

Rachel Kelley

Senior Division Behavioral & Social Sciences

Characteristics Common To Homeless Youth Pursuing The GED Certification

As the GED becomes an increasingly common alternative to traditional secondary education, providing access to quality GED programs is essential for students' and communities' futures. There has been much research conducted on the influence of numerous factors on students' success, including ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and reading level. Less study has been devoted to the impact of motivation, expectations, and relationships on students' success. Most research focuses on "mainstream" GED students. Because of their transience, less is known about the experiences of homeless, foster-care or otherwise "at-risk" youth within the GED program. In order to better understand this population and the influence of social factors on their involvement in GED, a survey was administered to students studying for their tests at a non-profit youth services agency in Denver, Colorado. Due to unforeseen circumstances at the agency, the sample size was limited. A pilot study, therefore, served to gather descriptive statistics and to inform the revision of a second survey currently being administered in the early spring of 2008. Initial results from the revised survey indicate that the students' expectations of themselves, not those of their friends, their teachers or even their parents, are most strongly correlated with their educational success.