

Case Study in Contextualization: Findings from an evaluation of LaGuardia's GED Bridge program



Vanessa Martin

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16 East 34th Street, New York, NY 10016
475 14th Street, Oakland, CA 94516

www.mdrc.org

Overview

- **Background and context**
- **The reform landscape**
- **Program spotlight**
 - LaGuardia CC's GED Bridge program
- **Discussion**

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Why focus on the GED?

- 21% of U.S. adults lack a high school diploma, barring most of them from college entry
- Adult education and the GED: Second chance pathways
- But critical challenges
 - Few students in adult education achieving GED
 - GED found to have few labor market effects
 - 2/3rds of jobs in 2018 require some college

THE REFORM LANDSCAPE

Challenges to moving forward

- Students face multiple barriers
 - Low basic skills
 - At-risk population
 - Inconsistent program participation
- Teaching and instruction
 - Teacher preparation and training
 - Content and pedagogy
- Programs and policies
 - Financial constraints
 - Open enrollment
 - Fragmented administration

Transforming the GED

Strategy #1: Revise the standards

- Instructional standards
- New credentialing standards

Strategy #2: Improve the preparation and transition

- College-prep curriculum
- Transition supports entry into college and training

Strategy #3: Integrate basic and occupational skills

- Dual enrollment GED and college programs
 - Noncredit courses
 - Credit courses
 - Credentialing pathways

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: LAGUARDIA GED BRIDGE

Improving GED instruction to prepare students for college and careers

- Operated by LaGuardia Community College's Office of Adult and Continuing Education
- Contextualized curriculum focusing on health and business careers
- Intensive career and postsecondary education counseling in and out of the classroom
- On-going support services for students once they have transitioned into postsecondary education

Goals of the GED Bridge Program

- Increase GED pass rates
- Introduce students to concepts and “ways of thinking” in the health and business fields
- Accommodate student needs and goals in instruction and transition planning
- Increase enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education through intensive transition counseling and on-going supports

What is contextualized curriculum?

- Focus on “ways of thinking” and concepts relevant to careers in the business and health fields
- Use of original/authentic materials
- Curriculum is designed in collaboration with college faculty in the Health and Business departments
- Instruction oriented beyond GED, toward postsecondary education

The Evaluation Design

- Small scale study that began in summer 2010
- Uses a random assignment research design
 - GED Bridge program, either to the Business or Health class
 - GED Prep class
- Studying the implementation and impacts of the GED Bridge program
- Evaluation and program funded by the Robin Hood Foundation and MetLife Foundation

What is GED Bridge being compared to?

GED Prep: Traditional GED class

- No focus on career concepts
- No transitional counseling
- 60 hours of instruction (compared with 108 in Bridge)
- Support services only at instructor's discretion
- Non-contextualized curriculum: "Teach to the Test"

Target Population

- 7th grade level or above on the TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education)
- Income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level
- 18 years of age or older

Recruitment and Enrollment

- Recruitment through various GED and ABE providers
- Intensive, 3-day recruitment and enrollment process:
 - Day 1: TABE and written application
 - Day 2: Writing Sample and one-on-one interview
 - Day 3: Random Assignment

Process usually takes about 3-5 weeks to complete

Research Sample

- Enrolled four full cohorts of participants into the study: fall 2010, spring 2011, fall 2011, and spring 2012
- The total sample size is 369 (201 in Bridge group and 168 in Prep group)

Findings

- **Characteristics of participants**
- **Findings from the field**
- **Early impacts**

Characteristics of Study Participants

Background Characteristic	Full Sample
Race/ethnicity	
Hispanic / Latino	50.1
Black, non-Hispanic	34.5
Other	15.4
Female	67.2
Average Age	26.6
Receiving public assistance	53.4
Employed at enrollment	38.4

Characteristics of Study Participants

Background Characteristic	Full Sample
Entering TABE scores	
7 th grade level	24.9
8 th grade level	25.2
9 th grade level	16.3
10 th grade level or above	33.6
Highest grade attained (%)	
9 th or below	15.2
10 th grade	30.1
11 th grade	36.3
12 th grade	8.9
Missing	9.5
Sample size	369

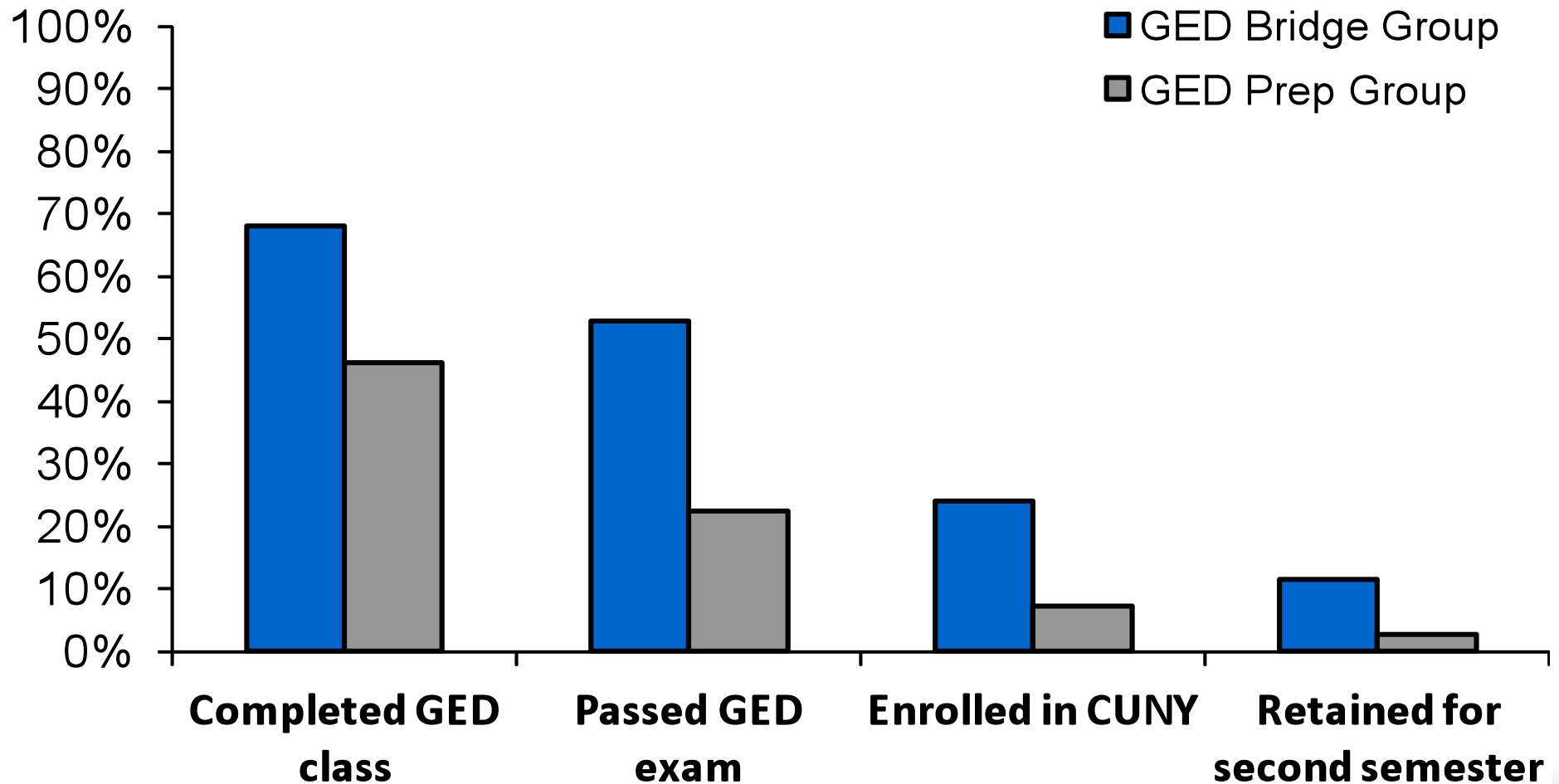
GED Bridge has a well-designed curriculum, and strong instruction and student support

- Strong and coordinated leadership and instruction
- Adherence to program goals in curriculum and assignments
 - Assignments are future-oriented with a focus on business and health fields
- Emphasis on student engagement, retention, and relationships
- Students from wide variety of backgrounds and experiences with prior GED classes

GED Bridge students are more engaged and have a greater sense of direction

- Differences in Bridge and Prep students' reported experiences:
 - Personal attention from teachers and staff
 - Understanding of financial aid, pre-requisites, and career/college options
 - Confidence about taking and passing the GED
 - Intention to enroll in post-secondary education

Higher GED pass rates and post-secondary enrollment rates for those in GED Bridge



What's Next?

- Findings indicate that there are ways to make the GED exam more relevant and a better conduit into college.
- Follow-up analysis to examine whether these early findings translate into success in college
- Further rigorous testing of similar models is needed in order to determine what works best for whom.
- Policy brief available at www.mdrc.org.

DISCUSSION

Vanessa Martin, MDRC

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