

# The Value of a High School Diploma



## Need: Local Residents Without High School Equivalency

In 2013, there were 39 million adults in the United States who did not have a high school diploma. If the number of dropouts among Americans age 20 was cut in half, the U.S. would gain \$45 billion in higher tax revenues and lower costs for health, jail, and welfare. Adults who earn their High School Equivalency (HSE) make the same wages as high school graduates, increasing earnings by \$115 weekly.

Locally, the need to prepare adult learners whose first language is Spanish to pass the state HSE exam is growing. In fact, 43.6% of students who attend the Community Schools of Frankfort are the children of Spanish-speakers. Many of our local residents can communicate on a basic interpersonal level in English, but struggle with academic proficiency in their second language (which research shows takes seven-10 years to fully develop). Offering HSE preparation/testing in Spanish allows local workers to complete their education and gain valuable workforce skills.

## The Response: Bilingual Preparation & Testing for GED and TASC Exams

When the state of Indiana's Department of Workforce Development chose a new high school equivalency test, interest in the GED closeout campaign heightened in the fall of 2013. In response to the demand, Purdue Extension's Learning Network of Clinton County opened up 10 additional testing sessions from September through December 2013, so that local residents could pass the test before an entirely new exam rolled out—and their scores were no longer valid.

During 2013-14, Purdue Extension's Learning Network provided the Clinton County Tutoring Program and ESL/HSE preparation program four afternoons/evenings per week, 40 weeks a year, to support local in-school and out-of-school youth and adults attempting to pass the test. The HSE classes were provided in Spanish to Spanish-speakers striving to pass the Spanish GED test.

## The Impact: 100 Passed the GED Test from March 2012-December 2013

Purdue Extension is standing in the educational gap by providing HSE testing for Clinton County that would not have been offered otherwise. Between March 2012 and December 2013, 100 residents passed their HSE test. It is estimated that 50 of those would not have passed without the addition of extra testing sessions.

Kenneth McGhee, who passed in November, is a perfect example of how educational attainment leads to economic impact both personally and collectively. "Growing up, we were always living from paycheck to paycheck. I remember how difficult that was, and I wanted a better situation for my son, who is six now," says McGhee, who—one month after passing his test—started attending classes full time at Ivy Tech Frankfort, majoring in computer information systems. "Since I earned my credential, I've had more calls, more opportunities than I've ever had before." McGhee and his family were present at the HSE graduation ceremony sponsored by Purdue Extension's Learning Network on Feb. 27, 2014.