

# Lit



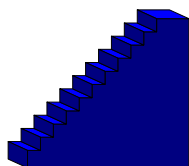
# Scan

## Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 1 ♦ Number 2

February 11, 1997 (revised September 1, 1997)

### **GED DIPLOMA A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER EDUCATION, HEALTH, PROSPERITY & HAPPINESS**



For many Coloradans--especially teenagers and twentysomethings who slipped through the cracks of the public school system--a GED diploma is a stepping stone to

higher education, mental and physical health, economic prosperity, and personal happiness, according to a 1996 survey of Colorado GED graduates. In mid-1996, the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative surveyed 328 Coloradans who earned GED diplomas between October and December 1995. Of these graduates, 235 responded. (Response rate: 70 percent)

#### **Highlights**

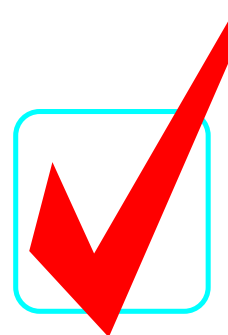
- ◆ Nine out of ten GED graduates are happier than they were before passing the tests.
- ◆ Two out of three GED graduates are pursuing college degrees and encouraging others to stay in school.
- ◆ Half of GED graduates got jobs, got promoted, or got better jobs after passing the tests.
- ◆ Half of GED graduates do more since passing the tests to ensure the health of their families and themselves.

#### **Who Responded**

The typical respondent was about 20 years old, unmarried and childless, either White or Hispanic, and only slightly more likely to be female than male.

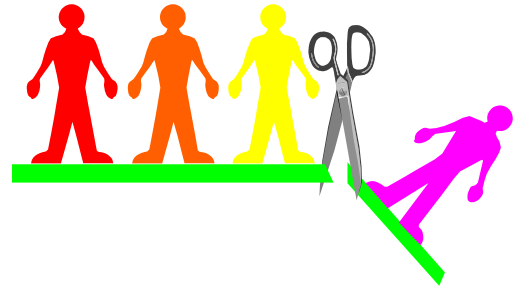
Education levels of GED graduates was also surveyed. Almost two thirds of respondents' mothers and over half of their fathers either did not graduate from high school, received GED diplomas themselves, or went no further than high school.

These findings suggest that the GED option is being chosen by many young adults in Colorado who are at least second generation at-risk students.

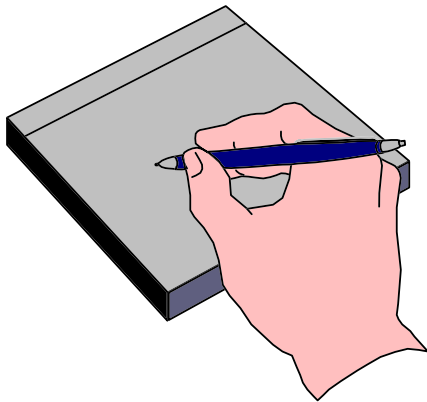


### Why GED Graduates Left School

Why did these students leave school? GED graduates appear to have had more trouble with "school" than "education." Most of the reasons for leaving school they identify suggest an inability--or unwillingness--to deal with the social strictures of school life.



- 40% were "not interested" in school
- 27% of females became pregnant
- 24% received poor grades
- 18% had to find jobs
- 17% left due to peer pressure, had problems with alcohol or drugs, or had problems with teachers
- 16% were expelled or suspended



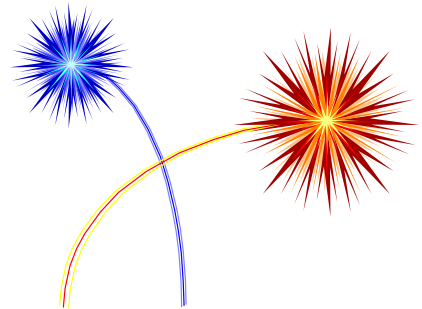
### Why GED Graduates Took the GED Tests

Why did these students decide to prepare for and take the GED tests? Somewhat surprisingly, for the overwhelming majority of them, completing their education was an end in itself rather than a means to an end (such as going to college or getting a job).

- 71% chose to do so for personal enrichment
- 38% were required to do so for educational admission
- 16% were required to do so for a job they were seeking

### How the GED Diploma Benefited Graduates

Of these GED graduates, the majority report that completing their high school education enhanced their personal well-being, and contributed to their decision to pursue college degrees. Having a GED diploma themselves, they have in turn encouraged friends and family to finish high school and go on to college or technical school.



- 86% report improved psychological health (more satisfied with life, set more realistic goals, feel more open to change, understand themselves better, communicate better with others, have more respect for opinions of others)
- 77% report increased participation in educational and cultural activities (keep up with current events via print and electronic media, discuss children's school work more frequently, obtain library cards, acquire home computers)

- 66% report pursuing college degrees themselves, encouraging others to stay in school, to prepare to take the GED tests, or to pursue other educational opportunities
- 50% report improved health practices for themselves and their families (diet, exercise, medical and dental checkups)



In addition, substantial proportions of GED graduates report successes in their employment and personal finances. They also become more involved in community activities after earning the equivalency diploma.

- 48% report a positive change in employment status (receive paying jobs, perform better in present jobs, are promoted, or change jobs)
- 42% report a positive change in personal finances (receive raise or other salary increase or better paying job, move to better homes or neighborhoods)
- 39% report increased participation in community activities (attend local community events, register to vote, vote, start doing volunteer work)

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that Colorado GED graduates are people who had a problem with “school,” not “education.” Less than a quarter of them left school over bad grades. Most fell victim to social and economic problems that made it impossible for them to succeed in a conventional school setting. Whatever their feelings about education when they left school, three out of four of these students sought a GED diploma for personal enrichment—that is, as an end in itself, not just a means to further education or a better job. In fact, however, most of them are pursuing higher education and are improving their work situations. Not surprisingly, these positive changes in their lives are improving their physical and psychological health as well as that of their families.

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