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**SPEAKER CHRISTINE C. QUINN, THE LITERACY ASSISTANCE
CENTER, THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE
DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESSES SERVICES AND THE NEW
YORK COMMUNITY TRUST LAUNCH GED COMPASS**

City Web Portal Will Streamline System and Help People Sign Up for the GED Exam

July 27th, 2010 – Speaker Christine C. Quinn, as part of her effort to improve the GED system, announced the launch of GED COMPASS, a web portal that will centralize New York City’s General Education Development (GED) testing seats and provide information on how to prepare for the GED test. Joining the Speaker in her announcement were Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, Phil Weinberg, President, New York City Workforce Investment Board, Susanne Lynn, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Youth Community Development, Elyse Barbell from the Literary Assistance Center, literary expert and researcher Jacqueline Cook, Roderick Jenkins from the New York Community Trust, Mia Simon, Director of Special Initiatives from CUNY, Chair of the Education Committee, Robert Jackson, Council Members Annabel Palma, Gale Brewer and Maria Del Carmen Arroyo along with students who attend adult education and GED prep classes through the NYC Department of Education’s Office of Adult and Continuing Education.

GED COMPASS was developed in response to community concerns about the condition of the GED testing system and the abysmally low pass rate in New York City of 48% and nationally, New York State comes in last. The GED COMPASS will streamline the process of finding a test site or prep program to centralize registration for the limited GED testing seats for the 1.6 million people in New York City who don’t have a high school diploma. Currently, the GED preparation and testing system is complicated and many students find the process daunting because they don’t know where to get information about obtaining a GED or prepare for the test. GED COMPASS can be accessed at www.GEDCOMPASS.com. Anyone in New York City who does not have a high school diploma should go to this site to get more information on how to prepare for the test and register for it.

"Anyone who's been caught in the mess that is the current GED system knows that it feels just like being lost in the woods without a compass," **said Speaker Quinn**. "At last, there's a new tool to help provide much needed direction. I want to thank the adult education field for bringing to our attention the needs and problems with the GED system, the LAC for their technical assistance in developing the COMPASS and our funding partners, DOE, SBS, DYCD, CEO and the New York Community Trust.

"As the name implies, GED Compass can point students in the right direction," **said Education Chair, Robert Jackson**. "I am pleased that persistent advocacy, particularly from adult education practitioners, has produced a collaborative response and I'm optimistic that this solution will help to increase the number of students who ultimately obtain their GED's."

"We believe this GED Compass is a great tool that allows the City to make the best use of its resources and reach that vulnerable group of New Yorkers who want to acquire the GED to gain entry to the labor market, secure a better job or pursue higher education opportunities," **said Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott**.

"Over the past several years, the Department of Education has taken great strides to improve our GED programs and, as a result, made a difference in the lives of thousands of New Yorkers." **Chancellor Klein said**. "GED COMPASS will help us continue those efforts by providing a comprehensive, online resource that will help the 1.6 million New Yorkers without a high school diploma get the information they need to prepare for the GED and succeed."

"The best way to build a vibrant New York City workforce is to invest in building the literacy skills of the 1.6 million New Yorkers who currently do not have a GED diploma," **said Elyse Barbell, Executive Director, Literacy Assistance Center**. "GED COMPASS is designed to create a single point of entry for people to learn the best way to take and pass the GED with the help they need from the City's dynamic and effective adult education system."

"GED Compass will go a long way towards improving New York's GED testing system," **said David M. Steiner, Commissioner, New York State Education Department**. "The Board of Regents and I wish to commend Speaker Quinn and her team for making this on-line GED test registration and information tool a reality for our adult learners. We look forward to continuing to work with our statewide partners to achieve more effective and efficient administration processes, greater student readiness and overall pass rates, and direct linkages from GED to student success in higher education, post secondary training and the workforce."

"In 2007, DYCD partnered with the New York Community Trust to conduct a study of the GED testing system in New York," **said DYCD Commissioner Jeanne Mullgrav**. "Today, I am delighted to see many of our findings addressed in the form of GED COMPASS. This system is a shining example of the power of government and private partners working together to create innovative solutions. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in both the public and private sectors to help our students successfully obtain a GED as a first step toward reaching their educational goals."

"Preparing our workforce with the education and skills they need is vital to our City's continued economic prosperity," **said Philip Weinberg, President of the NYC Workforce Investment**

Board. “Thanks to the leadership of Speaker Quinn and other public and private partners, our Workforce1 Career Centers, as well as the City’s broader workforce development system, will have an important new tool to help New Yorkers achieve their educational and career goals.”

“A GED is a bridge to better career and educational opportunities,” **said Council Member Annabel Palma, Chair of the City Council’s General Welfare Committee.** “I am delighted to join Speaker Quinn, as well as Deputy Mayor Walcott, Chancellor Klein, Commissioners Walsh and Mullgrav and advocates, to announce the launch of GED COMPASS. This web portal will serve as an accessible and useful resource for those New Yorkers who don’t have a high school equivalency diploma. Most importantly, GED COMPASS will be a tool that provides people with a path to career advancement and higher education.”

“As sponsor of the Adult Literacy Initiative, I have seen first hand how many New Yorkers including young adults are interested in furthering their education by obtaining a GED,” **said Councilwoman Sara M. González.** “GED Compass will assist these New Yorkers to fulfill their Dream.”

“I have seen first hand in my own family that the GED and digital literacy go hand in hand,” **said Gale Brewer.** “This city wide effort will open doors and create productive lives in every community, especially for the million New Yorkers who left high school without a GED. With this initiative, thousands of under-schooled New Yorkers will take the critical first step toward educational parity. I thank the Speaker for her leadership.”

“Getting my GED was one of the best decisions I’ve made in my professional life,” **said Council Member Maria Del Carmen Arroyo.** “It has brought me to where I am today and I hope my story will inspire those who are thinking about getting their GED to do so. This website will make it easier for people to get the information they need. It’s never too late.”

“CUNY is a longtime provider of GED preparation and testing for college-bound out- of- school youth and adults,” **said Leslee Oppenheim, Director of Language and Literacy Programs.** “CUNY welcomes the implementation of the GED Compass, facilitating the access for thousands of New Yorkers to higher education and training.”

“GED Compass is an important tool to help New Yorkers determine how and where to connect to GED prep and testing,” **said David R. Jones, president and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York.** “For too long, obtaining a GED has been a maze for New Yorkers - resources like GED Compass are vital to connect people to pathways out of poverty.”

“It’s never too late,” **said Ms. McNeill, a Brooklyn native and a student at the Department of Education’s Office of Adult and Continuing Education.** Sometimes your roads may not be straight and they may be crooked, but if you really want it, you wind up on the right path. That’s how I look at my life.”

“I think 40% of the people that could come to a school like this don’t know or are scared, that’s why they’re on the other side of the door,” **said OACE student Victor Blas.** “With awareness like this website, a lot of them would come and take that chance. It will give them a sense of

relief. They will say: ‘I didn’t know it was like that, it’s so easy to come back to school, what was I scared of?’”

“This website will be a tremendous help for people to find classes, especially if the technical classes are on there, like medical billing and LPN,” **said OACE computer student Karl Segers.** “A lot of people would be interested in those, especially since they’re free.”

“I know a lot of people that don’t know how to find programs to learn English,” **said OACE student Tom Wong.** “They are immigrants, they just came here, and nobody tells them about these programs.”

In February, Speaker Quinn proposed concrete steps aimed at improving the city’s GED testing system, which is currently fragmented and inadequate in assisting New Yorkers lacking a high school diploma. The Speaker’s reforms addressed the needs of New Yorkers who face the greatest obstacles in finding a job. The three-tiered plan will help New Yorkers take the first crucial step towards employment.

- The Council, together with the Department of Education’s Office of Adult and Continuing Education and the Department of Small Business Services, will create a citywide pilot at Workforce 1 Career Centers that will connect individuals without a high school diploma to GED testing and test preparation courses.
- The Council will work with the adult education and GED testing providers to encourage more individuals without a high school diploma to take preparation classes and also take an Official Practice Test (a simulated test mirrors the GED) before they take the GED test.
- The Council will work closely with the Literacy Assistance Center, DOE and SBS to better coordinate the GED system, with a goal of streamlining access to services so that individuals can build skills, obtain a GED if needed and receive assistance in their job search.
- The June 2008 study, “*Our Chance for Change: A Four-Year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in New York City*” outlined the myriad of problems in the system and difficulties that students encounter which was instrumental to understanding the complexities of the GED system.

About the Literacy Assistance Center

The mission of the Literacy Assistance Center is to support and promote quality literacy services for adults and youths. Funded thru the NY State Education Department and many other city, state and private entities, the LAC has 25 years of experience in assessing and meeting the needs of adult and youth literacy programs in New York City through high-quality professional development and technical assistance executed by a pool of highly qualified professionals with extensive knowledge, skills, and experience in their respective fields of expertise. These fields include program leadership; effective Instruction in ESOL, math, Pre-GED and GED; learning disabilities, computer-based instruction, curriculum development, health literacy, family literacy, financial literacy, and data management.

About the DOE Office of Adult and Continuing Education

The New York City Department of Education's Office of Adult and Continuing Education (OACE) is the largest provider of adult literacy education services in the state. They are part of the New York Department of Education's District 79 – Alternative Schools and Programs.

OACE offers over 900 classes for adults age 21 and over. They operate four Adult Learning Centers located in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx and they offer day and evening classes Monday through Saturday at more than 175 sites in all five boroughs, including public schools, community centers and faith-based organizations. Students can take classes at any of OACE's sites, regardless of which borough they live in. All classes are taught by certified teachers and are offered free of charge (tuition-free).

Ongoing registration for classes in Adult Basic Education, High School Equivalency (GED), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) is held regularly at schools and offices around the city. For more information about OACE, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/AdultED>

To learn more about GED COMPASS please visit www.gedcompass.com or www.council.nyc.gov

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