



CASE STUDY

Parma Aces Adult Education with High School Equivalency Basics® & High School Equivalency Achieve®

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Name

Parma City School District

Location

Parma, Ohio

Grades

K–12, with a strong tradition of adult education



Overview

Parma, Ohio, located in Cuyahoga County, is Cleveland’s largest suburb. In comparison to other Ohio cities and towns, Parma ranks in the upper quartile for population density and diversity.

The Parma City School District contains 14 K–12 schools, and it has maintained a robust adult education program since the early 1960s. The district currently offers a range of adult education services, including Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE), GED® preparation, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and career readiness courses and programs.

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Parma's adult education program serves individuals who range in age from 18 to nearly 100. The program's stated goal is to help community members achieve gainful employment, learn new skills, and improve opportunities for themselves and their families. In reality, it accomplishes much more than that. Adult education gives a second chance to those who struggle with basic skills. It improves their confidence and opens up a world of ideas, which often results in a new love of learning.

Parma City School District takes its role in adult education seriously. It is committed to using College and Career Readiness-aligned educational materials, such as *High School Equivalency Basics*® and *High School Equivalency Achieve*®, to help it reach its goals. Both programs are part of the McGraw-Hill Education High School Equivalency Series.

Implementation

Parma's director of adult education services, Susan Sheehan, implemented the High School Equivalency Series in her district the same year College and Career Readiness Standards were introduced.

"We receive an ABLÉ grant and an EL Civics Education grant, which allowed us to expand our adult education program," said Sheehan. "We were also involved with a larger initiative that got local employers on board. These businesses promised to consider our adult education students as candidates for employment if they could achieve specific test scores. McGraw-Hill Education adult education resources allow us to write contextualized curricula that match up to career training in healthcare, manufacturing, construction, IT, and hospitality to help our students reach those goals."

Sheehan noted that the Basic Skills for the Workplace workbooks (from the Essential Skills for the Workplace series) tie right in with their existing workplace training materials. This makes it easier to address math, reading, writing, and computer basics as needed.

"Basic Skills for the Workplace allows us to offer classes at our one-stops that address employability skills along with basic skills," said Sheehan, "so it connects to what our adult education students are trying to achieve."

Stephanie Schab, who has taught adult education in Parma for six years, said that they had been using Steck-Vaughn for separate content areas. She remembers constantly searching for reproducible materials online.

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Susan Sheehan, director of adult education
Parma City School District

"I was excited when McGraw-Hill Education *High School Equivalency Achieve* rolled out," she said. "My students love the books, and I was immediately impressed by the vocabulary and exercises. It was nice to have access to more in-depth information with the writing component mixed in."

Schab's teaching colleague, Shannon Pelsnik agreed. "It was nice to have workbooks the students could take home. We didn't have to print anything out," she said, "and the workbooks offer real-life examples and word problems my students can relate to."

Engagement

The High School Equivalency Series was created around the College and Career Readiness Standards. Engagement is a major reason why the three-part program works so well.

Schab, who teaches social studies, said the books generate discussions that make her classes more engaging. “My students have jobs, and they attend when they can, so engagement is very important,” she said. “I push *Achieve* because it gives more in-depth information. If we read a chapter about Nixon’s resignation, we cover more than comprehension. We discuss the purpose of the chapter, the emotions it creates, and then my students write an argumentative essay to express their own thoughts. By the end of the lesson, my students are so interested that they sometimes ask to borrow a book to take home. How can you say no to that?”

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Stephanie Schab, social studies teacher
Parma City School District

Schab suggested that instructors who want to get the most out of the High School Equivalency Series should use it to create a class rather than just handing out the books.

“I do two pages of reading, then discuss the content with my class. Then we do modeling and complete the chapter review together,” she said. “If the book suggests an additional activity or resource, like studying political cartoons, I always look into them. That really keeps my students engaged.”

Keli Pontikos, who teaches in the district’s ABLE program, said engagement is critical for helping students overcome barriers to learning.

“There is such a large variance in learning styles, learning capabilities, and learner backgrounds in adult education, it is up to us to provide a learning environment that is stimulating and in which all students can thrive,” said Pontikos. “I teach high school dropouts who have learned bad behaviors. By reinforcing skills that are applicable to their futures, such as those provided in the McGraw-Hill Education lessons, student motivation is enhanced.”

Sheehan agrees that engagement starts with understanding why information is important for a job.

“Even adults ask, ‘Why do I have to know this?’” she said. “Since these programs align with career goals, they give us something on the shelf to offer a student that needs specific information.”

Sheehan added that the presentation information in the McGraw-Hill Education books is a great benefit. “Not only do these books align to the College and Career Readiness Standards and provide sample lesson plans, but the presentation appeals to adult students,” she said. “The lessons are readable, and there are interesting graphics that break up the information. It’s something students want to look at.”

Results

Having the ability to engage adult students can make the difference between simply teaching them and inspiring them. Pelsnik spoke about the impact McGraw-Hill Education materials had on the life of one of her students in a video recorded for a recent Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) conference.

Pelsnik’s student, Tyeishia, used her education to beat the odds. Tyeishia went from being a homeless single mother of a 2-year-old girl to being a professionally employed phlebotomist with a bright future. Parma’s NewBridge program—an

extension of adult education services focused on preparing students for the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) examination—gave Tyeishia the reading fundamentals and workforce skills she needed.

“It’s amazing to see a student that couldn’t pass the GED working in phlebotomy or getting a Pharmacy Tech certificate. We’ve already had four people get their GEDs this year.”

Shannon Pelsnik, adult education instructor,
Parma City School District

“Our students are not only learning basic skills; they’re also learning about the healthcare field so they can be more successful,” said Pelsnik. “It’s amazing to see a student that couldn’t pass the GED working in phlebotomy or getting a Pharmacy Tech certificate. We’ve already had four people get their GEDs this year.”

Schab reported seeing similar results in her classrooms with the High School Equivalency Series. “This year four of my students passed the whole GED exam just from what they learned in this class, and I’ve seen multiple-level increases on our TABE® test scores.” She added, “For many of my students—like Steve, who married young and didn’t have the ability to finish high school—the success is much bigger. These classes sparked a passion for school and a new love of learning that he didn’t have before.”

Pontikos said she always suggests the High School Equivalency Series to locations that don’t have textbooks, because the series will drive results.

“Having a guiding framework for my teaching has strengthened the overall structure of the diversities present in my adult classrooms. By incorporating different perspectives that I have not considered, I can assure success for my students and help them learn to their maximum potential, in and out of school.”

See Tyeisha’s story at mheonline.com/secondchances.

The Future

Parma City School District is committed to using the High School Equivalency Series now and into the future.

“I wouldn’t have spent the money on *High School Equivalency Basics* and *High School Equivalency Achieve* if I didn’t think the programs work,” Sheehan said. “We are making a difference in people’s lives, and in teaching adults we are also touching other generations. Many of our students have children that they can share skills with and be a role model. We want to continue to do a great job and help our students be successful.”

About the McGraw-Hill Education High School Equivalency Series

The High School Equivalency Series is a three-part program built from the ground up on the College & Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education and 2014 Assessment Targets. The series includes programs for pre-HSE test preparation (*High School Equivalency Basics*), active HSE test preparation (*High School Equivalency Achieve*), and computer literacy (*PowerUP!® Getting Started with Computers and Keyboarding*).

High School Equivalency Basics (Grade Equivalency 6–8) is available for all five core subject areas: Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies. All programs are aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards.

High School Equivalency Achieve (Grade Equivalency 9–12) is not just aligned to, but built upon the new standards and assessment targets for the 2014 GED® Test, TASC™ Test, and *HiSET*® Exam.