**A** **BILL**

TO ESTABLISH THE GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT (GED) PILOT PROGRAM TO ALLOW STUDENTS, AGES SIXTEEN THROUGH NINETEEN, CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN A HIGH SCHOOL AND WHO ARE ONE TO TWO YEARS BEHIND IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, THE OPPORTUNITY TO REMAIN A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WHILE RECEIVING APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION TO RECEIVE A GED DIPLOMA.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) Subject to funds appropriated by the General Assembly, there is created the General Education Development (GED) Pilot Program to be implemented beginning in the 2009‑2010 school year. The program shall be designed to allow students, ages sixteen through nineteen, currently enrolled in a high school and who are one to two years behind in high school graduation requirements, the opportunity to remain a high school student while receiving appropriate instruction to achieve a GED diploma. The program shall consist of developing and implementing a self‑paced GED preparation program that includes, but is not limited to, academic course work, computer lab work, career readiness certificate preparation, and vocational training.

(B) The program shall be designed by the State Department of Education and shall be modeled after the American Council on Education’s GED Options Program. The goal of the program shall be to provide eligible students with a viable opportunity to achieve a GED diploma in a cost‑effective manner. The program shall be implemented in a limited number of school districts as determined by the amount of funds appropriated by the General Assembly and resources available to the Department of Education to support the pilot schools. The school district must be able to dedicate a classroom solely for the use of the program. A school district selected for the program shall collaborate with the Adult Education Office of the State Department of Education to develop the program and shall make recommendations for improving and possibly expanding the program. The Department of Education shall establish reasonably acceptable standards, guidelines, and minimum requirements for program qualifications in addition to other requirements prescribed in this section. The Adult Education Office of the State Department of Education shall provide a GED trained teacher for each program classroom, with funds from the pilot program paying the teacher’s salary. The target program classroom configuration shall consist of a GED trained teacher leading from ten to fifteen qualified students and one to three personal computers. Students participating in the pilot shall spend a minimum of one‑half to a full day in a combination of regular high school classes and GED preparation. The State Department of Education shall incorporate parental involvement and participation into the program, and shall develop and implement a contract between and among the student, parent or guardian, and the pilot school.

The Department of Education shall establish test schedules and guidelines that provide program participants with a reasonable opportunity to take and to pass the full GED examination within a minimal number of days after withdrawing from school in order to take the examination. The guidelines must allow each student to have appropriate practice test and pre‑test opportunities, and for an examination schedule that coincides with the conclusion of the school year. The pilot school may allow a student to take the GED examination at a different date and time if it determines that the student has extenuating circumstances that the pilot program can reasonably accommodate.

(C) A parent may request consideration for their child to participate in the program; however, the pilot school shall have the final decision regarding the student’s inclusion. To be eligible for the program, the student must:

(1) be currently enrolled in a public high school and reading at a level commensurate to program requirements established by the Department of Education;

(2) be between sixteen through nineteen years of age and be one or two years behind in high school graduation requirements due to poor attendance, study habits, or failure to complete required assignments;

(3) meet any general, academic, or other qualifications or requirement~~s~~ established by the State Department of Education;

(4) have demonstrated the motivation and commitment to completing the pilot program; and

(5) meet school attendance, performance, and behavioral requirements. A pilot high school shall address any related deficiencies according to its normal policies and procedures.

(D) Participation in the program shall not qualify a student as having met the academic requirements as set forth by the South Carolina High School League for interscholastic athletic activities.

(E) Each pilot school shall receive up to fifty‑two thousand six hundred fifty dollars, to implement the program. A pilot school shall receive funds only for the actual costs required for the program.

(F) By May 1, 2010, the State Department of Education shall provide the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee and the Chairman of the House of Representatives Education and Public Works Committee an interim evaluation of the success of the program. The report shall include any recommendations for the continuation of the program beyond the 2009 ‑ 2010 school year and for further expansion of the program.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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