



Transitional Age Youth & the G.E.D. in San Francisco

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

Every year, approximately 1,000 students in San Francisco drop out of high school. There are currently approximately 5,000 16-24 year olds in San Francisco that do not have a high school diploma or the equivalent. Given these high numbers, it is important for San Francisco to conduct a system wide analysis of both local and national General Education Development (GED) preparation programs in order to establish best practices in order to build an integrated system that will effectively serve its youth. Many local and nationwide programs are emerging as alternatives to high school that link youth to postsecondary education and the workforce. According to local data, we have more than 1400 students who are currently in the SFUSD system who are 18 and older who are almost 200 to 100 credits short of graduation. GED will be the only viable option for many of this youth.

Importance of the GED

Many youth struggle with high school for various reasons, including difficulty with classes or teachers, unsafe learning environments, or personal issues such as pregnancy/parenting or need for employment. They often consider the GED to be a shorter and more convenient second chance that will provide them with the ability to earn the equivalence of a high school diploma. The hope is that the GED will help them gain access to postsecondary education or higher paying jobs.

Since the well-known study in 1993 by Cameron and Heckman that reported that GED recipients *were no better off than high school dropouts*, multiple studies have been conducted that explore the question of whether a GED is valuable to the recipient. Recent research indicates that it is. Earning a GED increases earnings and probability of being employed. Two-thirds of GED candidates seek further education. GED recipients have higher self-esteem and more regular, uninterrupted, full-time employment. A sample from the Chicago Longitudinal Study showed that while GED recipients' outcomes were not as strong as high school graduates, their outcomes were more positive than high school dropouts. They reported significant differences between GED recipients and dropouts in income, life satisfaction, future optimism, substance use, and severe depression symptoms. Researchers concluded that the GED is the next best option for those who are likely not going to return to school and earn a high school diploma. Five years after receiving GED, recipients earned 15% more than their dropout counterparts.

Why the GED itself is not enough

While it generally improves outcomes for youth, it does not have the same economic viability as a high school diploma. While the Chicago Longitudinal Study sample showed more positive outcomes for GED recipients than dropouts, it also showed significant differences between high school diploma earners and GED recipients in income, life satisfaction, future optimism, substance use, and severe depression symptoms. GED recipients have a lower probability of enrolling in a postsecondary institution than high school graduates. While GED recipients earn more than high school dropouts, they also earn less than high school graduates. Instead of being a stepping stone to more opportunity, the GED has become an endpoint in itself. "The most successful districts build pathways that lead to full-fledged diplomas or are re-designing their GED programming as preparation to community college." GED earn lower in the long term than high school graduates.

Problem

Due to the costs of the high number of youth without a diploma or equivalent in the city of San Francisco, it is important that we look to national successful models in order to determine the best way to serve this population. While multiple services already exist, more coordination needs to occur between organizations such as SFUSD, CCSF, DCYF, HSA, JPD, MOWD and various CBOs so that services may reach this population more efficiently and effectively. More support and integration is needed to allow GED recipients to have the same opportunities at postsecondary education and high paying jobs as those who earn their high school diploma.

Successful national programs

New York has termed this second conclusion Multiple Pathways and the term is catching on. New York has developed Transfer Schools, Youth Adult Boroughs Centers, Blended GED programs, and Learning to Work Programs. Philadelphia has started small high schools specifically for youth 17 and older that don't want to return to "high school." Both Boston and Philadelphia have recommended an increase in the number of seats in alternative schools as well as an increase in the programs. It wasn't assumed that this increase in alternative education programs would fall only within the school district; instead it was assumed that CBOs as well as the district would create additional educational opportunities.

After reviewing several national cutting-edge models for transitional age youth educational programs, including Philadelphia, Portland, Boston, and Chicago, New York City stood out as being an exemplary model for San Francisco—New York City. New York City formed the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation in order to address the need for other options for youth to earn high school credentials and participate in promising post-secondary activities. These options include a full-time program, Access GED, and a part-time program, GED Plus, that combine academics with career and college preparation. Both models view the GED as a valuable step in preparing youth for successful lives, instead of being an end in itself.

Local GED programs

<p>City College San Francisco John Adams, 561-1900 Adult Learning Center, 241-2300 Mission 550-4417 Southeast, 550-4300 Downtown, 267-6500 www.ccsf.edu</p>	<p>Treasure Island Job Corps 351 H Avenue, Building 442 Treasure Island San Francisco, CA 94130-5027 (415) 277-2400 www.treasureisland.jobcorps.gov Ages 16-24; GED and diploma</p>
<p>San Francisco Conservation Corps Building 102 Fort Mason San Francisco, CA 94123 (415) 928-7417 www.sfcc.org Ages 18-26; GED & high school diploma</p>	<p>Glide 13th St & Ave. E Treasure Island San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 364-0349 www.glide.org Ages 16-24; GED & diploma</p>
<p>Five Keys Charter School 70 Oak Grove St San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 734-3310 www.5keyscharter.org Ages 17 and up; GED and diploma</p>	<p>Larkin Street 1142 Sutter St San Francisco, CA 94109 (415) 673-0911 www.larkinstreetyouth.org Ages 16-24; GED & diploma</p>
<p>YMCA 169 Steuart St San Francisco, CA 94105-1206 (415) 957-9622 www.ymcasf.org</p>	<p>San Francisco Unified School 555 Franklin St. San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 241-6000 www.sfusd.edu</p>

Recommendations for how SF can build a more integrated system

Since not one single agency owns the dropout problem, programs are not well coordinated and services are not unified in their outreach and referral (Boston Youth Transitions Task Force). Services need to be coordinated among SFUSD, CCSF, DCYF, HSA, JPD, OEWD and various CBOs.

What City Workforce Agencies & Policymakers Can Do

- ✓ **View the GED as a stepping stone to postsecondary degrees, credential programs, or employment training, not as an end in itself (Jobs for the Future GED to College)**
- ✓ **Combine GED classes with other services in order to increase retention; multiple pathways need to be available to youth to achieve high school equivalency (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)**
- ✓ **Gather data, by using methods such as a cohort methodology, to better determine the target population (Boston Youth Transitions Task Force)**
- ✓ **Strengthen partnerships among CBOs, City College, SFUSD, DCYF, etc. in order to increase sustainability, capacity and ability to grow and develop additional funding opportunities (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)**
- ✓ **Expand existing community models that have good outcomes for youth. These programs should become anchor programs that collaborate, share technical assistance, provide cooperative referrals, and serve as models.**
- ✓ **Improve recruitment strategies by bringing the information to the targeted community; pass out flyers, posters, and booklets with information about the program and also success stories of those from within that population; talk to members of underrepresented communities; ask current students for effective ways to reach their communities; use community radio and TV to interview successful students. (Goto, Spitzer, & Sadouk, 2009). A radio promotion that encouraged listeners to text message a code in order to learn more about enrolling in the GED program through Chesterfield County Public Schools Office of Adults Continuing Education allowed the program to target a younger audience and increased the amount of GED applicants and testtakers by 200%. (Hinton, 2007)**
- ✓ **Implement bridge programs (run by CBOs or public schools), which are post-GED programs that help students prepare for post-secondary work (Beder, 2007)**
- ✓ **Employ One-stops throughout the city to provide a solid referral system to CBOs and pre-employment programs for youth & young adults**
- ✓ **Engage Chambers of Commerce, labor unions, local employers, colleges and city agencies in collaborative efforts to help in resource development, recruiting and training staff, referring youth, employment services (e.g. internships, skills training, career planning), and evaluating progress.**
- ✓ **Track students and document outcomes through agreements between the school system, CBOs, and city agencies that allow for sharing information. The task force suggests exploring a web-based data system.**
- ✓ **Establish central information location, such as a website with links to various agencies, schools, CBOS, etc.**

What Current GED Programs Can Do

- ✓ Form partnerships with postsecondary institutions to better assist students in enrollment and allow for implementation of more resources from both ends (Jobs for the Future GED to College)
- ✓ Focus on one subtest at a time so the test appears more attainable; studies have shown retention rates are higher in programs that utilize this strategy (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Allow students to experience small successes early on (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Use pre- and post-tests to assess learner abilities as incremental achievements towards GED readiness for students at lower levels (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Periodically re-evaluate a student's progress, acknowledge incremental achievements, and re-affirm commitment to the ultimate goal. (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Implement small group activities, such as cohort groups and learning communities, that will encourage support among small groups of students (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Inform youth about the financial aid options available to them to further their post secondary training (Beder, 2007)
- ✓ Provide youth with access to a comprehensive social, financial and academic support system during both their time in the program as well during their transition to the next step (Jobs for the Future GED to College), including educational guidance, job assistance, career counseling, case management, transportation, child care, and substance abuse counseling in addition to their education and job training (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Include a postsecondary transition plan for GED recipients (Beder, 2007)
- ✓ Collect data that measures the efficiency of programs to better analyze and improve the program outcomes (Jobs for the Future GED to College)

What TAY Service Providers Can Do

- ✓ Have knowledge of local resources, relationships, and other CBOs in order to develop career pathway programs (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Utilize City College as the lead for establishing a career pathway, and supplement those services with a local CBO so that they can target specific populations
- ✓ Form relationships with local community colleges to help facilitate admission (Beder, 2007)

Context of the problem

Every year, approximately 1,000 students in San Francisco drop out of high school (California Department of Education, 2009; Rumberger and Rotermund, 2009). There are currently approximately 5,000 16-24 year olds in San Francisco that do not have a high school diploma or the equivalent (CITE). Of the more than 5.5 million Californians over age 16 that do not have a high school diploma (or higher degree), only 0.9% took the GED, and 0.6% actually passed, leaving more than 5 million without a high school diploma or equivalent (American Council on Education, 2008). Given these high numbers, it is important for San Francisco to conduct a system wide analysis of both local and national GED programs in order to establish best practices in order to build an integrated system that will effectively serve its youth. Many local and nationwide programs are emerging as alternatives to high school that link youth to postsecondary education and the workforce

Importance of the GED

Many youth struggle with high school for various reasons, including difficulty with classes or teachers, unsafe learning environments, or personal issues such as pregnancy/parenting or need for employment. They often consider the GED to be a shorter and more convenient second chance that will provide them with the ability to earn the equivalence of a high school diploma. The hope is that the GED will help them gain access to postsecondary education or higher paying jobs.

Since the well-known study in 1993 by Cameron and Heckman that reported that GED recipients were no better off than high school dropouts, multiple studies have been conducted that explore the question of whether a GED is valuable to the recipient. Recent research indicates that it is. Earning a GED increases earnings and probability of being employed (Tyler, 2002). Two-thirds of GED candidates seek further education. GED recipients have higher self-esteem and more regular, uninterrupted, full-time employment (Brown, 2000). However, some studies have found that GED increases earnings of white males, not minority males (Tyler, Murname and Willett, 2000). A sample from the Chicago Longitudinal Study showed that while GED recipients' outcomes were not as strong as high school graduates, their outcomes were more positive than high school dropouts. They reported significant differences between GED recipients and dropouts in income, life satisfaction, future optimism, substance use, and severe depression symptoms (Ou, 2008). Researchers concluded that the GED is the next best option for those who are likely not going to return to school and earn a high school diploma (Ou, 2008). Five years after receiving GED, recipients earned 15% more than their dropout counterparts (Lofstrom & Tyler, 2005).

Why the GED itself is not enough

While it generally improves outcomes for youth, the GED does not have the same economic viability as a high school diploma (Youth Transition Funder's Group, 2008). While the Chicago Longitudinal Study sample showed more positive outcomes for GED recipients than dropouts, it also showed significant differences between high school diploma earners and GED recipients in income, life satisfaction, future optimism, substance use, and severe depression symptoms. GED recipients have a lower probability of enrolling in a postsecondary institution than high school graduates (Lofstrom & Tyler, 2005). While GED recipients earn more than high school dropouts, they also earn less than high school graduates (Beder, 2007). Instead of being a stepping stone to more opportunity, the GED has become an endpoint in itself. This research suggests that the most successful programs are building “pathways that lead to full-fledged diplomas or re-designing their GED programming as preparation to community college.” (Youth Transition Funder's Group, 2008)

Problem

Due to the costs of the high number of youth without a diploma or equivalent in the city of San Francisco, it is important that we look to national successful models in order to determine the best way to serve this population. While multiple services already exist, more coordination needs to occur

between organizations such as SFUSD, City College SF, and CBOs, so that services may reach this population more efficiently and effectively. More support and integration is needed to allow GED recipients to have the same opportunities at postsecondary education and high paying jobs as those who earn their high school diploma.

Successful national programs

Many cities are addressing this issue by redesigning their GED programs. New York has termed this second conclusion Multiple Pathways and the term is catching on. New York has developed “Multiple Pathways” that includes transfer schools, Youth Adult Borough Centers, blended GED programs, and Learning to Work Programs. Philadelphia began small high schools specifically for youth 17 and older that don’t want to return to high school. Both Boston and Philadelphia have recommended an increase in the amount of space in alternative schools as well as an increase in the number of programs. These programs assumed that CBOs would create additional educational opportunities so that the responsibility would not fall only solely on the school district. After reviewing several national cutting-edge models for transitional age youth educational programs in various cities, one program stood out as being an exemplary model for San Francisco—the Access GED in New York City.

New York City formed the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation to address the need for other ways for youth to earn high school credentials and participate in promising post-secondary activities. These options include full and part-time GED programs that combine academics with career and college preparation. Both models view the GED as a valuable step in preparing youth for successful lives, instead of being an end in itself.

The full-time GED model is the Access GED program. Highlights of the Access GED model include:

- ∞ Youth Development Philosophy: Emphasizes the student in the context of providing tools needed to become happy, healthy and successful adults; includes student leadership, service learning opportunities, small student-teacher ratios, and individualized plans
- ∞ Primary Person Model: Students are paired with an adult advisor who stays with them through the entire program. The advisor helps them set goals and conduct assessments.
- ∞ Program Phases: The program is divided into five phases that enable the student to experience progress within a formalized structure
- ∞ Six week cyclical schedule: Enables program to address issues of rolling admissions and changing populations; provides multiple entry points for new students
- ∞ Cohort Model: Establishes a sense of community for a population that has typically experienced isolation and loss
- ∞ Contextualized Learning and Skill Development: Students work independently and in teams in order to develop skills that will be helpful in their postsecondary plans
- ∞ Portfolio Process: Students create portfolios that allow them to display their achievements; also is used as a tool to develop goals and plans
- ∞ Formative and Summative Assessment: Standardized tests, interviews, essays, progress reports and portfolios are used to measure achievement.
- ∞ Readers/Writers Workshop Model: Helps students whose literacy are below grade levels
- ∞ Learning to Work Partnership: Collaborates with Department of Education and CBOs to assist students in postsecondary career planning, college entrance, or job skills training; provides counseling, support, internships, and job placement
- ∞ Professional Development: Encourages professional development for GED educators

The part-time GED model is GED Plus, which combines academic services with support in transitioning to college or career. GED Plus often includes Learning to Work, an intensive job readiness, career exploration and support services program usually run by a partnering CBO. (Youth Transition Funder's Group, 2007; Youth Transition Funder's Group, 2008)

Local GED preparation programs

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Recommendations for how SF can build a more integrated system

Since no one single agency owns the dropout problem, programs are often not well-coordinated and services are not unified in their outreach and referral (Boston Youth Transitions Task Force). Services need to be coordinated among San Francisco Unified School District, City College of San Francisco, Department of Children, Youth & their Families, Human Services Agency, Juvenile Probation Department, Adult Probation Department, Office of Economic & Workforce Development and various CBOs who provide preparation, linkages and other supportive services for transitional age youth.

Leadership needs to fund GED in a coordinated effort to ensure a high quality programs and utilize workforce development fund from OEWD and HSA to incentive and support education goals. Adopting a citywide GED model and requiring linkages between contracted GED preparation sites & testing centers would encourage completion of the GED and support post secondary training.

What City Workforce Agencies & Policymakers Can Do

- ✓ View the GED as a stepping stone to postsecondary degrees, credential programs, or employment training, not as an end in itself (Jobs for the Future GED to College)
- ✓ Combine GED classes with other services in order to increase retention; multiple pathways need to be available to youth to achieve high school equivalency (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Gather data, by using methods such as a cohort methodology, to better determine the target population (Boston Youth Transitions Task Force)
- ✓ Strengthen partnerships among CBOs, City College, SFUSD, DCYF, etc. in order to increase sustainability, capacity and ability to grow and develop additional funding opportunities (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Expand existing community models that have good outcomes for youth. These programs should become anchor programs that collaborate, share technical assistance, provide cooperative referrals, and serve as models.
- ✓ Improve recruitment strategies by bringing the information to the targeted community; pass out flyers, posters, and booklets with information about the program and also success stories of those from within that population; talk to members of underrepresented communities; ask current students for effective ways to reach their communities; use community radio and TV to interview successful students. (Goto, Spitzer, & Sadouk, 2009). A radio promotion that encouraged listeners to text message a code in order to learn more about enrolling in the GED program through Chesterfield County Public Schools Office of Adults Continuing Education allowed the program to target a younger audience and increased the amount of GED applicants and testtakers by 200%. (Hinton, 2007)
- ✓ Implement bridge programs (run by CBOs or public schools), which are post-GED programs that help students prepare for post-secondary work (Beder, 2007)
- ✓ Employ One-stops throughout the city to provide a solid referral system to CBOs and pre-employment programs for youth & young adults
- ✓ Engage Chambers of Commerce, labor unions, local employers, colleges and city agencies in collaborative efforts to help in resource development, recruiting and training staff, referring youth, employment services (e.g. internships, skills training, career planning), and evaluating progress.
- ✓ Track students and document outcomes through agreements between the school system, CBOs, and city agencies that allow for sharing information. The task force suggests exploring a web-based data system.
- ✓ Establish central information location, such as a website with links to various agencies, schools, CBOS, etc.

What Current GED Programs Can Do

- ✓ Form partnerships with postsecondary institutions to better assist students in enrollment and allow for implementation of more resources from both ends (Jobs for the Future GED to College)
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- ✓ Allow students to experience small successes early on (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Use pre- and post-tests to assess learner abilities as incremental achievements towards GED readiness for students at lower levels (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Periodically re-evaluate a student's progress, acknowledge incremental achievements, and re-affirm commitment to the ultimate goal. (Gopalakrishnan, 2008)
- ✓ Implement small group activities, such as cohort groups and learning communities, that will encourage support among small groups of students (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Inform youth about the financial aid options available to them to further their post secondary training (Beder, 2007)
- ✓ Provide youth with access to a comprehensive social, financial and academic support system during both their time in the program as well during their transition to the next step (Jobs for the Future GED to College), including educational guidance, job assistance, career counseling, case management, transportation, child care, and substance abuse counseling in addition to their education and job training (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Include a postsecondary transition plan for GED recipients (Beder, 2007)
- ✓ Collect data that measures the efficiency of programs to better analyze and improve the program outcomes (Jobs for the Future GED to College)

What TAY Service Providers Can Do

- ✓ Have knowledge of local resources, relationships, and other CBOs in order to develop career pathway programs (Bragg, Bremer, Castellano, Kirby, Mavis, Schaad, et al., 2007)
- ✓ Utilize City College as the lead for establishing a career pathway, and supplement those services with a local CBO so that they can target specific populations
- ✓ Form relationships with local community colleges to help facilitate admission (Beder, 2007)

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