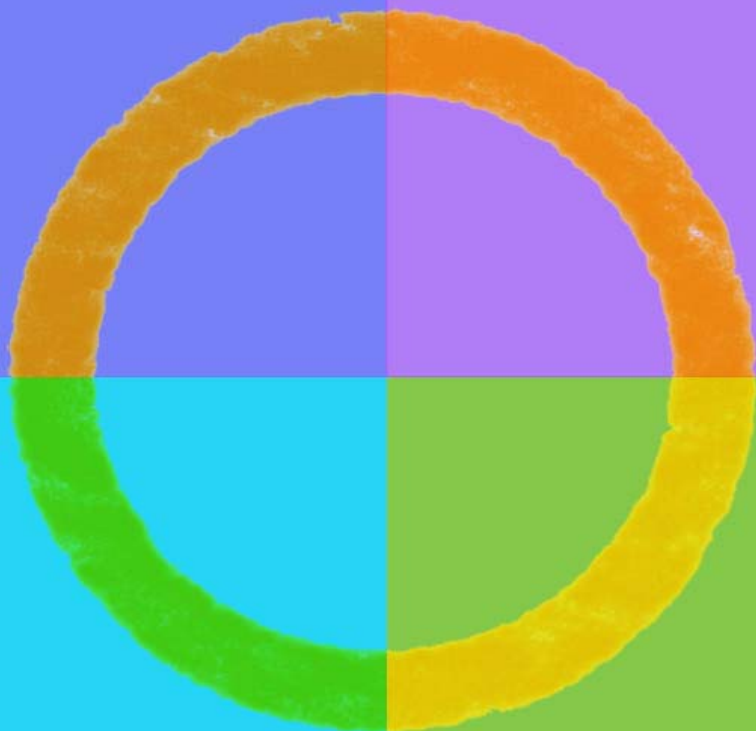


Going Beyond the Basics Resource Guide



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Chapter 1: Introduction to Going Beyond the Basics

“We cannot employ people here who cannot articulate clearly, cannot think clearly, who do not have the ability to absorb data, read effectively, write effectively . . .”

Head of a Holding Company with Employees Ranging from Executive-Level Managers to Administrative Staff¹

Introduction to the GED and the 21st Century Workplace

You've probably heard the phrase “It's a jungle out there.” The media – television, radio, newspapers – all talk about the world of work as a “job jungle.” The American workplace has changed and will continue to change. In the work world of the past, many people worked in jobs that required that they do the same task over and over again. The workplace of today and tomorrow requires that workers have higher skill levels and are able to effectively complete a variety of tasks.

Obtaining a GED (General Educational Development) diploma is an important, if not the primary goal, for an adult education student. It creates the possibility of opening many different doors. However, while a GED or high school diploma at one time provided access to life-long opportunities, such as higher-level positions in the workplace, today's world of work requires an increased demand for higher-level skills, as well as a highly trained workforce. GED students need the highest level of skills possible upon graduation in order to be competitive in the 21st century “job jungle.”

The GED Testing Service (GEDTS) reports that most adults pursuing their GED diploma desire additional education. According to GEDTS (2008), over 60% of the adults who took the GED Test indicated interest in continuing their education. Studies show that 28-30% of all GED recipients enroll in two or four year colleges. That means that 70-72% of GED recipients are either entering or are currently in the workforce.²

Research studies have been conducted on what is meant by transitioning from a high school setting to college. However, few studies have been conducted on the *transitioning process* of an adult education/GED program to college or the workplace.

Many GED students come to class wanting to “just take the test” and go on to a job. However, if a person attains only those skills required to minimally pass the GED

¹ The American Diploma Project. (2004). *Ready or not: Creating a high school diploma that counts*. Washington, DC: Achieve, Inc. Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.achieve.org/node/552>.

² American Council on Education. (2008). *Who Passed the GED Tests? 2008 Statistical Report*. Washington, DC: GED Testing Service.

Test, it is highly likely that this person will not have the skills needed to be successful in obtaining a higher-skilled entry level position. For some adults, the need to return to school for additional training or a degree after having been in the workforce for several years is also a reality. People are realizing that more and more, additional training and postsecondary education are absolutely necessary in order to simply maintain their jobs.

Going Beyond the Basics is a project designed to assist programs in the transition of adult education students to employment and postsecondary education and training. The GED Plus program initiated the movement towards enhancing the GED curriculum through incorporating higher-level skills and college preparation materials. However, there continues to be a need to expand the GED curriculum to incorporate higher-level skills in more authentic contexts. **Going Beyond the Basics** is designed to address the needs of those adults who plan to attend postsecondary education, as well as those adults who:

- are seeking better jobs and need higher-level academic skills to enhance their employability; and
- need instruction in higher-level skills in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics to pass the GED.

It has often been a commonly held belief that students planning to go to college need to take more rigorous coursework than those going directly into the workforce. Today, however, many employers are convinced that entry-level workers need the same knowledge and skills as college-bound students. Preparing all students for both postsecondary education and the workforce should be the goal of every GED program.

What Is the Expectation of the Workforce?

"We should be educating all students according to a common academic expectation, one that prepares them for both postsecondary education and the workforce." (ACT, 2006).³

The primary goal of any GED program should be to provide students with the skills to live productive and noteworthy lives, which includes entering careers that provide meaningful work and wages sufficient to support a family. In order to achieve this goal, it is important to understand the expectations of today's workforce.

The American Diploma Project is a major research initiative that attempts to identify the expectations of both postsecondary educators and employers in today's world and the skills necessary for all high school graduates to possess in order to be successful. This project spent almost two years interviewing college faculty and employers throughout the United States. From the information obtained, the following findings were noted:

³ ACT. (2006). *Ready for college and ready for work: Same or different?* Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf>.

- Most high school graduates need remedial help when entering postsecondary education. Nationwide, over 50% of students need at least one remedial course.
- Most college students never attain degrees. Fewer than half of those students who enter college leave with any type of degree.
- More than 60% of employers do not feel high school graduates have the skills to be successful in the workforce. They rate graduates' skills in grammar, spelling, writing, and basic math as fair or poor.
- Most workers question the preparation that high schools provided to them and rate literacy and critical-thinking skills as much more important than job-specific or computer skills.

The result of the research from The American Diploma Project was the development of a set of benchmarks in the areas of English and mathematics. These benchmarks include the higher-level skills identified as necessary by employers. In mathematics, the benchmarks reflect the content typically taught in Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and Data Analysis and Statistics. The English benchmarks require strong oral and written communication skills, as well as analytical and reasoning skills.

Both the English and mathematics benchmarks were identified and refined as a result of over 18 months of research conducted in postsecondary institutions and high-performance workplaces. Also incorporated into The American Diploma Project are workplace tasks and postsecondary assignments. Diverse occupations, such as plant, production, and construction managers, technicians, carpenters, teachers, machine operators, foresters, and others are used to show how the benchmarks can be taught to reflect the real world of work.

The work of the American Diploma Project differs from many state's academic standards in that its benchmarks are based in empirical evidence of what the postsecondary world – employers and educators – actually require of their employees and students. This is the type of background information necessary for GED teachers to access in order to ensure that the curriculum they teach is relevant, as well as rigorous.⁴

Another recent study that supports the need for all students to be educated to a comparable level of readiness in reading and mathematics, regardless of whether they are entering college or the workforce, is the ACT study – Ready for College and Ready or Work: Same or Different? (2006).⁵

This study identified the level of reading and mathematics skills that students needed to be ready for entry-level jobs that did not require degrees, but did pay wages sufficient to support families and offer the potential for career advancement. Like The America Diploma research study, the ACT study supports the commonalities between skills for college and for workforce readiness.

⁴ The American Diploma Project. (2004). *Ready or not: Creating a high school diploma that counts*. Washington, DC: Achieve, Inc. Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.achieve.org/node/552>.

⁵ ACT. (2006). *Ready for college and ready for work: Same or different?* Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf>.

What Skills Are Needed in the Workforce?

O*NET – The Occupational Information Network

O*NET, the Occupational Information Network, is a national database that includes jobs and worker attributes developed for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA). The database provides detailed occupational characteristics, educational requirements, and skills for all defined occupations.

O*NET is also constantly updated, making it an excellent set of informational tools for the classroom teacher.

O*NET provides many different types of information. When accessing O*NET, begin at the Resource Center and learn about the different products that are available. For the GED classroom, O*NET's information about different types of career exploration tools, testing and assessment guides, and information on different occupations is very useful.

O*NET Online allows teachers to access different types of searches. If teachers want to help a student find out what type of skills or training an occupation requires, students can complete a skill search on that occupation. O*NET uses a coding system called SOC which groups occupations by the types of tasks, skills, knowledge, and education required for the job. An example would be researching the tasks that a production worker completes and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed. O*NET would indicate that this position requires a high school diploma or GED, but either no formal training or minimal training for licensure is required.

Also included in the description are the different types and levels of skills a person would need for a particular job, including:

- basic skills,
- complex problem-solving skills,
- resource management skills,
- social skills,
- systems skills, and
- technical skills.

O*NET is highly usable because it identifies worker attributes and assigns those attributes to zones. Each zone indicates the types of skills and educational background necessary for specific professions.⁶

The chart on the next page identifies the different job zones, the education or preparation required, and examples of jobs that are located in each zone.

⁶ O*NET. U. S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.onetcenter.org/>.

Sample Chart of O*NET Zones

Zone	Education/Preparation	Examples of Jobs
1	<p>Little or no preparation needed</p> <p>May require a high school diploma or GED</p> <p>May require some formal training courses to obtain a license</p>	<p>Taxi drivers</p> <p>Amusement attendants</p> <p>Counter/rental clerks</p> <p>Cashiers</p> <p>Waiters/waitresses</p>
2	<p>Some preparation needed</p> <p>Usually require a high school diploma or GED</p> <p>May require some vocational training or job-related course work with some requiring an A.A., A.S. or B.S.</p>	<p>Sheet metal workers</p> <p>Forest fire fighters</p> <p>Customer service representatives</p> <p>Pharmacy technicians</p> <p>Salespersons (retail)</p> <p>Bank tellers</p>
3	<p>Medium preparation needed</p> <p>Most require training in vocational schools</p> <p>Related on-the-job training experiences or apprenticeships</p> <p>Most require an A.S. or A.S. degree</p> <p>Some require a B.S.</p>	<p>Funeral directors</p> <p>Electricians</p> <p>Forest and conservation technicians</p> <p>Legal secretaries</p> <p>Interviewers</p> <p>Insurance sales agents</p>
4	<p>Considerable preparation needed</p> <p>Most require a four-year bachelor's degree</p>	<p>Accountants</p> <p>Human resource managers</p> <p>Computer programmers</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Chemists</p> <p>Police detectives</p>
5	<p>Extensive preparation needed</p> <p>Bachelor's degree represents the minimal education</p> <p>Many also require graduate school, including a master's degree</p> <p>Some require a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. (law degree)</p>	<p>Librarians</p> <p>Lawyers</p> <p>Aerospace engineers</p> <p>Physicists</p> <p>School psychologists</p> <p>Surgeons</p>

A search of different zones and the occupations in each zone can assist teachers in developing the types of classroom activities that provide students with the skills necessary for today's workforce. The site is easy to navigate as you look at all of the different occupations and skills required in today's world. O*NET Online provides accommodations for different occupations, as required by the Adults with Disabilities legislation.

Career OneStop

Career OneStop is another excellent resource for both students and classroom teachers. The site has information on different occupations, industries, states, career tools, and even videos of different types of careers. Accessing this site provides information on the different occupations that are available in the workplace – both those with and without degree requirements. For the GED graduate who does not wish to continue on to postsecondary education, this information is crucial as the graduate plans for the types of skills necessary for a specific chosen profession.

Careers in the 21st century require higher-level skills than those of the early 20th century. However, there continue to be high-paying and high-skill jobs that require work experience or on-the-job training, rather than college degrees. The following are the top 25 highest paying occupations for 2006.⁷

⁷ Career OneStop at: <http://www.careeronestop.org/>.

Top 25 Highest-Paying Occupations by Median Hourly Wages

These are the occupations requiring work experience or on-the-job training with the highest median hourly wages in 2008.

#	Occupation	Median wages, 2008	
		Hourly	Annual
1	Air Traffic Controllers	\$53.78	\$111,900
2	Managers, All Other	\$43.38	\$90,200
3	Industrial Production Managers	\$40.04	\$83,300
4	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	\$37.98	\$79,000
5	First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Police and Detectives	\$36.29	\$75,500
6	Nuclear Power Reactor Operators	\$35.25	\$73,300
7	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	\$33.75	\$70,200
8	Elevator Installers and Repairers	\$33.35	\$69,400
9	Gaming Managers	\$32.83	\$68,300
10	First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Non-Retail Sales Workers	\$32.74	\$68,100
11	First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Fire Fighting and Prevention Workers	\$32.42	\$67,400
12	Power Distributors and Dispatchers	\$31.68	\$65,900
13	Captains, Mates, and Pilots of Water Vessels	\$29.79	\$62,000
14	Detectives and Criminal Investigators	\$29.29	\$60,900
15	Ship Engineers	\$29.18	\$60,700
16	Postmasters and Mail Superintendents	\$28.52	\$59,300
17	Power Plant Operators	\$28.11	\$58,500
18	First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	\$27.95	\$58,100
19	Real Estate Brokers	\$27.64	\$57,500
20	First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Correctional Officers	\$27.58	\$57,400
21	First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	\$27.55	\$57,300
22	Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	\$26.81	\$55,800
23	Gas Plant Operators	\$26.81	\$55,800
24	Transportation Inspectors	\$26.56	\$55,200
25	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	\$26.49	\$55,100

Twenty-five Fastest Growing Occupations (Texas) - 2006-2016

These are the occupations requiring work experience or on-the-job training that are projected to grow the fastest during the 2006-2016 time period.

#	Occupation	Employment		Percent * Change
		2006	2016	
1	<u>Personal and home care aides</u>	133,050	207,850	56%
2	<u>Medical assistants</u>	34,790	53,500	54%
3	<u>Pharmacy technicians</u>	24,420	35,050	44%
4	<u>Home health aides</u>	51,960	74,160	43%
5	<u>Physical therapist aides</u>	3,780	5,280	40%
6	<u>Dental assistants</u>	18,190	25,070	38%
7	<u>Rock splitters, quarry</u>	230	310	37%
8	<u>Interpreters and translators</u>	4,130	5,590	35%
9	<u>Aircraft cargo handling supervisors</u>	420	560	34%
10	<u>Cooks, restaurant</u>	67,060	90,120	34%
11	<u>Locksmiths and safe repairers</u>	1,790	2,410	34%
12	<u>Helpers-Extraction workers</u>	4,580	6,100	33%
13	<u>Derrick operators, oil and gas</u>	6,180	8,220	33%
14	<u>Service unit operators, oil, gas, and mining</u>	12,510	16,650	33%
15	<u>Hosts and hostesses, restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop</u>	24,580	32,690	33%
16	<u>Roustabouts, oil and gas</u>	21,920	29,120	33%
17	<u>Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food</u>	270,530	359,050	33%
18	<u>Audio and video equipment technicians</u>	2,770	3,660	32%
19	<u>Rotary drill operators, oil and gas</u>	7,660	10,100	32%
20	<u>Teacher assistants</u>	89,170	117,410	32%
21	<u>Millwrights</u>	3,000	3,950	32%
22	<u>Bill and account collectors</u>	35,760	47,010	32%
23	<u>Occupational therapist aides</u>	340	450	31%
24	<u>Bus drivers, school</u>	33,900	44,380	31%
25	<u>Waiters and waitresses</u>	174,140	227,790	31%

Career OneStop - Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.careeronestop.org>

What Does This Research Mean for the Adult Education Classroom?

Both research and data from national databases such as O*NET and Career InfoNet supports the need for adults to have higher-level skills in writing, reading, mathematics, thinking skills including decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking if they are to be successful in today's workplace.

The benefit of **Going Beyond the Basics** is to not only provide students with the skills needed to obtain a GED diploma, but also to assist them in attaining the academic and problem-solving skills viewed as necessary by employers. Through the use of authentic materials and problem-focused learning, adult education programs can better prepare students for the real-world. The integration of workplace academic skills is necessary for all students, not just those who wish to enter the workplace immediately following the obtaining of the GED diploma. By possessing higher-order skills in workplace writing, contextual mathematics, and reading workplace materials, as well as critical thinking and problem solving, students can not only improve those skills necessary for the workplace, but also for postsecondary education.

The **Going Beyond the Basics** curricula structure should be used with all students – whether their goal is to continue in the classroom or in the workplace. Creating an inextricable link between GED exit expectations and the intellectual challenges that graduates invariably will face in credit-bearing college courses or in high-performance, high-growth jobs is a lofty, but necessary goal for all educators. The commonly held belief that students going directly into the workforce do not need the same rigorous curricula of those students entering college is no longer supported by the research. Employers require the same types of knowledge and skills for their entry-level workers as is required for college-bound students.

Use of the **Going Beyond the Basics** model benefits students, adult education delivery systems, colleges, and the workforce. All of the skills are easily incorporated into an ABE/GED curriculum where often students merely want to obtain their diploma. It is important to work with all students regarding future workplace and educational goals so that they understand the importance of “going beyond the basics.”

To implement the pedagogy that supports **Going Beyond the Basics**, this guide will provide GED programs and teachers with research and research-based strategies to implement an authentic workplace based academic curriculum that will assist students as they study to complete their GED diploma and enter the world of work.

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Chapter 2: Resources and Websites

Contextual Learning

CORD Contextual Learning

CORD is a national, non-profit organization providing innovative changes in education to prepare students for greater success in careers and higher education.
<http://www.cord.org/>

Equipped for the Future

Equipped for the Future is a national standards based educational improvement initiative for adult basic education and English language learning.
<http://eff.cls.utk.edu/default.htm>

Career Development and Occupational Websites

Career InfoNet

A database of different careers and what skills and education are needed, plus lists of the top jobs in today's world.
<http://www.careerinfonet.org/>

Career OneStop

Comprehensive site that includes information on careers, educational institutions, job searches, and a comprehensive job bank.
<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Career Search

Schools in the U.S.A. Select a career and obtain information on the career, as well as the skills, background, and education required.
http://www.schoolsintheusa.com/career_search.cfm

Mapping Your Future, Inc.

A step-by-step guide for career planning for high middle school through college through adulthood.
<http://www.mapping-your-future.org>

O*NET Online and O*NET Career Exploration Tools. User-friendly access to occupational information and tools for exploring different careers.
<http://www.onetcenter.org>

You're a What?

Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook.
<http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/ooqindex.htm#F>