

GED exam about to get tougher

By Theresa Harrington, Contra Costa Times

CONCORD – Every time a bell rings in the holiday movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life,” an angel gets its wings. In a similarly heartwarming gesture, every time teacher Christine Paynton rings a bell in her Mt. Diablo adult education class, it means a student has earned his or her GED high school equivalency certificate.

As classes came to an end this month, Paynton excitedly rang her bell four times, proudly introducing graduates who passed their high school equivalency exams in the nick of time, before new tests are unveiled in January. Across the country, thousands of adults have been scrambling to finish the tests and earn their certificate – an important academic milestone for those without a high school diploma – or else begin anew with more rigorous, computerized assessments next month.

The GED Testing Service updated the exams to better prepare students for college and careers. The new tests will condense five subject-matter exams into four and will include more difficult questions aligned with new Common Core Curriculum Standards that promote critical thinking and problem-solving, said spokesman Armando Diaz. To get ready, some centers have begun offering the soon-to-be-obsolete 2002 test on computers.

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