractice.com).

### Communication Strategies

- Informally survey students about previous computer and calculator experience. Let them share what they already know and ask what they would like to learn.

- Use interactive Internet sites to increase involvement with the computer. Math games are very useful for math practice. Often students need individual help for the games since they have difficulty following the written instructions.

## Activities

Topics using the Casio fx-260 calculator (Use the book *Calculator Essentials for the GED* from McGraw-Hill/Contemporary written by Robert Mitchell and Dolores L. Emery and a classroom set of the Casio fx260 solar calculator.)

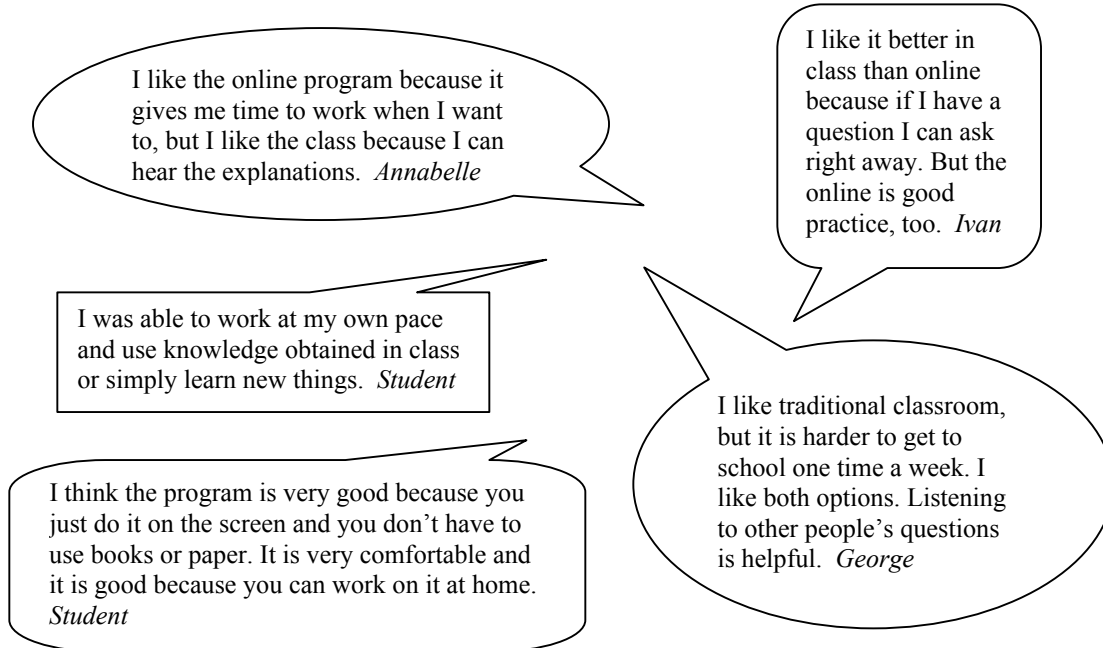
- Introduction to the Calculator
  1. Basic Computation Keys
  2. Correction Keys
  3. Function Keys: Using shift, mode, and memory keys
- Whole Numbers
  1. Adding whole numbers
  2. Subtracting whole numbers
  3. Multiplying whole numbers
  4. Dividing whole numbers
  5. Whole number word problems
  6. Using the memory key with the word problems
- Decimals
  1. Adding decimals
  2. Subtracting decimals
  3. Rounding decimals using the mode key
  4. Multiplying decimals
  5. Dividing decimals
  6. Decimal word problems
- Fractions
  1. Adding fractions
  2. Subtracting fractions
  3. Multiplying fractions
  4. Dividing fractions
  5. Changing fractions to decimals
  6. Fraction word problems
- Powers and Roots
  1. Finding the square and square root
  2. Finding the cube and the cube root
- Order of Operations
  1. Solving with and without parenthesis
  2. Order of operation word problems
  3. Upside down calculator worksheet

- Percents
  1. Finding the Part
  2. Finding the Whole
  3. Finding the Percent
  4. Finding the Percent of Increase or Decrease
  5. Percent Word Problems
- Geometry
  1. Types of Angles
  2. Pairs of Angles
  3. Types of Lines

### Mathematics on the Internet

1. Click the *Start* icon in the left-hand corner of the screen and go to *Programs*. Under *Programs*, click on *Internet Explorer*.
2. The Home page should be on the screen. Type in the following address to see exponents (or powers) in action: <http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/>.
3. For the next activity, type in [www.gedillinois.org](http://www.gedillinois.org).
4. Go to *Online Instruction*.
5. Go to *Sample Lesson*. (You need to scroll down to see the sample lesson.)
6. Go to *Math Lesson*.
7. Click on *Go to the sample*.
8. The sample math lesson on geometric lines and angles should come up. As you go through the lesson, click on "*Next*" to continue to the next page.
9. On the last page (page 13), please complete the *Learning Check Quiz*.
10. When you have completed this lesson, please go on to the next activity and type in [www.math.com](http://www.math.com).
11. Once the website comes up, under *select*, click on *Geometry*. Under *Building Blocks*, click on *Geometry words* and work through the lesson.
12. When you have completed the lesson, click on *workout* to practice what you have learned.

## Blended Online/Face-to-Face Courses



### ***Description***

Blended courses incorporate the use of *GED Illinois* with traditional instruction. Students are set up with hotmail e-mail accounts at registration. In addition to the traditional face-to-face classroom instruction, the students may use *GED Illinois* as an instructional resource in class and also at home if they choose. For the most part, the use of the *GED Illinois* program is reinforcement for the skill or lesson that had already been presented by the instructor. Therefore, ease in navigating the system is especially important for effective use of the program.

Blended classes that follow a hybrid model may be implemented in two ways: (1) students meet during regular class meeting times and use the online instruction in class or (2) students meet during most class meeting times but at other specified class times, they use the online instruction at home or at another location to complete required online instruction lessons.

Blended classes may also be implemented in a supplemental model. The *GED Illinois* program is then used during class time as a preparatory software program.

### ***Preparation for Using GED Illinois in Blended Courses***

An instructor should have a professional e-mail account or open a hotmail e-mail account to use with the *GED Illinois* program.

Open hotmail e-mail accounts for students who do not have an e-mail account or for those who prefer not to use personal e-mail accounts.

Instructors enroll their students into *GED Illinois*:

- Generate a login ID and password for each student to use to access the *GED Illinois* system.
- Check *Skip the Pre-Survey* to more effectively use Blended class time. (The Pre-Survey is unnecessary because students have already been placement tested and assessed by an instructor. Students can't always use class time to complete the survey because it leaves little time for instruction.)
- Develop a master list of students with their e-mail login IDs.

During class time, students can register into the system and become familiar with the program. Be sure to give them an information sheet with the *GED Illinois* website address and instructions on how to use their login ID and password to access the online instruction program (Appendix S).

Students may access *GED Illinois* as directed by instructors or as they desire at home.

### ***Online Orientation in Blended Learning Courses***

Perhaps the most important aspect of a successful Blended class is the adequate orientation of students. Comprehensive orientation includes a review of necessary computer skills such as using a mouse, keyboarding basics, accessing the Internet, using e-mail, and logging on to *GED Illinois*. For some students, this learning will take a matter of minutes; for others, it will be a several week process. Students need information about where they can get free access to computers with Internet capability such as in computer labs on campus and at public libraries.

The teacher can register the students and check *Skip the Pre-Survey* (once chosen it cannot be unchecked) before class orientation. This allows the group to access the program and get directly into the mechanics of *GED Illinois* at the first class meeting. Be sure to let the students practice logging in, do the first lesson in class, and see the response from the teacher. Make sure the students know that they should read the teacher responses after each lesson is reviewed. Emphasize that the students can interact with the teacher through e-mail to get answers to their questions.

### ***Blended Course Student Recordkeeping***

A simple journal book can be used to keep track of student progress. A "blue book" with a few pages designated for each student provides ample room for the teacher to make record-keeping notes involving each student's progress through the program and their comprehension. It is particularly useful to note scores on submissions and to compare resubmission scores.

Personal communication is by far the most effective form of feedback in the Blended classes. Students value and appreciate classroom interaction and rely heavily on that interaction for

feedback and direction. For this reason, it is important for the instructor to keep notes on lessons completed and general trends (concepts with which many students are struggling) to direct classroom instruction and tie the online lessons to class discussions.

### ***Class Size and Management Strategies***

A maximum class size should be set because of the time it takes the teacher to review online submissions in addition to the normal preparation and grading time required for regular face-to-face classes. A completed assignment of four or five lessons by one student may take the teacher 20 to 30 minutes to review and comment. A class of 15 students each finishing such an assignment would require a minimum of four hours of online work from the teacher.

One effective management strategy is to have a clear calendar and syllabus for classwork. Particularly for Blended classes, it is important for students to be able to plan ahead to make arrangements for computer access when working outside of class time. Sample syllabi for Blended classes integrate the curriculum (Appendix T).

Teachers can make use of a periodic update sheet. List the assignments and mark which ones the individual has completed. Make some goals for the student regarding realistic completion of some lessons by a set date. Also, make comments regarding particular successes or trials the student may be experiencing on the online program.

When structuring online lessons, it is important to narrow the focus for the students. Open-ended opportunities to work through the entire program are beneficial for a few students, but for most of them, the program can be overwhelming and sometimes frustrating in its scope.

During online sessions of the course, clear goals should be established that are connected to the classroom content of the sessions before and after. This helps the online sessions to remain meaningful parts of the whole course instruction rather than simply independent study opportunities. Furthermore, assigning specific lessons maintains course cohesiveness and a common frame of reference for classroom discussions.

Use the “Blended Course Evaluation Form” (Appendix U) to evaluate student responses to using online instruction with regular face-to-face instruction.

### ***Communication Strategies***

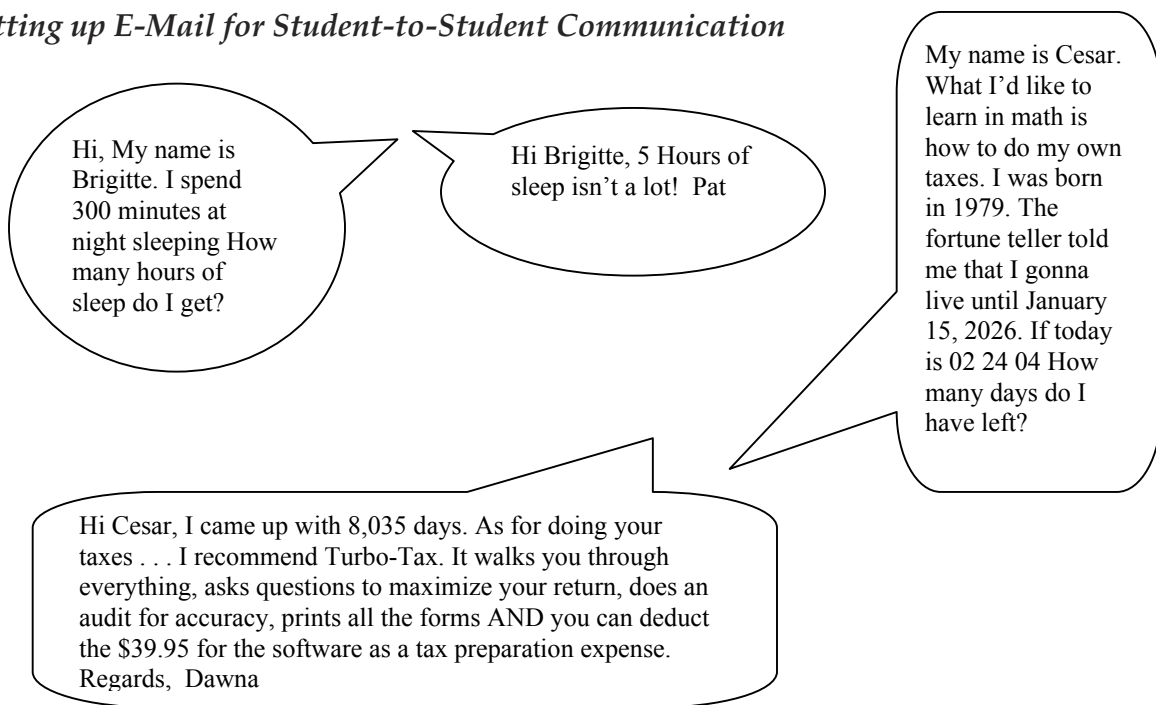
Any communication sent to students via e-mail should use a designated school/organization in the subject line such as “*school* online.” This enables students to immediately identify the e-mail as a course communication.

Each week when students enter class, ask them to check their portfolios to read the teacher’s comments and then have them continue working within the program.

If students are working on the program within the structured class time, it may be effective to have the students write a reaction comment to that day's computer activities before they leave class. This can be done in a journal form with the teacher responding on the same paper or by e-mail with the teacher returning it to the student each week.

Some prompts to obtain student feedback might include "Take a moment to reflect on your work tonight. What topics did you cover?" "Did the online program help you to learn the topic? Where did you leave off tonight?" Although the online program keeps track of what the student has completed, it may be helpful for the learner to write it down as well. Encourage the students to verbalize exactly what they did. This will help students to communicate future questions they may have to the teacher.

### ***Setting up E-Mail for Student-to-Student Communication***



To encourage student-to-student communication and learning using e-mail, set up communication groups.

1. Be sure that students fill out a form giving permission to share e-mail addresses (Appendix V).
2. In the address book, set up the e-mail addresses for the group and give the group a name such as Math Group.
3. To send an e-mail among the group, click on the *write mail* tab.
4. Select the Math Group address from the address book.
5. Type the message.
6. Hit the *send* button.
7. To reply to a group e-mail, use the *reply all* button.



## *Blended Course Content Strategies and Activities*

1. Have students submit writing samples via e-mail with an attachment. Then respond via e-mail with information and corrections.
2. Use *GED Illinois* for basic skills practice with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals outside of class time.
3. Use *GED Illinois* as a supplemental activity to reinforce lessons during class time.
4. Use e-mail groups to develop a topic under discussion. A possible social science topic might be as follows: Last week we discussed history. We used an “Overview of U.S. History Timeline” to discuss events, people in power, and economics during different time periods. Imagine that you could travel in time (just like in a movie, only you’re safe and will be able to come back safely), what time period would you like to visit? Why? Give at least two reasons for choosing that time period.
5. Unit Reviews can serve as concise summaries/ reviews of the material covered in class. They can be completed in about 30 minutes and are written in the GED Test question format.
6. Use the Computer Skills Worksheet (Appendix Q) to develop computer skills.
7. The following is an example online group writing assignment:

One of the goals of your *GED Illinois Online* grouping is to provide a network of people who can help each other, support each other, and discuss the GED process. This assignment will help introduce you to your online group, allow you to become more familiar with some of the features of *GED Illinois*, and give you an opportunity to practice writing.

### *Comparison and Contrast Assignment:*

- A. A comparison and contrast paper is designed to describe the ways in which things are similar and the ways in which they are different. You are going to be writing a comparison and contrast paper about your *GED Illinois* group. You may either choose several individual members of the group to compare and contrast, or you may look at the group as a whole.
- B. The first stage of this assignment is research. To begin the research process, each member of the group must ask three question, preferably open ended, not “yes” or “no”, to the whole group using e-mail. Please try to ask questions that you think will not be repeated by other members.
- C. Some time during the next week, you should respond to 15 questions using your e-mail. This way, each of you will receive a great deal of information to use in your paper as well as get to know a little bit about each other. You should also submit these responses to your teachers as your first writing assignment.
- D. When you sit down to write your papers, you are not expected to use all of this information. Instead, you will be analyzing all of the responses, looking for trends, and then writing about a few ways in which the people in the group are similar and different.

## GED Solely Online Course

With online, you don't feel pressure to perform. You don't feel stupid because you took too long to respond. In absence of online, I would not be pursuing my GED. *Paulette*

The GED online works well for me. I'm a little concerned at how long it takes me to grasp some things, or more like remembering everything I am reviewing. It's a lot at one time. Something I haven't been used to. With time, it'll all be fine. *Damon*

Yes, I would recommend the online course to other students. I really liked doing the pretesting as well as the units. It has helped me prepare for the Test but is the Test prepared for me! *Carol*

I will be sending the written assignment soon. I did three more lessons. It seems to get better the more I do. I would like lots of practice in this area. Can you recommend a book from the library? Thank you, *Sandra*

### *Description*

Solely Online courses use the *GED Illinois Online* instructional model. Solely Online courses are organized in the same way as traditional GED courses. For example, at Harper College, the courses are 8-week, 2 credit hour classes consisting of Math in one course, Social Studies and Science in another, and Language Arts Writing and Reading in a third. Students enroll in any or all of these courses to prepare for the GED Test.

Instruction is enhanced through instructor/student communication and a variety of instructional tools. For instance, English students may be given extra writing assignments, math students may be given more comprehensive instruction on the use of the calculator, and reading students may be asked to explore helpful background-building Internet sites.

Communication is an important part of Solely Online classes. Student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and student-to-academic resources such as student advisor and tech support need to be emphasized to enhance successful completion of *GED Illinois*.

An important component to Solely Online classes is the student orientation process. Students review the technology skills required to effectively use the *GED Illinois* program. Through the orientation process, students become acquainted with procedures for good student-to-teacher communication.

## *GED Solely Online Orientation*

Effective orientation of students directly correlates to a successful online experience. It is extremely important that students have computer access at home, on campus, or through other outlets such as work or public libraries. Students need to be provided with information regarding locations to use computers on campus or in the community for free. Taking students to centers on campus where they can access the Internet on the computer alleviates a lot of anxiety from novice computer users. Use the orientation process to let the students practice accessing the Internet, e-mailing, and logging on to the *GED Illinois* website.

After students have registered, filled out a “GED Email Form” (Appendix H), and enrolled into the *GED Illinois* program, an orientation appointment is set up for each student (Appendix I). Due to open enrollment, orientations are scheduled weekly on Tuesdays at either 1:30 PM or 4:30 PM. A new student is asked to schedule the orientation during the first week of enrollment. Usually three to four students attend the same orientation session.

At the scheduled orientation, an online instructor takes the students to the computer lab to acclimate them to the *GED Illinois Online* program. A syllabus (Appendix W) and orientation packet (Appendix X) for each subject area (Language Arts Writing, Language Arts Reading, Math, Social Studies, and Science) is distributed to the students. The instructor shows the student how to access the program and gives the student a login ID and password. The student at this time logs in and completes the *GED Illinois Online* registration form. The instructor should make sure that the whole registration form is filled out; otherwise, the program will not let the student continue.

Once the registration form is completed, the program will take the student to the Student Center page, which includes a listing of all the subjects (modules), the help desk, the portfolio for each subject, and the cyber café. At this page, the student should click on one of the subjects under modules to see the next page. Here is where the Pre-Survey, units, and Post-Survey are listed. The instructor should explain that each subject area has a Pre-Survey, which must be completed before access to the units is allowed. In the Solely Online classes, students are not allowed to bypass the Pre-Survey. The purpose of the Pre-Survey is to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the student. Once the student completes the Pre-Survey, the program will recommend, based on the student’s performance, which lessons they need to do. The lessons will be highlighted with an arrow that reads *To Do*. Lessons that are not indicated as *To Do* will read *Optional*.

At this point, the instructor should remember eight points about the online program:

1. The Pre-Surveys are long for each subject. If the student has to walk away during the Pre-Survey, it can be continued from wherever the student has left off as long as the *continue* button at the bottom of the page has been activated. If the student logs out, closes, or loses

connection before clicking on *continue*, the work will be lost. Also, if the student takes longer than 45 minutes before clicking on *continue*, the work will be lost because the program times you out.

2. The student should complete two to three lessons per subject area each week. This is based on an eight-week course. Recommend to the students that if they are enrolled in all three classes, they should set aside six hours to work online per week. If they are enrolled in two classes, they should try for four hours; and for one class, they should try for two hours per week. The teacher should discuss with the student the value of having strong self-discipline skills, time management skills, and determination in order to be successful in an online course.
3. The student must get a 70% or higher in order to get the lesson approved by the instructor. If a score on a lesson is lower than 70%, then the student may be asked to redo the lesson. If the student does the lesson over again and still gets a score lower than 70%, then ask the student to do the supplemental activity. Sometimes instructors e-mail alternate practice exercises that they have created, so the students can have more practice and are not simply redoing the exact same lesson.
4. The instructor should stress the importance of the portfolio menu under the Student Center page. Within each subject area, there is a chart that shows the lesson, date, and time submitted; status of the lesson (whether the teacher has reviewed/approved the work or not); and comments submitted from the instructor. If there is a green dot under the comments, the student should click on the dot to read the comments/assignments from the instructor. If students wish to communicate with the instructor via e-mail, they may do so under the cyber café menu where they can click on *email teacher*.
5. If the students are having any problems with the program, they should let the instructor know the unit, lesson number, and page so that it can be looked into.

The instructor should discuss with his or her goals for the course and plans for taking the GED Test. General questions about the test are also discussed. This is also a good time to discuss some of the incentives available to students for completing the *GED Illinois* and taking the GED Test. For example, Harper College offers scholarships to students based on their GED scores. Students should be made aware that if the online course does not work for them, they could easily transfer into a regular class at any time.

6. The subject area specifics are discussed through the orientation packets.

Math – Use of the calculator, how to fill in the grids, math packet, units covered in the online program

English – Additional writing assignments in the comment area of the portfolio section and units covered in the online reading and writing language arts in the online program

Social Studies – Constitution requirements and units covered in the social studies and science online program

The following is a list of what is included in each subject’s orientation packet:

- Syllabus for the *GED Illinois Online* course (Appendix W)
- Online Student Orientation Start-up Information (Appendix X)

*English/Writing*

List of *GED Illinois Online* units and lessons

List of computer sites on our campus

*Reading*

List of *GED Illinois Online* units and lessons

Constitution Test Information

*Mathematics*

List of *GED Illinois Online* units and lessons

Math packet, including arithmetic skill reminders and practice, measurements, order of operation rules, exponent rules, problem-solving tips, the Formula Page, and sample grids

Calculator packet with sample calculator skill problems and answers

7. Students are given a list of campus computer labs for student use, including locations and times when they are open.
8. The following page is a helpful teacher checklist of reminders for Solely Online orientation.

## *Checklist for GED Illinois Solely Online Orientation*

### \_\_\_ **How to Access Program (Provide student login ID and password)**

- *Special note: GED Illinois and the AOL browser are not compatible. AOL users must access the site in the following way:*
  1. Sign into AOL the way one would normally.
  2. Minimize AOL by clicking on the (-) sign in the upper right-hand corner of screen.
  3. Double click on Internet Explorer icon (or click on start, programs, Internet Explorer) and follow steps for access to *GED Illinois*.

### \_\_\_ **Student Logs in and Completes Registration Form**

#### \_\_\_ **Modules Menu, Subject Areas Pre-Surveys, Units, and Lessons**

- Each subject area has a Pre-Survey, which must be completed before access to the Units is allowed. The Pre-Survey determines strengths and weaknesses, marking lessons as To Do or Optional.
- The Pre-Surveys are rather long. They can be continued from wherever you left off as long as the Continue button at the bottom of the page has been activated. So, the Pre-Survey can only be saved in chunks (i.e., in Social Studies one must complete #1-13 and click on Continue in order to save that work. If one logs out, closes, or loses connection before clicking on Continue, the work will be lost. Also, if one takes longer than 45 minutes before clicking on Continue, the work will be lost. The program times out.
- If there are any problems with the program, let the teacher know the unit, lesson, and page so that it can be looked into and reported.

#### \_\_\_ **Portfolio Menu**

- Within each subject area there is a chart that shows Activity, Date and Time Submitted, Status (whether teacher has reviewed work or not), and Comments.
- It is *very important* to click on the green dots under Comments to see teacher comments.

#### \_\_\_ **Help Desk Menu**

- Some help with a problem is available if one clicks on Support, but it is strongly suggested that one contact teachers about problems.

#### \_\_\_ **Cyber Café Menu**

- Click on Email Teacher to communicate with the teacher through the program (or see the syllabus for e-mail addresses or teacher phone numbers to call).
- The Discussion Board link is here for class activities.

#### \_\_\_ **Subject-Area Specifics**

- MATH – Introduce the calculator, math packet, Formula Page, and Answer Grids
- ENGLISH – Explain Language Arts and additional writing assigned in Comments area of Portfolio
- SOCIAL STUDIES and SCIENCE – Discuss Constitution requirements

#### \_\_\_ **Student Questions and Online Course Difficulties and Contacts**

- If the online course is difficult for the student or the student remains uncomfortable with this type of learning, please contact the teacher or the office staff (847/925-6223). An AED Student Advisor and AED Tech Support are also available for student support.
- Students can easily transfer into traditional face-to-face courses if necessary.

## *Solely Online Course Student Recordkeeping*

A printout of the *Edit Class* page can be used as a whole class roster. In alphabetical order within each class section, it shows the student's name, e-mail address, login ID, and password. As new students are added to a class section, print an updated copy. Keep everyone who joins a specific class within a given semester in the same section. For example, spring semester Solely Online students could be in section "E," summer semester students in section "F," fall semester students in section "G," etc. Keep students that are in face-to-face Blended classes in section "A" each semester. If a student repeats an online class for the next eight-week session, then that student can be moved and placed in the new section via the program and individual folder.

After a student completes the Online Orientation, start a file folder for the student. The file folder holds the student program registration sheet; e-mail information form (Appendix H); the individual syllabus; a printout of all the units, lessons, Pre-Survey, and Post-Survey for the subject matter; and a printout of the *Student Placement* based on the Pre-Survey. Since this page appears in a separate window, it is easiest to left click on this window, right click for command menu, and then left click on *Print*. On the top of the printout, write the student's name and Pre-Survey score. After reviewing each student activity, date and record the score under the appropriate Unit/Lesson. It is very informational to use the number correct over total number of questions rather than percentage correct as activities vary in length. This makes it easier to assess a student's progress with the material. Be sure to keep a record if the student has to redo the lesson or has completed a teacher-assigned supplemental activity. When the student completes the Post-Survey, write that score near the Pre-Survey score. In addition, as students correspond with the teacher, print the communications and file them in the student's folder. It may also be a good idea to keep copies/printouts of teacher correspondence with the student; the program does keep an electronic record of sent e-mails, however.

Another helpful tool for recordkeeping is a traditional grade book. List the students enrolled in the class and the dates for each week. The following notations can provide useful information at a glance:

- E = Orientation
- RS = Returning student
- X = E-mail sent to student about lack of work
- R = Student responded
- WA = Writing assignment given
- I = Lesson submitted

The advantage to keeping a grade book is that all student participation can be quickly assessed; that tracking is especially helpful if the class has open enrollment.

At the end of the course, print student portfolios. The individual student portfolio lists each completed activity, date/time of completion, and status. This along with the *Student Placement*

printout provides an overall assessment of student participation and progress throughout the semester.

Teachers turn in both their attendance sheets and portfolio printouts after each eight-week session. All online students are entered into STAIRS in the same way as any other student. Rather than set up classes as open entry, however, Lab-Open Entry is chosen. This allows the program to record each lesson submitted and approved by the instructor in the STAIRS system.

### *Class Size and Management Strategies*

Class size will vary each session, but for the most part, class size can accommodate the normal number of students as in a face-to-face class. Enrollment can reach up to 30 students, but as is true with face-to-face classes, only a percentage of the total enrolled actually participate (“attend”).

After students have attended the Orientation session, all paperwork is filed in individual student folders marked with a Post-it® as a reminder that the student has attended Orientation but has not yet begun work in the program. When the student submits the Pre-Survey, the Post-it® is removed, and a printout of the *Student Placement based on Pre-Survey* page with the name and number correct written in is included in the file.

Some students jump directly to the unit reviews to try to save time. In those cases, very few students do well and it is strongly recommended that they go back and do the lessons under that unit.

If students send correspondence, print these and keep them in the file folder. It is also often helpful to print out and file the teacher response to the student.

At the end of the semester, print student portfolios. The individual student portfolio lists each completed activity, date/time of completion, and status. This along with the *Student Placement* printout provides an overall assessment of student participation and progress throughout the semester.

Log onto the program at least four times a week to check on student progress, to send encouraging and informational messages, and to record scores in their folders.

### *Communication Strategies*

Any communication sent to students via e-mail should use a designated school/organization in the subject line such as “*school* online.” This enables students to immediately identify the e-mail as a course communication.



When a lesson is reviewed, teacher comments should include the score as a percentage and a statement that relates the activity score to GED Test scoring. For example, if a student receives 70% correct, write that 70% is an okay score and that on the GED 70% correct is a passing score. Include a reminder that in practice materials, it is beneficial to strive for a higher percentage correct. Every comment should be positive and encouraging. Provide study tips reminding students to go back and read over questions answered incorrectly, read correct answer, and ask whether the correct answer makes sense. End the response with, “Do you have any questions?” or “Let me know if you have questions.” Comment on every lesson completed.

Since communication and a sense of connection are crucial to the success of an online class, e-mail the whole class about every two weeks. In these casual conversational e-mails, encourage participation; discuss time management in terms of how many lessons should be completed or should be done per week; suggest test-taking strategies and preparations; and give GED Test information (i.e., scoring, time, types of questions on the test, percent of questions in various content areas, GED Testing dates, and requests for students’ test plans). Try to adapt whatever information would be shared with face-to-face GED students into a short concise e-mail for online students. After receiving these messages, students often respond, improving communication and connectedness. Students rarely respond to lesson comments in individual activities, and this may be due to format issues. There is no e-mail capability when students are reading teacher comments in their portfolios; whereas it is very simple for a student to send a reply to an e-mail that the teacher has sent. When an instructor e-mails a student directly, it is more likely that the student will respond by e-mail or by phone, continuing the line of communication.

If possible, find out the students’ goals and when they plan to test. When this information is revealed, the teacher can offer more help and options to prepare for the test. For example, as a student is nearing the completion of the lessons or has taken the Post-Survey, the instructor can recommend that the student go into the office to take some practice tests to see if the student is ready to take the GED Test.

### *Sample E-Mail Communication: Teacher-to-Students*

#### **Class E-Mail Messages**

7/13/04

Hi!

Hope your summer is going well. I can’t believe we’re actually in Week 6—time is flying.

For those of you who need to take the Constitution Test, have you been able to study for it? When do you plan on taking the Constitution Test? Let me know if you need any help or if you’d like to come in on a Tues, Wed, or Thurs afternoon to take the test.

Diana

5/12/04

Happy Spring!

It finally feels like spring at the very end of the Spring semester! Just wanted to remind you that Friday is the last day to submit work in *GED Illinois*. If you would like to continue in the online class over the summer, you will need to re-register in the AED Office. Call (847) 925-6223 to make an appointment to complete paperwork and the TABE test. You will not need to do an orientation again. Once you register, we will enroll you in the online class to begin June 7.

What are your plans for taking the GED Test? Are you registered for a test date or plan to register for a certain date? If you would like to take a Practice Test in Social Studies and/or Science, I will be available to give these during the week of May 17—Monday and Tuesday for sure and possibly Thursday or Friday. Let me know what day and time would be best for you. Each Practice Test takes approximately 40 minutes to complete.

Best wishes for continued success.

Diana

4/12/04 (week 12 of 16-week semester)

Hi!

Hope you had a nice Holiday weekend and a happy spring! Some of you began class back in January, others joined class throughout February and March, and others as recently as a week ago. If anyone has taken the GED Test during this time, please let me know. If you are planning to take the GED, the test dates at Harper are May 1 and 8, June 22 and 23, July 20 and 21, and August 17 and 18. The test is given in two sessions. Each session runs from 7:30 AM to about 12:30 PM. You can print a registration form at [www.cookcountyped.org/2004-App-English.pdf](http://www.cookcountyped.org/2004-App-English.pdf). This form needs to be mailed with a money order or bank check about four weeks before your requested test date.

There are five weeks left in the semester. Now is the time to really push towards completing your goals. If you have any questions about the GED Test or need help in completing your study in the *GED Illinois* program, please let me know.

Best wishes for continued success.

Diana

1/30/04 to students who are participating

Hi!

Congratulations on completing the Pre-Survey in Social Studies and/or Science and possibly some lessons. I strongly suggest that you complete only the lessons marked To Do. You can go back to the Optional lessons at a later time. There is so much in this program, and you want to concentrate on the lessons that will help support any weak areas you might have. I think some of the lessons in this program are set up better than others. Let me know if you have any questions or problems and I will let you know how the various lessons and your performance

on them relate to the GED Test. Be sure to click on your Portfolio to check my comments—the green buttons—so that you can receive my feedback on the lessons and your progress.

TIME MANAGEMENT: How much time have you spent working in the *GED Illinois* program? If you were attending classes, you would have spent four hours working on Social Studies and Science, four hours in Math, and four hours in Language Arts Reading & Writing. If you find yourself thinking uh-oh I'm already playing catch-up, not to worry. The best part of this program is how individualized it is. But the point I want to make is that you will need to dedicate a certain amount of time to studying for the GED. If you are enrolled in three classes, try really hard to set aside about six hours a week to work in the *GED Illinois* program. If you are in two classes, try for four hours; and if you are in one class, set aside two hours. Let me know how it goes.

Best wishes for continued success.

Diana

1/30/04 to students who have not completed any work yet

Hi!

This is the second week of class. By next week you should have your Pre-Surveys in Social Studies and Science completed. Let me know if you have any problems in working through the Pre-Survey.

PRE-SURVEYS: If you cannot finish all the questions at once, the program will save your place and you can continue where you left off—EXCEPT I have found that if you stop in the middle of a page, it will only save up to the last time you clicked on Continue. For example, in Social Studies, the first page consists of numbers 1-13; then you click on Continue. Say you completed numbers 1-10 then you need to stop. The program will not save 1-10 because you did not get to the Continue button. I know it is pretty weird, but that is how it is set up. We do not have any control over this.

Once you get the Pre-Surveys completed, the program will mark lessons To Do or Optional based on how you did on the Pre-Survey. It is worth your time to complete and try your best on it because it will show how you can lighten the study load.

TIME: How much time have you spent working in the *GED Illinois* program? If you were attending classes, you would have spent four hours working on Social Studies and Science, four hours in Math, and four hours in Language Arts Reading & Writing. If you find yourself thinking uh-oh, I'm already playing catch-up, not to worry. The best part of this program is how individualized it is. But the point I want to make is that you will need to dedicate a certain amount of time to studying for the GED. If you are enrolled in three classes, try really hard to set aside six hours to work in the *GED Illinois* program. If you are in two classes, try for four hours; if you are in one class, try for two hours. Let me know how it goes.

Best wishes for success.

Diana

12/1/03

Season's Greetings!

Hope you had a nice Thanksgiving. I enjoyed seeing family and eating a lot—especially dessert!

There are about two weeks left in the semester. So, among your many other things to do, you might want to check where you're at in studying for the GED Test.

When do you plan on taking the GED Test? There are some changes in how the GED Test will be given in Cook County. Unless you're already registered for the Dec. 6 test date, the next opportunity to take the test will be in February. I will provide more information on actual dates when I receive it.

Please take a look at your calendar and schedule a time to come in to take the TABE test. We need a post-test for all our students. Please call the AED office (847) 925-6223 to schedule a time when you can test. You may also register to retake classes at this time.

Best wishes for continued success.

Diana

12/19/03

Season's Greetings!

Hope you are not feeling too busy and overwhelmed with all this time of year brings. We need to close the *GED Illinois Online* program for the Fall '03 semester at this time. The course will be available again starting Jan. 20 and will run through May.

Next semester, we hope to increase communication among our online students, provide more study tips, and do other things within the course to help you succeed. If you would like to sign up again, please call (847) 925-6223 and someone, probably Donna or Ruth, will give you necessary information. You will also need to make an appointment to take the TABE test, which acts as the post-test for Fall semester and pre-test for Spring semester.

If you find that you have time to study for the GED over the break, I suggest visiting the website [www.gedpractice.com](http://www.gedpractice.com); listening to 91.5 FM (Chicago Public Radio/National Public Radio—like channel 11 only it's on the radio); watching channels 11 and 20; and if you have cable, watching Discovery Channel, Learning Channel, History Channel, Animal Planet, etc. The informational shows, not some of the weird reality shows, provide a lot of background knowledge that is helpful for understanding the GED Social Studies and Science questions.

When you get a chance, please stay in contact. Let me know when you plan to take the GED Test, any questions you may have, and tell me how the online course was in helping you to prepare for the test. Hope to hear from you soon. I'll check my e-mail periodically during break. Have a really nice Winter Break.

Best wishes for success.

Diana

10/22/03

How are you? Some of you have been in class since the end of August/beginning of September. Others have just joined the class this week. This is a gentle reminder/pep talk about time, goals, steps to reach goals, and success.

The *GED Illinois* program is huge. There are many activities to complete when you look at all five subject areas. Anyone feeling overwhelmed yet? I often feel overwhelmed by everything in my life and the many things I would like to accomplish. But I've found if I calmly take one day at a time (often easier said than done), set aside the time when I'll work on something, and then just do it (sorry about the Nike reference), it actually gets done. Lately, due to an illness in my family, my chunks of time have become smaller and smaller. (I've been meaning to write to you for the last two weeks.) Better late than never—right? Lately, I figure 20 minutes on a task is better than 0.

Think about your goals; write them down (if that helps you); look at the various days of your week. When can you dedicate 20 minutes, 30 minutes, or an hour to studying for the GED? Even if you can't complete the program in the next 8 weeks—that's OK. You can continue next semester wherever you left off. Do a little at a time and it will get done. And before you know it, you'll have passed the GED Test and be ready to add something new to the To Do list. Hope to hear from you soon.

Best wishes for continued success.

Diana

9/15/03

Greetings!

It's the beginning of the 4th week of class. Some of you have just recently registered. Others have been in class from the beginning. At this point in the semester, you should at least complete the Pre-Survey in each of the subject areas you are registered. This will give you a good indication of your strengths and weaknesses and also help you focus on the lessons you should complete. Please let me know if you have any questions. You can e-mail me through the online program or send an e-mail to [dcincine@harpercollege.edu](mailto:dcincine@harpercollege.edu), or call (847) 925-6596.

Best wishes for success.

Diana

### *Solely Online: Social Studies and Science Strategies and Activities*

1. E-mail students occasionally. Cover topics such as Constitution Test information and reminders; the importance of developing background knowledge through reading newspapers, magazines, watching TV, listening to NPR (National Public Radio); and GED Test reading strategies and reminders.

2. Group Activity for the Class Discussion Board: Get to Know Each Other Historically  
Send an e-mail message to the whole class:

Studying for the GED can be miserable, fun, frustrating, and interesting. Studying in a group can help you to better connect with the GED materials as we connect with one another. Misery loves company? Or in other words, this is a way to enjoy meeting new people and learning together. Actually, you will find that discussing Social Studies and/or Science topics along with your plans to take the GED is a good way to study. First, we need to introduce ourselves. Let us do that in a historical way. Send a message to the group by Reply All and we will all receive your message.

Tell your name and an important event that happened in the year you were born, but do not tell the year. Let us see how many of the group members can figure out what year you were born.

Go to [www.hyperhistory.com](http://www.hyperhistory.com) and click on *Hyper History Online*. Click on the *Events* button (left side), and then click on the *years* link (right side) for a great timeline that shows many different events—political, cultural, scientific, etc.

Complete: My name is \_\_\_\_\_. The year I was born \_\_\_\_\_.

For example, here is mine:

My name is Diana. The year I was born the USSR launched Sputnik. Can you guess what year I was born?

Good luck! Your Teacher

3. Group Activity: Building Background Knowledge in Science

Send an e-mail message to the whole class:

Do you like watching TV? Do you get stuck in traffic a lot? A great way to study for the GED Social Studies and Science Test is to watch documentary style shows (not reality stuff) on channel 11, Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, and History Channel, and to listen to National Public Radio (NPR) on WBEZ 91.5 FM. Also, visit websites such as the following:

<http://americaslibrary.gov> (The Library of Congress interactive website)

<http://literacynet.org/sciencelincs/> (click on Student/Learner or Hands-on Science in left menu bar)

Let's try an activity together:

During the next two weeks, find a science or social studies news story that you think is important and write a short summary—one paragraph that tells the what, who, where, when, and why of the story.

Or

I think the news story about \_\_\_\_ (title) \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_ found \_\_\_\_ (source) \_\_\_\_ is important because . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

E-mail your summary to everyone in class by using the Reply All function.

Best wishes for continued success.

Your Teacher

### *Solely Online: Language Arts Writing and Reading Strategies and Activities*

1. Ask for a writing assignment after the Pre-Survey is completed or after completion of Unit I. Give the assignment and topic in the comments within the review of the Pre-Survey. By doing this, it may be possible to check on whether a student has been reading an instructor's comments. If students do not complete the assignment, they may be avoiding the writing, or they may not be accessing the comments.
2. After obtaining their permission, pair up students for writing assignments, which they will complete by working together via e-mail. An effective assignment is the standard interview. By interviewing one another, they can each develop a comparison/contrast paper to submit. At the same time, they may meet a "buddy" with whom they can converse via e-mail. This can help increase their engagement in online learning.
3. Copy writing that a student submits and mark sections that need editing in blue. Ask the student to find and edit for a specific problem. For example, from a student essay, one paragraph may be selected in blue. The student is then asked to find two run-ons, correct them, and resend them to the instructor.
4. Besides providing encouragement, explanation, or correction, comments can also serve to establish rapport and better communication between the student and his or her instructors. For example, in the Language Arts Reading units, one lesson is based on "A Rose for Emily" and *Arsenic and Old Lace*. If you know the short story and the play, sharing your reaction or sharing an experience can produce a response from the student. Sometimes just asking about a book or a play a student likes can lead to an exchange of communication.
5. To supplement instruction, e-mail teacher-made practices on lessons to students. Not only can you control the length and intensity of the practice, but you provide some special attention that adds personalization. Be sure that any e-mail you send is identified by whatever special designation that you have chosen (in our case, it is Harper Online Course) so that students can readily distinguish it from the spam and junk mail that they probably receive.
6. Telephone students (with their permission). They will tell you much more on the phone than they will by e-mail. The more ways that students are engaged, the more they are likely to succeed in the course.



## *Solely Online: Mathematics Strategies and Activities*

1. When reviewing a lesson, always begin with a positive and encouraging statement. Based on the lesson and the students' work, provide them with formulas, definitions, and tips to help them solve the word problems within the lessons. If a student wants more practice/work on a specific topic, e-mail or snail mail the student practice problems. Also, remind students to read the problem carefully and ask whether the correct answer makes sense compared to the other choices given. Always end with a comment about calling or e-mailing a response with any questions or concerns. Online students need to know that they can ask questions via any form of communication and that the instructor is available if they need help with their math.
2. Comment on those lessons where the student has received a 70% or lower; otherwise, mark the lesson approved. Because one often wonders if students read comments and suggestions, the instructor might include a question that calls for a response.
3. The following is a "get to know you" activity to keep the lines of communication open and ongoing while at the same time being related to math. The activity is e-mailed to groups of students:

Hi everyone.

One of the nice parts about any class, whether it be in the classroom or online, is the exchange of ideas and the fact that we always can learn from one another. So, our first step is to introduce us to the rest of the group. Please answer the following questions about yourself and e-mail your response to the group.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

What do you want to learn in math that could help you in life?

Tell a mathematical fact about yourself. For example, I am 19,972,800 minutes old. How old do you think I am?

Best wishes!

Maria

Sample student responses to the e-mail:

"I hope to sharpen my math skills so I can quickly determine the formulas needed to figure the square footage of different shapes such as cylinders, ovals, and octagons."

"I weigh 67,200 grams. How much is that in pounds?"

"What I'd like to learn in math is to improve my life and how to do my taxes."

"I was born on September 25, 1979; the fortune teller told me that I am going to live until January 15, 2026. If today is 2/24/04, how many days do I have left?"

"I want to learn the math necessary to help my son with his math homework."

"I am 173 cm tall. How tall am I in feet and inches?"