

Hall County Jail Offers Computerized GED Testing for Inmates

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Recently (April 9, 2013), a group of inmates took their GED tests via computer at the Hall County Jail. According to the offices of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), the Hall County Jail is the first computer-based GED testing lab set inside a Criminal Justice facility, in the State of Georgia. This milestone was reached through the combined efforts of the Hall County Jail staff, Hall County MIS Department, Lanier Technical College IT Department, and the Adult Education staff of Lanier Technical College. As a result of the program's success, other Criminal Justice agencies around the State of Georgia are expected to follow Hall County's lead.

The vast majority of people in the U.S. Criminal Justice System do not have a high school diploma. Studies have shown that a correlation exists between the level of education attained by an incarcerated person and his or her recidivism rate. These facts indicate that it is in the best interest of our community that we continue to ensure the inmates of the Hall County Jail have ready access to a basic education. Before now, GED testing for Hall County Jail inmates had to be administered at another location. Jail personnel along and GED instructors were shuffled together with testing inmates to the Prison Work Camp and given the exams as scheduled. Not only did it add expense to the tax payers in caring for the inmates, it also prohibited female inmates from taking part in the testing process. Jail policy forbids "mixing" male and female inmates in any given space. Although inconvenient, the process of testing at a separate location is still the method being utilized by Criminal Justice agencies in surrounding counties and throughout the State.

The new and improved computerized method for administering GED tests allows more flexibility to all parties involved. Previously, the written tests had been given in five separate parts. Writing and Math tests were administered to inmates on one day, while Social Studies, Science and Reading followed on the next available day. Under the new system, there are still two testing days for the GED. The tests are split in half, with the halves occupying only two days of the month. Broken down this way, all five tests could essentially be taken in one day. The writing portion by itself would require three weeks for grading, in the past. It now only takes three days. With the exception of the writing portion of the GED, an inmate will instantly know whether he/she has successfully passed the exam upon completing the individual tests. An average score of 450 must be achieved on all five tests, for an overall total of 2250 in order to have successfully earned a GED Certificate.

According to Lanier Technical College GED Instructor, Burch Roberts, the program really gained momentum when GED Examiner Sally Brown stepped in to give it the "needed push". Instructor Roberts has been teaching GED students for the past eight years... Three of which has been at the Hall County Jail. A rigid format is strictly adhered to by everyone. Tests are given twice per month, and classes run five days of the week. To safeguard against preference being given among the inmates by the Instructor, no criminal charges are ever asked of, nor discussed by anyone in the program. Policy further dictates that the teacher cannot also be the tester; therefore, a separate GED Examiner is brought in to satisfy that requirement. Each series of tests given to Hall County Jail inmates is exactly the same standardized tests that are given to everyone else, across the Country. Information regarding testing and results can be applied to other schools and institutions with similar programs. Keeping all testing and

studying under one roof saves money for our taxpayers, it reduces the risk of an escape and it practically eliminates the issue of contraband being subversively introduced.