



Student Personas

May 2017

Abstract: There are four student types, or personas: *Determined*, *Family Go-To*, *Disheartened*, and *Here and Now*. Each persona has a different mindset alongside several identifying characteristics. The following document describes each persona and how to design for this type of student.

How to read the summary sheet

How/what the student **feels**

Quotes from actual students.
What the student **says**

Student **mindset** and feelings toward the GED

Bio of the student

What the student **does**
(We use *Paralysis* to describe a tendency to feel so overwhelmed by a task, the student does nothing.)

Strength of these **characteristics**

Strength of goals **motivating** them

Opportunities for GEDTS to help this student succeed.

Determined

I WILL
The GED is my first step to success

My name is Robert. I am going to get my GED no matter how long it takes! I study every day even if I don't want to. I surround myself with supportive people, and have a set of goals that I want to accomplish. I'm nervous about taking my tests, but I know if I don't pass the first time, I will figure out what I need to improve for next time.

Regret **Unstoppable** **Focused**

"It's like, if you want something, you will have to work hard. You have a struggle, but you have to do it. It's like, I don't have fear."

"When I sit down to actually study and read, I give it everything I have. I'll read one paper like five times over if I have to until I've got it down."

"I had to learn how to study. I put it in my schedule, and then it became a mandatory thing for me. Now, it's just part of my day-to-day."

What is preventing me from progressing?

- Learning the skills (mastery)

What do I believe I need to be successful:

- Anything that will help me do this faster

Self-Factors

Self-Efficacy ☐ high

Fear of failure ☐

Self-Control ☐

Intrinsic Motivation ☐

Aspirations

Professional ☐

Personal ☐

Material ☐

Family/Social ☐

What can GED do to help me?

- Easy sign-up, scheduling, and testing processes
- Show me tutoring options
- Show me what I need to study / work on
- Help me learn effective study skills
- Help me keep the momentum going forward

☒ Likelihood to start/stop ☒ Loyalty to GED brand

☒ Interest in adult ed classes ☒ Paralysis

GED Testing Service Confidential and Proprietary

Determined



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Determined



This persona needs support to help him continue moving forward. Even the most determined student can hit obstacles, so encouragement is still valuable.

This persona also needs the benefit of well-target study aids: everything from *how* to study through *what* to study can be useful.

Designing for this persona

- Build in rewards and reinforcements for this persona's hard work. Point out when he's applied effort and when he's improved his skills.
 - *You've studied 4 hours this week – you're making progress*
 - *Steady effort towards a goal leads to long-term results*
- Provide encouragement for this persona's new identity as a hard-working student who has the capacity to succeed.
 - *The unit test you just took shows that you have really learned that topic*
- Provide access to a really good study program that provides good diagnostics, short lessons, and immediate, accurate feedback.

Family Go-To



I CAN

I need my GED, it's so important!

My name is Danielle. My whole life, my focus has been on other people. I've taken care of siblings, my parents, and now my own children. They all rely heavily on me, and I won't let them down. I need my GED so bad to provide a better life for my family, but with everything going on it's so hard to find time to study! At the end of the day I'm so tired.

Embarrassed

Dependable

Drained

"I'm the type of person where I felt like I put people around me before me and kind of put myself on the back burner."

"I understand what thoughts can arise in the child's head [for lack of attention], and I don't want my kids to ever feel that from me."

"Once I put that little girl to bed, I'm too tired to get out of bed."

What's preventing me from progressing:

- Balancing my time between family and school
- Not having time to sit and focus
- Low energy and accountability

What do I believe I need to be successful:

- Accountability so I can stay on track

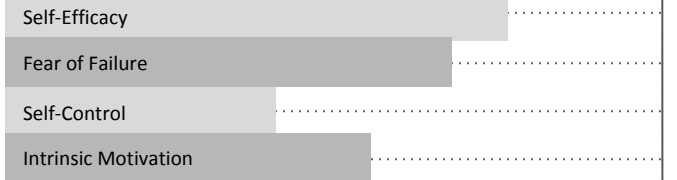
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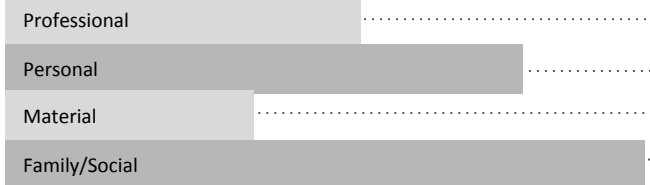
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✓ Paralysis

Self-Factors



Aspirations



What can GED do to help me?

- Help me see that prioritizing the GED is for my family
- Help me clarify my next step and what life might look like after the GED (how it will benefit my family)
- Provide me with adult ed options
- Give me on-the-go study options with short lessons that I can put down and easily resume

Family Go-To



I CAN

I need my GED, it's so important!

This persona needs a shift in her self-identity. She has a strong desire to be a good person and to do good in the world -- but has seen being available to her family as the only way to do that.

Help this persona see a bigger vision of how she can do good in the world, and for her family, with the GED.

Designing for this persona

- Help this persona believe that taking time for her own GED studies isn't selfish, or "stealing" from the time she believes she owes her family.
 - *When you spend time studying, you are being a good role model to your children and showing them what it takes to be a good student*
 - *Continuing to work on something when it's hard takes courage*
- Help this persona see she can be proud of her dependable nature, as she becomes a dependable student.
 - *You've always been the person that helped others. Now you can apply those skills to helping yourself get the GED*
- Show her the connections between an area where she already feels self-efficacy, to her new role as a GED student.
 - *Being consistent with your study time is another way you show the world what a dependable person you are*
- Help her to see that pursuing her dream of getting the GED is a kind of hero's journey.
 - *You've always done your best for others, and that takes strength. You've continued to pick yourself back up when life knocked you down, and that takes courage. When you apply that strength and that courage to getting your GED, you are unstoppable*
 - *Every time you take a step towards your GED, you are taking a step towards a better future for your family*
- Share memorable anecdotes from people who have faced similar of challenges
 - *"I didn't want my kids to feel neglected like I did growing up, but I knew that if I didn't get my GED, I'd never be able to give my kids the life they deserve, we'd never be able to take a vacation" - Sharon from Los Angeles*

Disheartened



I’LL TRY

I want my GED, but can I do it?

My name is Heather. Life has been pretty hard for me, and I’m used to people letting me down. I see my friends graduating college and I feel like they are passing me by. I’m stuck in a rut. I get discouraged or frustrated when I don’t understand something. If I don’t pass the test, it will be proof that I’m a complete failure.

- Despondent
- Ashamed
- Frustrated

“It’s almost like I want to do it, but what if I fail? The first step is applying myself and realizing that I can do this and not to be scared of failing.”

“I felt like giving up. Which I did give up. I just didn’t want to do it anymore. It was frustrating, extremely frustrating. I felt like I was never going to pass that portion.”

“I realized I was running away from [getting my GED] because I didn’t feel I could do it.”

What’s preventing me from progressing:

- Fear of failing or not finishing
- It’s not clear what skills I need to pass
- Test anxiety

What do I believe I need to be successful:

- I don’t believe I can be successful... I need confidence and reassurance

- ☒ Likelihood to start/stop
- ☒ Interest in adult ed classes
- ☒ Loyalty to GED brand
- ☒ Paralysis

Self-Factors



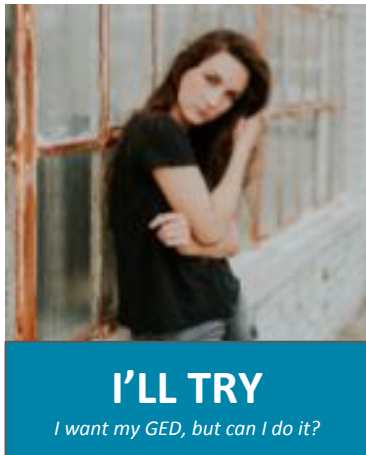
Aspirations



What can GED do to help me?

- Help me adopt a growth mindset (my brain *can* grow and failure is part of the process)
- Provide me with encouragement and support
- Connect me with other GED students and positive support systems
- Help me find somewhere I can get help (maybe adult ed) where I don’t feel stupid or judged

Disheartened



This persona needs hope, especially hope that she is able to change herself. That takes the growth mindset and self-efficacy.

Help this persona see that every hero experiences failure and setbacks, and overcoming those ordeals is part of the victory.

Designing for this persona

- Teach this persona the scientific fact that “the brain grows”, and so it is possible to get smarter, and better, at something you couldn't do before.
 - *Just like exercise makes your muscles stronger, when you study you make your brain stronger*
 - *When you spend time studying, your brain is getting better at learning*
- Help this persona make the transition from one area, where she may have good self-efficacy, to the area of being a student, where she has low self-efficacy.
 - *Think of something you can do, or that you are proud of. Maybe you can play basketball, or you're a good cook, or you know how to take care of children. But, there was a time you hadn't learned to be good at those things yet. Just like you learned how to get better at basketball, or cooking, or childcare, you can learn math*
- Counter this persona's fear of failure, and increase her self-efficacy, by building in lots of small steps, so that each one is a "small win." For example, completing the registration process can become a win.
 - You just completed your first step towards getting your GED*
- Counter the negative messages this persona has received in the past with fact-based encouragement.
 - *Lots of people struggle early in life, but go on to real success later*
 - *Many people start the GED program without much confidence, but then they get the right help to stick with it, and they get their GED*
- Share memorable anecdotes from people who have faced similar of challenges. Include grittier peer stories.
 - *“Before I felt discouraged, dumb, I didn't think I could do it. Then I met Andrew, and I started to believe maybe I could do it.” -Holly, Los Angeles*

Here and Now



I WILL... later

The GED will always be there.

My name is Sam. I have ambitions and know that I can get my GED if I put my mind to it. Getting the GED is a big task, and it's going to take a long time... I want to get my GED, but I'm just not sure why I can't stay focused! I have a job right now, and I'm getting by alright. I'll definitely do it at some point.

Guilty

Distracted

Overwhelmed

"I jumped around a lot from going back to school to working, school to working. Staying focused has been hard for me."

"I know [the GED] is something that I have to get done, because like I said, that's one of my goals. When I set myself to a goal, I'm going to do it. I might not do it tomorrow, but I'm going to do it."

"I wanted to get my GED so I can get into music school and start learning how to do music production. Honestly, me not getting it is just procrastinating. I'm the only one that is holding myself back."

What's preventing me from progressing:

- It's not a priority right now
- I don't put in the time or effort
- Studying is boring!

What do I *believe* I need to be successful:

- I just need to put the time into it and I'll get it done

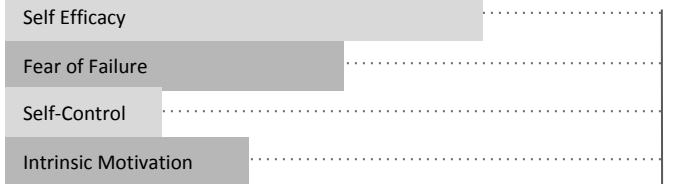
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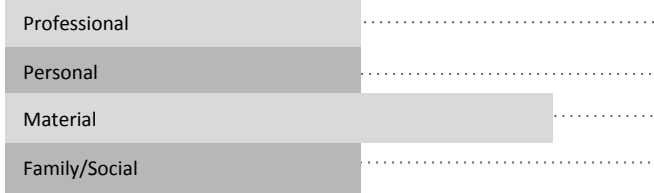
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✓ Paralysis

Self-Factors



Aspirations



What can GED do to help me?

- Help me make a plan and actually stick to it
- Give me interactive ways to study that make it fun, or at least not dreadful
- Break things into small tasks so I can see my progress and not feel overwhelmed
- Help me build habits and maintain them!

Here and Now



This persona has a great need for the support of a strong structure. While everyone is affected by the context around them, this persona will especially benefit from a context that encourages consistent actions in the right direction. That context can come from a positive social group, a structured study tool, or automated messaging,

Designing for this persona

- Guide them through the process of selecting the best weekly study approach, including day of the week and time of day (i.e. a single 3-hour study session on the weekend; 15 minutes every morning and every evening 6 days a week). Integrate with their favorite calendar so the reminders will be present.
- Use “nudge” tools to help provide useful reminders, and eventually build a habit of studying.
 - Text reminders can be sent each day, encouraging the student to take an immediate action.
- Take just a few minutes now, to make progress on your daily studying goal.
 - Planning prompts can help the student take action when there is no specific time associated with the activity. Invite him to commit to a specific plan.
- “When it’s the weekend and I have to study, I will _____”
(The student could fill this in with any useful plan that *he* makes, and so commits to, e.g., “get up early on Saturday”, “study before I go out with my friends in the evening”, “take my book with me and study when I take the kids to the park”)
- Provide good deliberate practice tools, whether online study materials, a highly structured GED dashboard, or an excellent ABE.
- Use “social norms” to encourage consistent steps towards the GED. This could include notification when friends or fellow students are studying, or comments about effective choices others like him make.
- Many students say they do best with regular study times