



# Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

## GED to College Transition Program

**The State should promote access to higher education** by making a programmatic change in the structure of adult education programs to strengthen linkages between Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED-preparation classes and community colleges.

### **Currently:**

- The gap between New York's supply of skilled workers and its projected skilled workforce needs is expected to widen over the next decade. In addition, a large portion of the growth in labor demand is predicted to be for middle skill positions that require education beyond a GED or high school diploma, but less than a 4-year college degree.
- Policies and programs impacting welfare recipients and individuals living near poverty often do not support efforts to access higher education, which has proven to be the surest route out of poverty.

### **Policy Solution: Create a GED to College Transition Pilot Project**

#### *Project Components:*

- **Direct links to college advisement and enrollment assistance** for ABE, ESL and GED students, especially for those who recently passed the GED.
- **Flexible class schedules** that allow for multiple points of entry, exit and re-entry.
- **Learning cohorts** that build a group of students and teachers to progress together from GED completion to college entrance and degree completion.
- **Academic counseling** tailored to meet the needs of low-income working adults and welfare recipients. Specifically, all welfare recipients should receive information about Work-Study and Internship programs that make it possible for students receiving public assistance [under NYS Social Services Law §336(8)] to participate in higher education programs.
- **Ongoing support and assistance** to ensure that students receive all available information about financial aid and scholarship programs.
- **Advocacy teams** within community college and vocational training programs to assist low-income students and particularly welfare recipients with enrolling and maintaining participation in these programs. These teams would work with social services caseworkers and employers to ensure that students have a manageable schedule that does not compromise their compliance with work activities or receipt of benefits.
- **Transferable credits** between community colleges and standardized course material.

#### *Eligible Population:*

- **Individuals living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level**
- **Individuals receiving public assistance** (TANF or Safety Net Assistance) who have a goal of entering a higher education program, even if they are not currently ready to enroll

**Additional Points to Consider:**

Many students who have earned a GED or participating in a GED-preparation class are interested in pursuing higher education. However, GED-holders often possess greater challenges and more responsibilities at work and at home than traditional college students. Access to college is essential for poor New Yorkers with low literacy skills and limited education to break out of the cycle of poverty. “GED to College Transition” programs are becoming more numerous throughout the U.S. as a means of providing a direct “bridge” for students to enter post-secondary education after they earn a GED.

Successful programs work to re-align education systems to promote transitions from basic education, ESL and GED-preparation classes to community colleges and other institutions of higher education. ABE/ESL programs can act as “feeders” to directly link students to community college or occupational training. In addition, adult education and post-secondary education teachers and administrators can work collaboratively to design curricula that will facilitate the transition from GED to college entrance. These educators are then able to design academic programs that accommodate the lives of adult learners and integrate basic skills with work and family responsibilities. Programs are most successful in reducing poverty by connecting course content with workforce development goals and skills demanded by employers.

**Academic schedules, course curricula, and career counseling services** must be tailored specifically to the needs of non-traditional college students who are more likely to be older, working full-time, and to have more substantial family obligations.