

The GED Via TV

by Molly K. Robertson



What happens to adult students who are afraid to go to a classroom, who can't afford the gas to drive to classes, who work during the times classes are available, who have small children and no child care, or who simply have no transportation? In Indiana they can enroll in the statewide GED ON TV program. The series of 39 half-hour GED Connection television programs is broadcast throughout the state on the eight Indiana Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) channels and is carried on dozens of cable channels.

The GED Connection series produced by Kentucky Educational Television (KET) includes programs that cover the reading, social studies, science, writing, and math skills many adults need to improve to earn the Indiana GED High School Diploma. Additional practice for each lesson is available online for those who have access to the Internet. Unfortunately, according to our enrollment data, only 40 percent of Indiana's GED ON TV learners have Internet access from home; the other 60 percent make do without the online support.

Enroll by Telephone

Learners call a toll-free telephone number to enroll and receive books by United Parcel Service. The cost to the student is \$45, which covers pre- and post-testing, three workbooks, a calculator like the one needed to take the GED, and a voucher to pay for the GED test at any Indiana GED testing site. Testing sites in Indiana

are allowed to charge up to \$60 for GED testing so it is a bargain for the learner. GED ON TV is funded by the Indiana Legislature through the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Adult Education.

GED ON TV is not for everyone. Potential students take a pretest at home; those who demonstrate a reading level above grade 8.5 and a math level above grade 7.5 on the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) may enroll. The most successful students read at the 10th grade level when they begin. Motivation may be the trickiest part for learners who study alone at home. Throughout the series, students receive newsletters and bi-weekly calls from the GED ON TV staff, who ask how they are doing and what help they need. We remind them that if they miss a TV program, they should nonetheless do the homework chapter in the workbook and call for any help they need. A toll-free GED Helpline is also available, but it is not often used. As one student said, "I'm glad to know you're there, but when I have a question I ask my husband!"


The Indiana GED ON TV program recently started offering KET's Pre-GED Connection series for those who read between the sixth and eighth grade levels. It is new this year, and we won't know how it works as distance learning for a while, although five learners have moved on to GED-level study and one has earned a GED. Adults who pretest below the sixth grade level receive a refund and the telephone numbers of local classroom-based programs.

Once Enrolled, Always Enrolled

Since the program expanded to serve the entire state in 1990, more than 7,600 Hoosier adults have

earned their GED certificates after studying with the GED ON TV programs from home. Periodically we send a letter to all prior non-completers, reminding them that they can re-enroll and try again. They are always re-enrolled for free and also granted a test-fee voucher. In 2004 a number of re-enrolled learners passed: one who had originally enrolled in 1991, one from 1995, one from 1997, and three from 1998.

The 7,600 GED completers represent 90 of Indiana's 92 counties; 74 percent are women and the average last grade completed is 10th. They range in age from 16 years old to 92. Over the years the age of our learners has consistently decreased. In the first decade the median age was 34; now it is 26. On a 2003 GED ON TV student survey, one learner wrote, "GED ON TV helped refresh my memory on subjects I had learned years ago."

Another wrote, "I taped the programs so that I could watch them over again, especially the math." These adult learners truly value the opportunity to study from home with GED ON TV in Indiana. 

About the Author

Molly K. Robertson is the founding director of the Indiana GED ON TV program. She left high school at 16, earned a GED in 1982, and holds a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's in telecommunications. She lives in Muncie, Indiana, with two large, rowdy, black poodles. ♦

More Information

For more information about Indiana's program, contact Molly Robertson via e-mail at gedontv@muncie.k12.in.us.

Many states use the GED Connection. Visit http://www.ket.org/enterprise/gedprep/ged_connect.htm and <http://litlink.ket.org/wesged.aspx> for more on the GED on television in general.