



**Literacy Texas**  
*Your link to literacy*

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888-577-9347

Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Edwards and I'm the Executive Director of Literacy Texas. Our office is located here on 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Austin, although we represent folks from all over the state. Literacy Texas is the statewide coalition of adult education service providers. So, I'm here to speak for the thousands of folks across Texas who teach adult learners, and cannot be here today. Many of these are small nonprofits in small communities, where the majority of services are provided by volunteers.

You will no doubt hear today from many people who are experts in the detailed issues facing Texans who are working hard to earn a Certificate of High School Equivalency. I won't run through this long list of issues but will say that Literacy Texas believes the two largest hindrances in the current system are price and inability to use paper and pencil.

With regard to price – the vast majority of adult learners who are trying to get their certificate have low to moderate income. We are talking about folks who are unemployed, or at best minimum wage earners. The primary reason they want their HSE is to earn higher wages. The current GED cost of \$135 is twice the cost (or more) of the other two options in consideration. When you're living at the poverty line, that money translates to diapers, food, and gas. Literacy Texas feels all Texans working on their High School Equivalency would be better served if offered more affordable options.

The second issue deals with technology. The current testing system is only available by computer. Which, essentially, turns the testing process into a proofing of one's computer skills. These adult learners, for the most part, do not have a computer in their home. For older adult learners, in particular, it is incredibly stressful to need to master not only the educational content – but also know how to manage computer skills on a keyboard and system they do not have experience with – all while trying to complete a timed test. Literacy Texas asserts that a paper and pencil option is a fair, appropriate and equal method of testing, and should be an available option for all involved.

As a representative of Literacy Texas, I am not here to advocate one vendor over another. But there should be choice. The two current primary barriers to success are cost and access to paper and pencil testing. There are literally thousands of Texans right now who want to improve their lives and their families' security by getting their high school equivalency certificate. Let's give them choices to achieve success.

Thank you.



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