Excel
ADULT HIGH SCHOOL

EXPLORE HOW HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS CAN
TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF ADULT LEARNERS

GALE PRESENTS

HOW MANY LEARNERS AREN'T FINISHING HIGH SCHOOL?

Roughly every **15 seconds,** a student decides to drop out of high school

That's **5,479 students** a day

And **2 million students** a year[1]

In total, **nearly 30 million adults** haven't finished high school in the United States.[2] Unfortunately, even with such high dropout rates, adults looking for ways to earn their high school diplomas have limited options. Often they have aged out of their local school district programs, and high school equivalency programs like the GED and HiSET require students to pay for the standardized exam, creating more barriers to graduation.

By 2031, **94% of all jobs** in the United States are expected to require a high school diploma or higher—and 72% of jobs will require at least some postsecondary education.[3] If American adults aren't able to fulfill these requirements and prepare for this shift in the labor market, we can expect unemployment rates to rise dramatically.

So what's the solution? Expanding adult education opportunities.

Your Library Can Help Adults Earn a High School Diploma

As one of our nation's most trusted educational institutions—and as an entity already focused on supporting adult literacy, GED preparation, workforce development, and underserved communities—the public library is a natural venue for an end-to-end high school completion program for adult learners.

Explore how your library can help adults transform their lives and strengthen the community by offering an opportunity to finish high school.

Impact Adult Learners	Impact Your Community
• Open doors to further educational attainment and career growth for adults. • Help increase income potential and decrease unemployment and generational poverty. • Bolster the confidence of adults and inspire lifelong learners.	• Improve the local economy by growing the workforce pool with adults who have higher educational attainment. • Add to local and state tax coffers as adults earn higher salaries and increase spending power. • Help increase labor force productivity and innovation.

THE HIGH COST OF DROPPING OUT
How Does Not Finishing High School Affect Adults?

REDUCED INCOME POTENTIAL

Adults who don't finish high school earn:

$8,892 LESS ANNUALLY
than those with a high school diploma

$16,796 LESS ANNUALLY
than those with an associate degree

$39,000 LESS ANNUALLY
than those with a bachelor's degree[4]

INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT[5]

5.5% of high school dropouts are unemployed

Compared to **4%** of high school graduates

And only **2%** of college graduates

High school dropouts have a higher unemployment rate than the national average, which was 3% in 2022.[6] During the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate for high school dropouts **skyrocketed to 21.2%**, while the rate for high school grads increased to 17.3% and the rate for college graduates increased to 8.4%, revealing how much more vulnerable adults without a high school diploma are during economic downturns.[7]

DECREASED HEALTH SPAN

On average, the life expectancy of adults who drop out of high school is **14.2 years less for men** and **10.3 years less for women**, compared to college graduates.[8] Adults with less education are less likely to have access to benefits like health insurance, paid leave, and retirement plans,[9] and are more likely to experience chronic and acute health issues throughout their lifetimes.[10] Individuals who have less education are also more likely to participate in behaviors that increase their health risks, including smoking, being overweight, and being sedentary.[11]

In a public health study conducted over 20 years, researchers concluded that expanding educational opportunities could save eight times more lives than medical advances just by reducing health disparities.[12]

INCREASED INCARCERATION RATES

High school dropouts are **three times more likely** to get arrested after the age of 18,[13] and dropouts make up **68%** of all incarcerated people in the United States.[14] Involvement in criminal activity leads to other negative effects, like lost earnings, adverse health effects, increased legal expenses, and a higher likelihood of relapse into criminal behavior.[15] Unfortunately, there's also a clear cycle linked between incarcerated people and the educational attainment of their children—10% of students whose parents are incarcerated drop out of high school.[16]

In the United States, **high school graduates** earn nearly **$9K more annually** than those without a high school diploma;[17] are **less likely to live in poverty**; and are **more likely to lead longer, healthier lives**.[18]

What Would a Future with More High School Graduates Look Like?

The current high school graduation rate is 87%.[22] Research estimates that increasing the high school graduation rate to 90% would drastically improve outcomes:[23]

14,260 new jobs

$3.1 billion in earnings

$159 million in state and local tax revenue

$2.5 billion in spending

How Does the Dropout Rate Affect Communities?

INCREASED PUBLIC COSTS

Adults who haven't finished high school are **nearly four times** more likely to rely on government assistance programs, such as food stamps, housing assistance, unemployment benefits, and Medicaid, which can strain government budgets.[19]

HIGHER COSTS TO TAXPAYERS

High school dropouts' increased reliance on public resources, lower tax contributions, and higher rates of criminal activity lead to high costs for taxpayers. On average, an adult who did not complete high school costs the economy approximately **$272,000 over their lifetime**—that's over **$7.4 trillion** for all 30 million American adults who haven't finished high school.[20]

LOWER ECONOMIC GROWTH

A higher dropout rate also leads to lower economic growth. A less educated population has lower wages, decreased productivity, and a lower probability of employment.[21]

Considering Solutions to Increase Graduation Rates

From increased poverty to poor health outlooks, not finishing high school can negatively impact adults across communities. High school graduates have better opportunities for employment prospects, higher lifelong earning potential, and benefits that help them live healthier lives.

Addressing the high school dropout rate with programs that make earning a diploma more accessible has the potential to improve the lives of millions of adults, while reducing public health costs in communities across the United States.[24]

EVALUATING ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Equivalency Exams vs. Accredited High School Diplomas

Equivalency exams, such as the GED and HiSET, enable learners to prove that they have equivalent knowledge compared to a high school graduate. Instead of completing high school courses, students take an exam covering core subjects like math, science, social studies, and English language arts to earn their equivalency certificate.

While getting a GED can be faster—depending on the time spent on test preparation, which can be anywhere from three to 12 months—completing a full high school curriculum helps learners get a broader education and develop key life skills, like problem-solving and time management. High school students also typically have access to more academic support resources and career guidance. And on average, adults with a high school diploma make $2,000 more a year than those with a GED.[25]

For adults interested in postsecondary education, most colleges and universities accept applicants with a GED, but a small percentage do not. A high school GPA is also one of the main considerations for college acceptance and for financial aid that isn't available to GED recipients.[26]

Transforming How Adults Approach High School Education

Adults looking to graduate high school have limited options, but programs are available, like *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School*, that allow them to earn an accredited high school diploma on their own time.

What makes a good high school completion program for adult learners?

Online Access: Digital platforms make it easy for adults to access courses anytime, anywhere.

Self-Paced: Busy adults need more flexibility—self-paced courses allow them to complete coursework on their own schedules.

Academic Support: Online tutors and advisors offer more support for student learning, college planning, and career guidance.

Transfer Credits: For adults who only need a few credits to graduate, the ability to transfer completed course credits from other high schools is essential.

Your library can offer adults in your community a high school completion program with all these benefits and more with *Excel Adult High School*.

> "The GED program is successful for some people but it's very difficult. . . . It can be expensive to take the GED. It can be limiting and we felt like a high school diploma program was really more encompassing. This one provides academic coaches. It provides tutoring. It's a program that you really can't fail. . . . That was the really important part—offering something that is going to give that extra level of support for people."[27]
>
> —**Misty Jones, San Diego Public Library Director**

> "One of the best things about [*Excel Adult High School*] is that it is self-paced and it does not rely on a massive knowledge test at the end to award a diploma. These students struggled with traditional school the first time around, so it is important for them to experience success and to see progress as it is being made. The scholarship model is a different way of funding a library resource for us, but now it makes sense that each seat is an investment in a person and in turn an investment in our community."
>
> —**Michelle Mears, Library Director Rolling Hills Library, Missouri**

DISCOVER EXCEL ADULT HIGH SCHOOL

Break down barriers to graduating high school by offering adults in your community the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma through the public library. *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School* is 100% online, self-paced, and offers essential support to help adults graduate and plan the next step in their education or career.

PROVIDE A CORE ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

- **The 21.5-credit, standards-aligned curriculum** helps prepare students for success in college or the workplace. Academic courses support learning in core subjects, and elective courses help students decide on a career path or college major in subjects like business, technology, and more.
- **100 courses, all updated regularly,** are available for students to choose from to earn their 15.5 academic credits and six elective credits.

OFFER GREATER FLEXIBILITY

- **The online platform** allows access to courses whenever and wherever students have time to learn.
- **The self-paced program** encourages students to set their own schedules to complete coursework—six courses are loaded at a time, so students can choose which to take first or take several at one time.

NURTURE ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT & SUCCESS

- **Success coaches** check in with students; offer encouragement; and are available by text, phone, or email to answer any questions and help with concerns.
- **Online tutors** offer live tutoring, allowing students to get one-on-one help with their coursework when they need it.
- **Academic advisors** offer expert career and college counseling services to help students make a plan for their career or postsecondary education.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR ADULT LEARNERS

- **Ongoing Support:** Students are well supported by instructors, tutors, and success coaches.
- **Transfer Credits Accepted:** Credits can be transferred from other high schools, home schools, or passed portions of the GED or HiSET. Depending on credit transfer, students can complete the program in 24 months or less.
- **English Language Learner (ELL) Friendly:** Built-in ELL tools give non-native English speakers access to courses in other languages.
- **Applicability & Engagement:** With over 30 electives to choose from, students can choose to focus on one path or multiple areas.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- **Built-in Qualification Process:** The program workflow helps qualify a student for a scholarship award. It includes an application, prerequisite course, library interview, and 30-day scholarship probation.
- **Program Management:** Track student progress and outcomes with an intuitive, real-time dashboard and reports.
- **Onboarding Training and Support:** Get help with program implementation, staff training, student recruitment, and promotion.
- **Proven Outcomes:** Join libraries across the United States that have graduated adults and helped create brighter futures.

Excel Adult High School is accredited by Cognia, the parent organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and by the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS).

READ EXCEL ADULT HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS STORIES

Daniel Click

Elk City Carnegie Library, Elk City, Oklahoma

Twenty years after leaving high school following his sophomore year, Daniel Click attended *Excel Adult High School* through Elk City Carnegie Library. With the support of the library and his success coach, Click graduated the same week his daughter graduated from her local high school. Earning his high school diploma opened opportunities for a job promotion and continued education at a technical college where Click earned his computer networking undergraduate certificate with a 3.2 GPA.[28]

Jasmine Edmundson

Tulsa City-County Library, Tulsa, Oklahoma

As a mother of six, Jasmine Edmundson needed a program with flexible options when she decided to earn her high school diploma. By transferring her credits to *Excel Adult High School*, Edmundson was able to complete the six courses she needed and graduate in just a few months. "Being able to be at home and work on my assignments to complete my diploma was excellent because I don't always have the time to go take classes," said Edmundson. "I've always wanted to be a nurse or teacher, and now I'm finally taking those steps. I have enrolled in TCC [Tulsa Community College] in the nursing program, and I have now received a higher-paying job because I have my diploma." [29]

Kelry Smith

Rolling Hills Library, Saint Joseph, Missouri

Kelry Smith left high school and her family in ninth grade. After spending six months in prison when she turned 18, Smith was determined to turn her life around. She earned her GED, married, and became a mother of three—then her husband passed away. Smith had a fourth child, remarried, and welcomed a stepdaughter. While encouraging her children to graduate, Smith wished she could earn her high school diploma. Although she enrolled in *Excel Adult High School* with zero credits, the self-paced program allowed her to graduate with a 3.44 GPA in just seven months. "The library has so many great programs but by far this is my ultimate FAVORITE one!" said Smith. "There are real people to reach out to at the school if needed." Now that she's graduated, Smith plans to study accounting or start a career in insurance.[30]

> " The Excel scholarship program is the epitome of servant leadership exemplified. The program is a re-investment in your community. Its announcement blasting "Coming Soon" on Facebook in January 2023 is still our biggest social media audience in terms of engagement and metrics ever at 33,000+. We couldn't believe it! We had over 250 applicants narrowed down to five. We currently have three proud graduates, one in just two months! We're now planning our first commencement!! [*Excel Adult High School*] is a second chance to earn that high school diploma, not to be confused with a GED program and really the first thing your library should look at to differentiate itself. Thanks to the stellar support from Gale, we have done just that."
>
> — **Howard C. Marks, MLS, MPA, Director**
> **Ector County Library, Texas**

> " I want to make sure I share just how absolutely fulfilling it is to offer this program to our patrons. When interviewing patrons for scholarships, you learn about all the challenges and barriers they faced trying to get their high school diplomas. It is humbling to be a part of their journey and to witness them in their caps and gowns at the graduation ceremony. This program is an investment that pays dividends beyond what we put into it via funding or managing the program. Furthermore, managing the program is easy because of the amazing support team at Gale."
>
> — **Ricqui Brooks, Adult Literacy Coordinator**
> **St. Louis County Library, Missouri**

Excel
ADULT HIGH SCHOOL

Meet Gale

Gale, part of Cengage Group, partners with public libraries to help expand their impact and meet the ever-evolving needs of their communities with trusted content and user-friendly technology. With Gale, public libraries have the resources they need to engage learners, develop focused programming, and reach diverse and underserved populations. Learn more at gale.com/public.

Meet Excel Education Systems

Gale partners with Excel Education Systems to deliver accredited high school diplomas through public libraries because of their commitment to providing high-quality education services to their students, including more than 20,000 adult learners. Since 2005, *Excel High School* has helped thousands of high school–age and adult learners graduate and move on to higher education, employment, military enlistment, and job advancement. Learn more at exceled.com.

> " Education is essential to create opportunities for adults and their families, but many adults face barriers to continued learning. At *Excel Adult High School*, our goal is to give every person, regardless of their circumstances, the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. Our success coaches create a supportive environment for all students from the first day of enrollment to graduation. We've seen so many adults earn their diplomas by taking advantage of our flexible program and move on to accomplish their goals."

— **Jodi Alama, Success Coach**
Excel High School

Learn more about how your library can help adults earn a high school diploma at **gale.com/graduate-adults**

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