



For Immediate Release
November 9, 2009

Contact Tracy Munford
(212) 614-5538 (office)
(646) 483-6804 (cell)

GED System in NYC Often Fails Students, for a Second Time CSS Report Says New York Ranks 48th Nationwide in GED Pass Rate

The Community Service Society (CSS) today released a report detailing a dysfunctional GED (General Educational Development) system in New York City. The report, **“From Basic Skills to Better Skills: Generating Economic Dividends,”** explores the New York City GED system, which is rated near the bottom of GED systems nationwide. According to the report, there are more than one million working-age New Yorkers without a high school degree or equivalent equaling nearly a quarter of the city’s working-age population. Most people with a GED, according to the report, end up in low-wage jobs with little chance of advancement.

“From Basic Skills to Better Skills,” chronicles the circuitous, inefficient and extraordinarily dysfunctional route, that more than one million New Yorkers must take in order to achieve a GED,” said David R. Jones, president and CEO of CSS. “The GED system should be a pipeline to upward mobility for most; instead it is a pipeline to failure for many.”

The report is an examination of the city’s system of GED preparation and testing. New York State is 48th in the country in the GED pass rate – with only 60 percent of participants passing the test as of 2007, with New York City having a 47.5 percent passing rate. Only 7 percent of the GED-eligible population end up in preparation programs each year; less than 3 percent take the test itself. An analysis by CSS indicates that during the current recession, those with less than a high school education lost jobs at nearly twice the rate of high school graduates and more than ten times the rate of college graduates.

Jones added that there is no single entity within city government responsible for tracking the performance of GED programs. “A decentralized program begs for failure in a city with an extraordinary number of people without a high school diploma.”

The authors of the report spent nearly one year meeting with and interviewing GED programs in New York City. According to authors, Lazar Treschan and David Jason Fischer, their research determined the reasons for poor GED performance are 1) insufficient resources, 2) lack of oversight, and 3) complete absence of coordination. The majority of GED programs are funded at approximately \$1,000 per participant annually – not nearly sufficient for programs to offer the necessary hours, retain good teachers, focus on

transition to college or careers or provide participants with the support services they need to succeed.

“One of the primary anchors of this failure is that the city of New York has no single agency to help sort through all existing options,” according to Treschan, director of Youth Policy for CSS and the primary author of the report. “We cannot expect strong outcomes from a system that is funded at less than one-tenth of the K-12 education system, and programs who receive little in the way of centralized support. The GED can be an incredible opportunity to revitalize New York City’s economy. For that to happen, we need to elevate and support the work of the organizations that provide people with the basic skills they need to succeed and advance.”

According to the report, some initiatives have shown promise, such as programs that integrate teaching of basic and career skills in which adults can earn a GED while receiving job and career training. However, programs struggle to find the resources to offer such promising practices.

Jones added, “GED programs must be a bridge to college or a career that must be adequately funded, with special emphasis for high-school drop outs who are low-level learners.” He added, “In addition, programs should provide quality instruction and pay equity similar to the K-12 system. In the end, a second-class GED system, used primarily by black and Latino New Yorkers will contribute to poverty instead of a successful GED program which can only add to the economic strength and vitality of New York City and state.”

“From Basic Skills to Better Skills: Generating Economic Dividends,” was funded in part by the NYC Council, Consortium for Worker Education.

You can read a copy of the report on line at <http://www.cssny.org/advocacy/>

###

For 160 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation’s largest city.