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*A Personal Class In A School Of Thousands*

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## Special Report on Education

**Before Considering ANY Homeschooling GED or High School Diploma Programs please read this Special Report to get the FACTS.**

"Your Education is worth what You are worth."  
- Anon

Sounds a bit dramatic? Well, it isn't; 1/3 of all people who enroll in high school fail to graduate in the United States. And those people who dropped out of high school and never bothered getting their high school diploma or equivalency are destined for some tough times. For the most part, they know it, but prefer not to think about it.

But not everyone is content to just sit back and allow their lack of a diploma to hinder them. An increasing number of people are beginning to see they have options that can correct this situation.

Education is not filling a bucket but lighting a fire.  
William B. Yeats, poet

So what is the best option for people out there needing to pursue alternative means to a secondary school education? Is it going back to the classroom to take courses in a formal class environment? There are a lot of alternatives out there but they aren't necessarily good. Some result in wasted time and money or simply steer you in a bad direction. With the ever growing world of communications technology, distance education is becoming a very popular path for learning and earning diplomas. The question still remains, though, is a distance education program the best option for getting a high school equivalency? We looked into some of these schools and compared them to the growing number of alternatives to find out.



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## Who is in the Market for a High School Diploma?

First of all, before dissecting all the ways someone could get a high school diploma these days, we must look into who these people actually are. For those who actually made it through high school in the usual way it may be hard to imagine just how many people out there are in need of different methods.

Still, a key group of people who are seeking out various options to get a secondary school diploma are actually high school aged students. For a lot of people out there the publicly run school systems aren't fulfilling their needs. In these cases the classes may be too large or the teacher's aren't properly addressing certain concerns. Other students may have failed a number of courses but still want to make up those credits so they can graduate with the rest of their peers. There is also a growing number of students that are being home schooled. In these cases their parents must have access to a lot of resources to make sure everything is done right. Places offering high school equivalency programs are extrahelpful.

A great number of those high school aged students, the teenagers that require other ways of earning their diploma, are those that are quite literally unable to attend so-called regular classes. The more obvious in their rank are people with certain physical challenges that can't be met by their local schools. Though not as many, there are teenagers who have careers in entertainment, sports and the like, and can't make it to classes. In many of these cases, an education is still mandatory, so they have to find ways to meet that requirement

New citizens are very often in need of getting a high school diploma. While the reasons and solutions can vary a great deal from case to case, the basic need is the same. **Having a recognized high school diploma while looking for work in countries like the United States is highly beneficial – in fact, it's an imperative.** More and more people are realizing that experience doesn't always speak for itself and having that piece of paper to back up their qualifications can be the crucial difference between getting a step up, and being stuck under the glass ceiling.



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Along with all of these people are those that just didn't make it through high school on their first try. In developed countries including Canada, England and the USA there are staggering statistics of how many people drop out of high school. In some cases the rate of students that quit high school can be as high as 20 percent! For a lot of people this can actually work out alright. There are jobs out there that don't require a diploma and it isn't necessarily a bad thing to go that route. What tends to happen a lot though is when people hit a certain age they want to get a better job or even move up in the ranks at their existing job. That's when they discover that not having a high school education behind them can be difficult.

## How difficult?

- **In the last 20 years, the earnings of high school drop-outs doubled, while college graduates earn three times as much over the same period.**
- **The high school graduate will make \$414,000 more over a 40 year period than the non high school graduate even during times of economic instability.**
- **Unemployment rates for workers who failed to complete high school are nearly four times the rate for college graduates.**
- **High school graduates today attend college at higher rates than ever before.**
- **In 1970, 52% of high school graduates enrolled in college by the following fall; In 2000, an astounding 63% enrolled in time for the fall session.**
- **High school drop-outs make up nearly half the heads of households currently on welfare.**
- **Nearly half the prison population consists of high school drop-outs.**



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## What options are Available?

In all of these cases there are an ever growing number of options to achieve the goal of a high school diploma. The most logical one is, of course, simply going back to high school. Depending on what state you are living in the laws allow for people as old as twenty to enter or reenter the public school system. This option is pretty much self explanatory but doesn't always offer the best results. Typically someone who is in need of a high school diploma has already left the actual school for a reason.

Aside from people who cannot fit a regular high school into their lives, there are often negative perceptions involved in going back. Someone who dropped out of high school may find the age difference embarrassing when deciding to return to school. There are various stigmas attached to former dropouts by both the teachers and the peers. However subtle these stigmas are presented they can still affect the returning student in a pretty poor way. Time and again it has been proven that education works best only when in a positive environment so it is clear that while some see this as the only way, it is certainly not always the best way.

Night school and other such programs offer an appealing way around this. The mix of people in a night school setting is often broad and being around such a diverse group makes it difficult to become intimidated. Further more these types of courses are rarely over crowded. The student to teacher ratio often works out much better than it would in a regular high school. This makes learning easier as the one on one help is more readily available. Better still, the teacher is that much more likely to recognize when the student needs that extra help.



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Both of these in class educations share a common problem. For the people we are most concerned with here, getting their diploma is something that has to be achieved while working around a strict schedule. Whether they are immigrants with more localized credentials or lifelong citizens wanting to improve themselves, these potential students likely have families to care for and full time jobs to attend. While going to a typical day school is all but impossible for them, a night class can also be difficult to get to. It requires a commitment of a certain amount of hours each week at set times and then the added burden of homework as well.

Outside of the classroom are numerous other ways of earning a diploma. Not all of these options involve the same level of education. Most of these other high school equivalents fit into the category of distance learning. These include correspondence courses, web based courses and even telecourses that often operate through public television stations. Most distance learning schools these days offer a program that combines all of those elements in some way.

Through distance learning a student is able to set their own schedule, which is one of the greatest benefits. When it comes to students who are over the age of twenty there are almost always difficult schedules for an education to fit around. This is especially true for those people who are on shift work. Depending on the program and the company facilitating it, distance education courses can be taken one at a time or several at once, even then the student is free to set their own agenda. Their studies can be done on a daily basis or one or two days a week. Since course materials are at their disposal they can choose to learn at any time of the day desired. Everything that would normally be taught by a teacher is given in print, audio or video form.

With distance learning, the student remains faceless to the teacher and usually anonymous to other students, which will eliminate intimidation from peers. The fear so many adults have when going back to school is also gone because there is no need for teachers to know their age or background. As such, the educational atmosphere is completely dedicated to learning. There are no social stigmas to worry about and the focus is entirely on the books. Furthermore, this type of setup forces the student to communicate in writing. The side effects of that are enormous improvements in written communication which is the most important asset in the modern world.



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## Is a GED Worth the Paper it's Written On?

With most of the above educational options comes one important choice; what kind of high school program is best for you? There are many options out there and at a glance it isn't at all an easy choice to make, but the more you learn about these programs, the easier that choice becomes. The important thing to do is to recognize what each General Educational Degree is actually offering, and how they can benefit the individual.

There are programs like an External High School Diploma, or an EDP, which allows an adult to earn a diploma by demonstrating a grasp of high school skills through the context of their life experiences. More popular, though, is the General Educational Development credential, or GED.

A GED is, in essence, nothing more than a test to say that, even though you didn't finish high school, you know enough to get by. Someone wishing to earn a high school diploma, above a certain age, can take one of these tests to demonstrate that they have a firm grasp of high school level concepts on things such as math, science and English.

**A GED is easily and often mistaken by potential students as being the same as getting a high school education.** Due to the variety of courses and programs designed to help people prepare for GED examinations, there exists a misconception that the GED and a high school education are one and the same. This is not true.

**A GED program is far less intense than a high school curriculum and the required knowledge is far more generalized.** For someone that merely wants to learn for the sake of learning this isn't necessarily a bad thing. Others, however, are focused on their future careers and being saddled with a sub-par qualification could be devastating.

The truth is that not all diplomas are created equal. While a GED diploma is supposed to be looked upon as equal to a high school diploma by every business and academic institution in the United States, it by no means gets equal treatment. Much like everything else in life, there are stigmas attached to the GED. Oftentimes, assumptions are made about a person displaying a GED on their resume.



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It has been proven true time and again that even though institutions accept the GED, the person reading the resume may not. It is easy to imagine a case where two people are competing for a job and one has a recognized high school diploma and the other has a GED diploma. It is, sadly perhaps, just as easy to see how the person comparing the resumes will favor the high school diploma over the GED diploma.

What is left is a high school education equivalent that is not quite equal to a high school education, but sufficient for a person to get a start in life. True, there are perceptions against those with a GED, but hard work and perseverance can undo those misconceptions.

Some parents choose to home school their children, believing that a home-based education can be far superior to the cash-strapped education system in America today – and they may be right. The education system is most definitely in disarray, and the absence of 'out of the box' thinking evident in most school curriculums give parents, with a little time and money, cause to consider maybe taking responsibility for their own kids. But, once again, this raises problems when it comes to graduation.

How exactly do you measure education earned at home? What price do you put on experiences that can't be quantified easily? Is there a better way, or a way to combine home schooling with a genuine diploma earned after the fact?

Yes, there is. It's called the Citizens' High School Accredited High School Program.





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## CITIZEN'S HIGH SCHOOL - EXPLAINED

We have already determined that for most potential students out there, a non classroom environment works best. Since the GED isn't a strong step towards a better future, we have to find a way to get a distance education that will work for you.

There are a lot of schools offering distance education courses. We have put a lot of them to the test to find out which ones really do the best job for their students. The school we'll use as our model for hereon out is Citizens' High School, because it has met and exceeded all of our expectations and has a proven track record of success.

Citizens' High School has been providing high quality high school level education for over twenty years. The first thing to notice about them is that they offer an actual high school education and an actual high school diploma. Again, their program is not a GED, so the stigma attached to it isn't an issue here. The next thing to notice, and which is just as important, is that they are an accredited school.

When looking at earning a high school diploma through distance education methods and even from in-class studies, it is of utmost important to use a school that is accredited. Not only that, but it must be accredited by a legitimate organization. This may appear to be easy and obvious enough but don't be fooled.

Especially now that we are in the age of Internet and easy mass marketing there are hundreds or even thousands of places offering high school diplomas. For a large number of these it is designed as a way of scamming people out of their money. A school claiming to be accredited isn't enough to assure you they are on the level. Before applying to a school and especially before giving them money, it is important to make sure they are a legitimate educational institute.



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There are easy tip offs that the school isn't operating on the level. For instance, if it sounds too easy then it's probably not for you. A diploma can't be bought and it can't be earned in a matter of days. It is also likely that if the school came to your attention through a popup ad or an unsolicited phone call then they aren't a school with an acceptable history.

To become properly accredited a school has to go through more than just simple paper work. Citizens' High School, for instance, was founded in 1981 but they did not become accredited until 1984. This is because becoming accredited by a recognized organization can't happen until the school has operated for several years. At that time, applications have to be made that include information on courses, credit systems, teachers and student results. The school will then be analyzed even closer. Students will be surveyed and course materials will be reviewed. Once they're accredited, schools like Citizens' High School still have to submit annual reports to demonstrate their standings. As if that weren't enough the process usually repeats itself every five or so years. There is also an on-sight review board, consisting of 8-10 committee members, scrutinizing every aspect of the school and its operations that lasts for a period of 2-3 days.

Citizens' High School is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council (DTEC). Recognized by the Department of Education, they display accreditation information on their website. However, we've already said that even the bad school's and the scams advertise that they're accredited too. So the potential student should still look into a few things.

First, in the case of Citizens' High School you would check with the DETC. If there is no record of them being accredited then they're obviously up to no good. Since most people aren't familiar with organizations like the DETC, it is still a smart idea to check with the Federal Department of Education. They will inform you if the accrediting organization is legitimate.

Once you've determined that the school is on the up and up then you can start looking at the finer details.



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## Why is it Important to go to a Recognized School?

Looking into whether or not a school is accredited is not only to help you get value for your dollar, but to give you peace of mind. The scams that are out there can do you more harm than simply taking your money.

Clearly, these scams cheat the students out of a real education. Unfortunately the temptation of an easy way out wins a lot of people over. However, just because they have a printed diploma doesn't mean they're a better person for it and it certainly doesn't mean they have good credentials. In fact, when a person lists a diploma on their resume that doesn't come from an actual school they can get in a lot of trouble. For example: If a person finds a job and it is later discovered they do not have a "real" high school diploma, they could be fired on the spot. If discovered that their diploma isn't real then they could lose their job. Worse than that, the company could take legal action against the employee or applicant. Lying on a resume is a form of fraud. Even if the person wasn't aware that their diploma was fake, they are still liable. If for that reason alone, it is important to make sure you aren't being swindled by a diploma mill. It is more than just a waste of money.

Now, even distance education schools that offer a legitimate education and a real diploma aren't necessarily schools that are recognized. A school like Citizens' High School has a known reputation for offering high quality education with high standards. Students looking to pursue postsecondary educations will be able to apply to colleges confidently knowing their diploma is from a respected school.

Not all schools can claim the same credibility. Even though they are accredited and even though they offer good learning tools they may not have a strong enough reputation to carry a student's future safely. So another thing a student must do before applying to a prospective distance education school is to make a few inquiries to other institutions. If you are looking to get into college then it is an easy step to call those colleges right away. Ask the college if they accept high school diplomas from schools accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council.

The same holds true for certain employers. There are some companies that will help workers advance their education goals. The reasoning behind this is simple: more educated workers are usually more adaptable. Simply asking an employer for school recommendations can result in a wealth of promising information.



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## What Should You Look for in the School?

There are a lot of factors that can make one school better than the next. This is true for traditional high schools as well as distance education schools. When we favored Citizens' High School it was because they stood up to rigorous comparisons.

Citizens' High School designed a program that is extremely flexible and can cater to teenagers and adults alike. Furthermore, they are able to offer a proper high school education to people from all different backgrounds. When applying, it is possible to take into account other credits that have already been earned from a previous high school experience in the United States or abroad. This is a common sense factor that saves the student time and money and the unpleasantness of a redundant educational experience.

Citizens' High School offers a broad array of courses which are very good. Their courses cover the basic academic fields of English, Math, Science and Social Studies. The curriculum allows its students to have gain a solid foundation in these basic areas of knowledge. Citizens' High School doesn't have one set path for all of its students though. Those entering the school with existing credits will be guided differently. Also, there are different alternatives in place for students wishing to work towards a post secondary education and those who hope to enter the work force directly after earning their diploma.

For the latter, there are elective courses that are geared towards business and technical subjects. These courses bring the students closer to a real world education rather than a simple text book one. By providing their students the opportunity to take these courses they increase their students' marketability. It is important for the student to choose a school that uses materials that are proven in quality so they can be sure to learn what's right and what's crucial. The consistency throughout a given school is also necessary to make sure the student can call or write for help from anyone at any time.



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Citizens' High School is one of the schools that offer standard high school text books. Unlike most traditional high schools they always use ensure they use the latest additions available for each subject. Information is constantly changing no matter what subject you are in. Being up to date can mean the difference between a superior and inferior education.

Another key feature to look for in a distance education course is flexibility with time. One of the main reasons for choosing distance education is the opportunity for the student to work at their own pace. Working through a school that isn't able to bend around your schedule just can't possibly work out.

This means the school you choose has to be fast paced where you need it to be and slow paced where you need it to be. For a student that wants to rush an education the school has to be able to live up to that demand. Those students that want or need to take their time have to be able to do so without a negative pressure being placed on them.

At Citizens' High School the students can take up to three years to complete a program. Feedback is timely and helps to reinforce what the student has learned. Students who find it manageable to handle a heavy workload can complete a normal academic year in as little as four months.

Then, like any product you are in the market for, you want to make sure the education you buy comes with a good value. Are the course materials good? Is the support staff there for you? Do they offer worthwhile feedback?

The distance education program we've been looking at, Citizens' High School, exceeds in value. Not only are their course books current, but unlike some of their competition they allow their students to keep the books and all other materials even after completing a course. This is an unspeakable value because those materials will be with the student to offer knowledge for a lifetime. Citizens' High School also makes sure they have teachers available to help any student through a mailed correspondence, e-mail or a telephone call. Their teachers are real and they are experienced. Just because someone wants to learn independently doesn't mean they should be learning alone. These teachers are an invaluable resource.



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## **And When You Finally Apply ...**

We've looked at the options and their benefits. We determined that an actual high school diploma is the best way to go and that an accredited school is necessary. Now that the student has decided on which accredited distance education program to work through, there is still a matter of applying. Make sure when applying to your school of choice that you first read all of the information they provide. Ask questions that are on your mind and make note of anything they require from you. Also, make sure you understand the whole process. By looking at Citizens' High School's web site their entire process is laid out in a clear manner. Incidentally, this is another sign of a good school. If you read their pages carefully you'll find information that is common amongst distance learning schools.

Depending on what kind of background you have and what you are using the distance learning courses for, there are certain documentations that may be needed. For instance, a guidance counselor at your current school may have to provide written permission to take Citizens' High School courses, or transcripts from previous schools may have to be sent along with your application.

**Phone 1-800-736-GRAD (4723) for a No Hassle Information Package**

**Visit Us Online at <http://www.citizenschool.com>**