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## Students' Perceptions of the Adult Basic Education General Educational Development Program at a Rural Mississippi Community College

Trena Starlene Lee

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Students' perceptions of the adult basic education general educational development  
program at a rural Mississippi community college

By

Trena Starlene Lee

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Community College Leadership  
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2014

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2014

Students' perceptions of the adult basic education general educational development  
program at a rural Mississippi community college

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The purpose of this study was to examine GED students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college. There were 64 GED students who participated in this study. A survey containing 15 questions was administered to the participants. Likert-scale response type questions were used to provide information particularly on students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Chi-square tests were run to determine if differences existed among students' perceptions based on age, race, and gender. The findings of the study showed that overall the students had a positive perception of the ABE/GED program. Additionally, the study found that differences did not exist among students' perceptions based on gender and race, but a difference was found for two items based on age.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Kenny, and to my children, Keiana and Kaycee. Thank you for your love and support throughout this journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and patience to take on and finish this endeavor. Without Him, this would not have been possible. I would like to thank Dr. James Davis for his guidance throughout this process. I would also like to thank my committee members; Dr. Stephanie King, Dr. Joshua Watson, and Dr. William Wiseman for assisting me through this dissertation.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Having a General Educational Development (GED) certificate can make a bigger difference in a person's life than not having one at all. GED recipients fare better on several outcomes such as, future earnings, life satisfaction, lower levels of depression, and less issues with substance abuse than do high school dropouts who do not obtain the credential (Heckman, Humphries, & Mader, 2010). According to the United States Census Bureau (2009), approximately 20 % of the U.S. population has not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. Of these adults, it is estimated that more than 20 million of them are functioning at low levels of literacy, and tens of millions lack the reading, writing, math, and English skills needed to be successful in the workforce and in their daily lives.

According to Perin (2003), high school dropouts often have low literacy levels. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003) defined low literacy as the inability to read or write well enough to perform necessary tasks in society or on the job. In 2003, it was estimated that 16% of adults in the United States functioned at the lowest level of literacy (NCES). This means that millions of people in the United States lack the basic skills needed to read and understand a note from a teacher, a recipe, a newspaper article, instructions on a medicine bottle, or a voting ballot. These statistics indicate that

millions of adults in the U.S. could benefit from programs that would help them improve their basic skills, get a GED, and ultimately improve the quality of their lives.

One program that helps adults obtain a GED is the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. ABE is adult education that includes reading, writing, and math skills at a level below high school completion (Pierce, 1993). Services provided by the ABE program are targeted to adults ages 16 and older who are not enrolled in secondary school; who lack mastery of basic skills to function in society; who lack a high school diploma; or who lack basic English skills (Alamprese, 2003). All ABE programs are required to provide instruction in basic academic skills and GED preparation (Eyre, 1998).

There are numerous agencies that provide ABE programs. Some include correctional institutions, libraries, private businesses and industries, community and faith-based organizations, secondary institutions, and postsecondary institutions, the majority of which are community colleges (Alamprese, 2003). ABE programs are funded by grants provided to states through the U.S. Department of Education. According to the United States Department of Education (2007), awards are made to any of the state eligible agencies that under state law are solely responsible for administering statewide policy for adult education and literacy. Community colleges play an important role in the development of underprepared students through the delivery of developmental courses and GED completion programs (Laanan & Cox, 2006).

A key mission of the community college is to serve all segments of society, which includes educating adults with low literacy skills (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As one of the many functions of the nation's more than 1,200 community colleges, the issues and challenges of adult literacy have been addressed through the delivery of ABE programs

and other literacy programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Community colleges began offering ABE programs after the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Eyre, 1998). This legislation established a state and federal partnership to focus on the very basic of educational skills for adults who had not completed secondary education. ABE programs help adults who lack basic skills gain the necessary skills to function in society. Because of the community colleges' long history of responding to the many needs of a student population characterized by work responsibilities, family responsibilities, and other time constraints (Laanan & Cox, 2006), the ABE programs offered at these institutions provide flexible class schedules for busy adults so they will have an opportunity to participate in the program.

ABE programs nationwide have shown strong participation in the program. In the United States, the number of participants in ABE programs in 2004 was 1,044,111 and in 2005 there were 1,009,706 participants, a slight decrease (NCES, 2008). The number of participants in the United States fell to 919, 819 in 2006 and in 2007 increased to 941,659 participants (NCES, 2008). The ABE program in Mississippi has also had a considerable amount of participation. In 2004, there were 21,304 people participating in ABE programs in Mississippi and in 2005, there was a slight increase to 21,437 people (NCES, 2008). In 2006 and 2007, participation declined in Mississippi to 17,776 and 16,825 people respectively (NCES, 2009b).

While there has been large and steady enrollment in ABE programs in the United States and Mississippi, which includes community colleges, retention of students participating in the program has been a problem. Many adults enroll in the program, but do not stay until they have completed their goal (Comings, Parrella, & Soricone, 2000).

Consequently, retention has often been described as the number one problem for ABE programs (Kerka, 2005). Comings, Parrella, and Soricone (1999) noted that 50 % of the adults who enroll in ABE programs drop out before completing 35 hours or 10 weeks of instruction. While many adults enroll in ABE programs seeking to obtain a GED, many of them drop out before completing the GED exam.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (2009), there are nearly 400,000 Mississippi adults 25 years old and older without a high school diploma. Furthermore, according to the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (2009), there are more dropouts in Mississippi than there are people with a college degree. Mississippi ranks 49<sup>th</sup> among all states in terms of the percentage of its population between the ages of 18-24 with a high school diploma. Consequently, these statistics reinforce the need for ABE programs and for adults to stay in ABE programs until they have completed the GED exam.

Adults are more likely to participate and remain in programs if the courses and services offered match their needs and are of high quality (Tolbert, 2005). If participants feel the program is ineffective and is not helping them achieve their goal, they may not enroll or they may drop out before reaching their goal. Unfortunately, few ABE/GED programs take the time to find out if students' needs are being met. Therefore, this study investigated the perceptions of GED students enrolled in an ABE/GED program at a rural community college.



### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine student perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college in which they were enrolled.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college. This study will answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of GED students regarding the ABE/GED program?
- 2) Are there differences among the perceptions of GED students based on the demographic factors of age, race, or gender?

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms below are defined for the purpose of this study:

*Adult*- an individual who has attained 16 years of age or who is beyond the age of compulsory school attendance under state law (Mississippi Community College Board Policies and Procedures Manual, 2002).

*Adult education*- instruction designed for people who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance and have either completed or interrupted their formal education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

*Community college*- a regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate degree as its highest degree (Vaughn, 2006).

*Completion*- the accomplishment made by an adult achieving his or her educational needs (Comings, Parrella, & Soricone, 1999). This definition pertains to completing an adult education program.

*General Educational Development (GED) certificate*- a certificate that is equivalent to a high school diploma (Peterson, 2010).

*High school dropout*- a person who has not graduated from high school or completed a state-or district-approved education program (NCES, 2003).

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of a study are characteristics of design that set parameters on the interpretation of the results. Therefore, a limitation of this study will be the willingness of the participants to respond truthfully to the surveys. The study will also be limited by the sample size represented in the study.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study will be limited to a rural community college in Mississippi. This study did not compare or contrast ABE/GED programs in other community colleges in other parts of the country due to the focus of the study. Generalizations from this study should be limited to the above-mentioned population only.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Kerlinger (1973) defined theory as a set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena. Creswell (1994) stated that the theory becomes a framework for the entire study, which is an organizing model for the research questions or hypotheses for the data collection procedure. The theoretical framework for this study will be based on Maslow's Theory of Motivation. The basis of Maslow's theory is that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs,

and that lower factors need to be satisfied before higher needs can be satisfied (*Maslow's Theory of Motivation-Hierarchy of Needs*, 2012). According to Maslow, there are five general types of needs. The need that provides the theoretical basis for conducting this study is the need for self-actualization. Self-actualization is the highest level of need according to Maslow. Self-actualization needs offer challenging and meaningful work assignments which enable innovation, creativity, and progress according to long term goals.

Based on Maslow's Theory of Motivation, if students' needs are met, they are more likely to remain in ABE programs and complete the GED exam. If students' needs are not met, they might drop out of the ABE program before completing the GED exam. This study will provide GED students an opportunity to share their perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college.

### **Justification of the Study**

It is well known that completion of high school, or obtaining a GED, is required to access postsecondary education and is a minimum requirement for most jobs (*Dropout Rates*, 2005). Even so, the high school dropout rate in this country is a major problem. Approximately one third of the students who enter ninth grade each year drop out of high school; that's over a million a year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). Because of the high dropout rate, ABE programs are increasingly more important for high school drop outs. It is imperative that adults who enroll in ABE programs remain in the program and complete the GED exam, so they can have the necessary skills they need to live a productive life.

Retaining learners is an ongoing challenge for ABE programs, in which high attrition is common (Kerka, 2005). Many ABE students have certain responsibilities that may force them to leave the program before completing the GED exam. Kerka (2005) also stated that each learner has a “complex constellation” of factors that contribute to enrolling, continuing in, and withdrawing from a program. Since retention is a problem in ABE programs, there is a need to identify students’ perceptions of programs and access if their needs are being met.

The results from this study will greatly benefit community colleges, as well as any agency administering the ABE program. The findings from this study could help administrators of the ABE program determine ways to increase retention. In addition, the findings in this study should lay the foundation for further research of ABE/GED programs and provide administrators of the program with valuable information on how to better assist individuals in achieving their educational goals.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

How to retain adult students is an enduring question for providers of adult education (Wonacott, 2001). Finding a solution to the retention problem is ever so important since ABE programs often lose participants in the first few weeks (Quigley, 2000). Therefore, determining students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program and finding out if their needs are being met is essential in retaining them. This study investigated the perceptions of GED students enrolled in an ABE/GED program at a rural community college.

This chapter contains related literature about the ABE program. This chapter begins with the history, purpose, and importance of the ABE program. The next section describes the related literature regarding adult learners and teachers of ABE programs. The next section describes factors associated with adults staying in or leaving ABE programs (i.e., situational, institutional, dispositional, demographic, and emotional-relational factors). Finally, the chapter concludes by describing retention strategies to keep participants in the ABE program.

## **History of the ABE Program and GED**

### **ABE Program**

ABE was created by federal law in the early 1960's. The government provided funds to establish, encourage, and expand programs to assist adults in overcoming educational deficiencies which would hinder productive and responsible participation in the life and growth of the nation. With the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Title II B of Public Law 88-452, it created the first ABE program as a state grant (Eyre, 1998). The 1964 federal legislation established a state and federal partnership to focus on the most basic of educational skills for adults who had not completed secondary education. Funding for states the first year was \$18.6 million. In 1965, 37,991 adults enrolled nationally in what was known as ABE (Eyre, 1998).

Adult education has been a concern to the federal government for a very long time. There have been a number of legislative acts dedicated to this very subject dating back to the 1960s. Poverty and adult literacy became a concern during the Kennedy administration (Eyre, 1998). Although President John F. Kennedy started the ball rolling to help adults gain a quality education, it was President Lyndon B. Johnson who launched a series of programs to end poverty and increase the role of the federal government in improving education. In 1966, the United States took a step to support a federally aided network of providers under the Adult Education Act of 1966. Halperin (2006) proclaimed that who would have guessed that this relatively unheralded act would spur a national network providing education and literacy services to over 2.5 million adult learners annually, including one million 16-24 year olds.

More recently the federal government established the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. This act replaced the Adult Education Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 provides a framework for a more developed workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet the needs of the nation's businesses, job seekers, and those who want to further their careers (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). With the inception of these acts, more young adults and older adults alike have been given a chance to improve their lives by attending ABE programs and receiving their GED.

### **GED Exam**

The GED has been around for a long time. The American Council on Education developed the GED in 1942 when a request was made by the U.S. Armed Forces Institute. It was originally designed to help soldiers improve their knowledge and education level so that once they returned home from service they could enter the workforce (*About the GED*, 2007). Although the GED was originally developed for military personnel, it became a popular high school alternative for many students in the 1950's. In fact, from the 1960's through today, most students who take the GED are not in the military. The GED has been revised many times since 1942 in order to keep up with the increasing requirements of the modern job market. The GED is comprised of five sections which covers the different areas of knowledge that students must be competent in for them to graduate from high school. The five sections are: Reading, Writing, Social Studies, Science, and Math (*About the GED*, 2007).

## **Importance and Purpose of the ABE Program in Mississippi**

ABE is critical to the future of the state of Mississippi (Pierce, 1993). In 2003, 16 % of Mississippians lacked basic literacy skills (NCES, 2005). Between 2007 and 2009, 27.1% of Mississippians that were 18-24 years old did not have a secondary education credential, i.e., a high school diploma or GED certificate (NCES, 2011). More than 16,200 students did not graduate from Mississippi's high schools in 2009 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). People with a high school credential earn a significant amount more than people without a high school credential. According to the United States Census Bureau (2009), the average earnings of males without a high school diploma in 2009 was \$22,602, and for females was \$14,202. The average earnings of males with a high school diploma was \$32,435, and for females was \$21,219. High school dropouts have the opportunity to enroll in ABE programs and get a GED for a chance at a more productive life.

### **ABE Program in Mississippi's Community Colleges**

The mission of most community colleges is shaped by these five commitments: serving all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students, providing a comprehensive educational program, serving the community as a community-based institution of higher learning, teaching and learning, and fostering lifelong learning (Vaughn, 2006). According to Laanan and Cox (2006), the mission of the community college is designed to meet the changing societal needs. Community colleges have been a major provider of the ABE program where an influx of high school dropouts enroll to obtain a GED (Perin, 2003). Mississippi provides ABE programs in all 15 of its community colleges (See Table 1). The Mississippi



Community College Board has the responsibility for administering the ABE program for the state of Mississippi's community colleges. The ABE classes offered at the community colleges are free to any eligible adult. The program is designated for adults who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance under state law. The Mississippi Community College Board's website (2012) states that the ABE program is designed to:

Enable adults to acquire the basic education skills necessary for functional literacy, provide adults with sufficient basic education to enable them to benefit from job training and retraining programs and to retain productive employment so that they might more fully enjoy the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship, and enable adults who so desire to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school (2).

Mississippi's community colleges have seen growth in their ABE classes. In 2009, there were 20,480 students enrolled in the ABE program (Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 2009). Although there was great participation in the ABE program, the number of participants who actually completed the GED exam was low. According to the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (2009), only 9,147 participants completed the GED exam. That is less than half of the participants that were enrolled in the ABE program in 2009. Therefore, this study provided GED students the opportunity to give their perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college.

Table 1

*Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges*

Coahoma Community College	Copiah-Lincoln Community College	East Central Community College
East Mississippi Community College	Hinds Community College	Holmes Community College
Itawamba Community College	Jones County Junior College	Meridian Community College
Mississippi Delta Community College	Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	Northeast Mississippi Community College
Northwest Mississippi Community College	Pearl River Community College	Southwest Mississippi Community College

**Characteristics of Adult Learners and ABE Teachers**

**Adult Learners**

Wynne (n.d.) stated that adult learners have characteristics that set them apart from ‘traditional’ school learners. Adult learners come to programs with a variety and range of experiences, in terms of their working life and educational backgrounds. These experiences can impact how and why they participate in a program. Wynne describes some characteristics that are common to adult learners. Adult learners are intrinsically motivated, and they increase their effort when motivated by a need, an interest, or a desire to learn. Wlodkowski (2008) noted that motivation is the natural human process for directing energy to accomplish a goal. Another characteristic that some adult learners have is lack of confidence. Some students may have had poor prior experiences in education, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and failure (Wynne, n.d.).

Recognizing that adult learners come to programs with different backgrounds and needs, programs should adopt a learner-centered perspective that engages adults in

understanding and managing positive and negative forces that help and hinder learning and design program structures that support persistence (Kerka, 2005).

### **ABE Teachers**

Kerka (2005) stated that adult learners have barriers to participation in ABE programs, but ABE teachers face challenges of their own (Smith & Hofer, 2003). Smith and Hofer (2003) found that ABE teachers have four unique barriers to teaching adult learners. First, ABE teachers have limited formal preparations geared specifically to teaching adults and limited opportunities for professional development and continued learning. Second, ABE teachers work under less than optimal conditions and lack many of the supports that would help them do the best job possible. Third, ABE teachers do not follow clear career paths into the field and a significant portion do not stay in the field long. Fourth, ABE teachers typically play a limited role in the broader field of ABE. According to Patterson and Mellard (2007), staff preparation includes educational background, credentialing, previous experience, and ongoing professional development. ABE programs are increasingly viewing staff development as a continuous improvement process that involves a variety of activities that support staff in their professional enhancement (Alamprese, 2003). Sabatini, Ginsburg, & Russell (2005) noted that teacher preparation programs that specialize in ABE are not common. A plan for improving teacher preparation and working conditions starts with policymakers in programs and states attempting to provide better working conditions for teachers, which includes more teaching resources, opportunities for professional development, and input into decision-making in programs (Smith & Hofer, 2003). Smith and Hofer (2003) also suggested that the plan for improving teacher preparation and working conditions should

be built upon research that demonstrates the connection between well-trained, well-supported teachers to student persistence and achievement in ABE programs.

### **Factors That Influence Persistence in ABE Programs**

Millions of our nation's adults lack the skills or competencies necessary to be successful in the workplace and society, but they are not persisting in adult education programs (Tolbert, 2005). As previously stated, adults do not stay enrolled in ABE programs for a number of reasons. According to Tolbert (2005), adults with literacy needs face numerous obstacles that prevent them from participating in adult education programs. A few that was mentioned were lack of childcare, transportation difficulties, learning disabilities, personal or medical problems, embarrassment, and scheduling conflicts. These obstacles coincide with what Quigley (1997) stated are reasons adults start and stop attending educational programs. The reasons stated were situational, institutional, dispositional, demographic, and emotional-relational factors.

#### **Situational Factors**

Situational factors are problems with employment, finances, child care, family, transportation, health, and abuse. Students may have problems with family, health care, finances, transportation, child care, and lack of free time which interfere with regular class attendance (Kentucky Adult Education, 2005). King's (2002) study looked at barriers to participation in GED programs among recent high school dropouts. He found that the primary barrier to participation in GED programs was related to family constraints, which included lack of encouragement from family, difficulty arranging child care, and other family problems.

### **Institutional factors**

Institutional factors include program level or content, location, and attendance/reentry policies. According to Kentucky Adult Education (2005), students may see inconvenient hours of operation, inaccessible locations, attendance/reentry policies, and unclear procedures as institutional barriers that interfere with their ability to attend adult education programs. Although, Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach (2005) found that student characteristics are more important determinants of retention than institutional factors. Even so, Kerka (2005) states that ABE programs should provide services that help students make progress toward reaching their goal.

### **Dispositional factors**

Dispositional factors include educational attitudes, self-efficacy, resilience, and attribution of failure. According to Kentucky Adult Education (2005), students sometimes have low self-esteem, memories of prior academic failure, or negative feelings about past school experiences that impact their retention during the first few weeks of class. Meder (2000) suggested that engaging learners in discussion of motivational issues increases learner persistence and retention. Engagement is a phenomenon that connects an individual to an experience in a meaningful way (Ziegler & Durant, 2001). Kerka (2005) recommended having adult learners set goals, which could be motivation for them to remain in a program. Comings et al. (1999) found that adults who mentioned a specific goal were more likely to persist than those who did not have a goal.

### **Demographic factors**

Demographic factors consider age, gender, and cultural background. Comings et al. (1999) found that gender and ethnicity were not significant predictors of persistence, but age did show a relationship to persistence. More research is needed to better understand reasons for differences in persistence across age groups (Comings et al., 1999).

### **Emotional-relational factors**

Emotional-relational factors include social support and encouragement. Kerka (2005) stated that a key positive or negative influence on learner retention is social relationships. These relationships include support or opposition from family and friends, relationship among learners, and relationship between learners and teachers. Students may allow the opinions of family and friends to influence their decision to attend adult education programs (Kentucky Adult Education, 2005). Link (2006) noted that adult students need support if they are going to persist in adult education programs. Link (2003) found some common themes about adult student persistence and retention in adult education programs. The common themes were: support provided by family, friends, teachers, and other students; the importance of adult learners setting a specific goal; and the importance of self-esteem and self-confidence. Link (2006) found that caring instructors are an important aspect of adult education programs that leads to student retention.

In conclusion, adults are more likely to persist in programs if the courses and services offered satisfy their needs (Tolbert, 2005). Comings et al. (1999) defined persistence as adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-

directed study when they must drop out of programs, and returning to programs as soon as the demands of their lives allow. With that definition in mind, they conducted a study using 150 adults in an ABE program in New England to gain some insight into persistence. The study found that adults who had previously been involved in basic skills education, vocational skills training, or self-study were more likely to persist than those who had not. Also, adults who mentioned they entered a program to reach a specific goal were more likely to persist than those who did not mention a goal. Four supports to persistence were identified as a result of the study. The first support was awareness and management of the positive and negative forces that help and hinder persistence. Positive forces mentioned by participants were support by family, friends, and teachers and personal goals that contributed to persistence in a program. Some negative forces were lack of support and no free time. The second support was self-efficacy that pertained to participants' feeling of being able to accomplish their goals. The third support to persistence was setting a goal. The fourth support to persistence was the progress toward reaching a goal (Comings et al., 2000). Support, goals, and self-confidence are all factors that contribute to individual student retention and persistence, and they are also found in classrooms with a high level of retention (Link, 2003).

Persistence is highly individualized for each learner, with many factors contributing to enrolling, continuing in, and withdrawing from a program (Kerka, 2005). In a study of 338 adult learners of ABE, Long (2001) found that more than half of learners who dropped out of programs cited job-related pressures, money problems, and child care conflicts as the primary factors for dropping out. She concluded that it is

important to look at main reasons learners dropped out of programs, but noted that most learners had a “complex constellation” of reasons for dropping out.

### **Retention Strategies**

According to the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (n.d.), a number of states have made efforts to improve the outcomes that are associated with their ABE programs by redesigning how the courses are offered and by focusing on what students do after ABE. The efforts that were made included four main characteristics: a focus on acceleration, contextualizing of coursework to specific industries and jobs, fostering transitions, and enhanced student supports. The first effort consists of speeding up the course offerings of the program either by allowing students to be simultaneously enrolled in basic education and degree program coursework, by simultaneously offering basic courses with remedial coursework that might have to be completed, or by contextualizing the basic offerings themselves. Often, for many working adults who have to take ABE before going on to a certificate or degree program that would pay off for them in the end, the road is simply too long. Consequently, many adults drop out before completion of their goals. The second effort refers to designing the basic skills offerings-reading, writing, math, or language arts-into a work context which students get specific jobs skills training. In this case, students are more likely to earn college credits and complete jobs skills training. The third effort focuses on helping move more basic education students into subsequent programs. Some students do not advance to any training or higher education beyond their GED. In today’s society, people need more training and education to be successful in the workforce (Tolbert, 2005). The fourth effort demands enhanced student supports that should be available to them in the form of academic and



career counseling or mentoring. These four efforts should be combined in a comprehensive strategy to reform ABE offerings (Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, n.d.).

Abrams et al. (n.d.) stated that there are three essential elements to student retention in ABE programs. They are: make each student feel welcome and valued; make each class worthwhile; and make each student believe in a positive personal future. Pierce (1993) offered the following suggestions for keeping the adult learner in the classroom: increase the number of classes and the times at which they are offered, provide a strong, effective counseling component, provide job counseling and/or job training as a part of a program, offer daycare at the program site, and provide patient, caring instructors, peer tutors and student support groups.

Many students leave ABE programs after their first encounter (Wonacott, 2001). Abrams et al. (n.d.) stressed the importance of the initial contact with a student. Retention really begins at intake, which sets the tone for the remainder of the student's experience (Kerka, 2005). Abrams et al. (n.d.) suggested adult education programs take certain steps to ensure student retention. First, orient students to the program and to the services that will enable them to remain in the program long enough to achieve their goals. Second, programs should make a determined effort to understand the goals of the student. Third, it is important to periodically follow-up on student progress or problems. Lastly, counsel or assist the student or make a referral to other community services that the student can utilize. Early and continuous follow-up, both inside and outside the classroom, form a constant theme in adult student retention (Wonacott, 2001). Kerka (2005) suggested that when learners stop attending programs, programs should attempt to

maintain contact. Although some programs have developed effective strategies to retain learners, much work still needs to be done (Tolbert, 2005).

Cearbaugh's (2006) study sought to discover why participants did not remain in her ABE program. Twenty ABE students were interviewed for the study, with interviews taking place in the second week of the program. A self-developed questionnaire was used for the interviews that were considered informal and with questions being asked orally. Cearbaugh used the participants' answers from the questionnaire to pinpoint the problems students had with the program and to adequately address them. She found that there was a 20% increase in student retention after 5 weeks of conducting the interviews.

Quigley's (2000) study sought to identify ABE participants that may be at-risk of dropping out of an ABE program in Pennsylvania. He found that the first 3 weeks of an ABE program are critical to participants' success. An at-risk group was identified, and they received peer support, teacher support, and one-on-one tutoring during the first 3 weeks. The results revealed that more peer tutoring and teacher attention have a positive impact on retention. The results suggested that increased peer support, as well as enhanced teacher support for at-risk students through a small group setting during the first three weeks, may be sufficient to retain them in the program.

Keffallinou (2009) conducted a study to identify ways to help students in an ABE/GED program to persist long enough to achieve their goals and help improve program outcomes. The study consisted of 71 students enrolled in the program. The main goal of the study was to find out how persistence, attendance, learning gains, and goal achievement of students that are at risk of dropping out would be affected if the program provided extra supports for them. The program relied on teacher's input and

attendance records to target specific students. If students had consecutive absences, a counselor would meet with them individually to discuss why they missed class and how the program and student could work together to prevent dropping out. The program also developed a student persistence orientation for the GED students which helped them better understand program expectations. The program also followed up with students who had already dropped out of the program to offer an opportunity to come back. The results of the study showed improvements in learning gains, educational gains, and completion rate. The completion rate improved from 45% to 65% from the previous year.

A study conducted by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (2003) looked at ABE programs at community colleges in five states. The study sought completion rates of ABE programs at community colleges in California, Oregon, Iowa, Hawaii, and Connecticut from 2001-2002. They found that California had a 30.8% completion rate, Oregon had a 50.3% completion rate, Iowa had a 35.3 % completion rate, Hawaii had a 28.8% completion rate, and Connecticut had a 48.6 % completion rate. With the highest completion rate barely over 50%, more work needs to be done to raise completion rates in ABE programs.

Keeping adult education students in the classroom long enough for them to reach their educational goals is a constant challenge for the adult education field (Link, 2006). Adult students stop attending educational programs for a variety of reasons (Kerka, 2005). Therefore, it is the responsibility of states and the federal government to encourage programs to adopt practices that will ensure program quality and access and help adult learners achieve their goals (Tolbert, 2005). Wonacott (2001) stated that adult

students must juggle competing demands on their time, which includes study, family, work, and other commitments. Cuban (2003) suggested that programs may need to adopt their program curriculum and schedules to the needs and interests of their students. A program's learning environment can also contribute to a student's decision to stay or leave a program (Comings et al. 2000). The environment in which a program operates, such as the characteristics of adult learners and the structure of the service delivery system, are factors that affect a program's capacity to offer quality services to learners (Alamprese, 2003). A number of factors contribute to adults withdrawing from adult education programs, such as lack of childcare, transportation difficulties, learning disabilities, personal problems, or scheduling conflicts (Tolbert, 2005). Learning about the factors that contribute to student retention in adult education and directing staff development around those factors may result in increased retention and student success (Link, 2003).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The ABE program is designed for adults and out-of-school youth ages 16 and older who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The ABE/GED program provides adults an opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma (Laanan & Cox, 2006). According to NCES (2011), the GED credential is often considered to be the equivalent of a high school diploma for students who do not graduate from high school. ABE is now experiencing an influx of 16-20 year olds who are leaving high school and enrolling to obtain a GED (Perin, 2003). Most high school dropouts often cite school-

related reasons for leaving school, such as missing too many school days, getting poor grades, and not liking school (NCES, 2009a).

Adult learners who attend ABE programs or any adult education program often bring past experiences with them (Kerka, 2005). Past experiences can impact how adult learners participate in learning, which poor prior experiences in education can lead to feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure (Wynne, n.d.). Past educational experience is just one barrier adult learners may have (Kerka, 2005). Adult learners also have many competing responsibilities that may require them to drop out of programs before reaching their educational goals (Tolbert, 2005). Comings et al. (1999) stated that adults must make an active decision to participate in each class session and often must overcome significant barriers in order to attend classes. Adult learners struggle with problems concerning family, finances, childcare, transportation, and more (Kerka, 2005). Researchers found that providing supports to adult learners increase persistence (Comings et al., 2000; Link, 2006).

Learning the secrets to success in keeping adult students attending class long enough to reach retention standards and complete their goals continue to be an area of interest for program improvement (Link, 2006). According to Comings et al. (1999), only 50% of adults who enroll in ABE classes and attend for at least one hour drop out before completing 35 hours or 10 weeks of instruction. Quigley (2000) found that the first 3 weeks of an ABE program are critical in retaining adult learners. Retention efforts should ultimately begin at intake of the adult learner (Kerka, 2005). Royce and Gacka (2001) found that the relationship between students and teachers was important, and that the initial contact with adult learners must establish a trusting relationship.

Wonacott (2001) suggested that having an orientation before programs begin can provide a wide range of program information that allows adult students to make informed decisions as well as access their own circumstances.

Several researchers (Link, 2003; Tolbert, 2005) have acknowledged improvements in programs' efforts to retain learners in adult education programs; yet, there is still work to be done (Tolbert, 2005). King (2002) suggested that adult education providers should develop policies and procedures that are sensitive to the needs of GED participants and their families. He also suggested that adult education providers develop facilities that provide child care for the large number of GED participants and future participants who have child care needs. Quigley (2000) found that providing extra support from teachers and counselors to adult learners helps them persist in adult education programs. Duke and Ganzglass (2007) also concluded that providing supports to adult learners can influence student success.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to provide an opportunity for students to share their perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college in which they were enrolled. The findings from this study may be used to help administrators of the ABE/GED program better assist individuals in achieving their educational goals.

This chapter discusses the procedures that will be used to conduct the study. This chapter includes the following sections: research design, population, instrumentation, validity and reliability, procedure, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is descriptive. Data was analyzed primarily by providing descriptive statistics in order to provide summaries of the results. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), descriptive statistics are data techniques that enable the researcher to meaningfully describe the data with numerical indices or in graphic form. Descriptive statistics was used to describe GED students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program in which they were enrolled.

#### **Population**

The population for this study consisted of students enrolled in the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college. There were 66 students present for

the survey. Of the 66 students, 64 participated in the survey. Only 2 students chose not to participate in the survey.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation used for this study was a survey consisting of two parts.

Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) state three major characteristics of surveys:

- 1) Information is collected from a group of people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics (such as abilities, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and/or knowledge) of the population of which that group is a part.
- 2) The main way in which information is collected is through asking questions; the answers to these questions by the members of the group constitute the data of the study.
- 3) Information is collected from a sample rather than from every member of the population (p. 390).

The survey constituted the primary method of data collection. Part I of the survey was designed to collect demographic information about the participants. Part II of the survey was designed to measure perceptions of the ABE/GED program. Participants addressed Items 4 through 11 of the survey using a 5-point Likert-type scale: strongly agree; agree; undecided; disagree; strongly disagree. The survey also contained three “YES or NO” questions and one open-ended question.

### **Validity and Reliability**

A written survey (ABE/GED Student Survey) was the primary method of data collection. The instrument was formulated based on substantial reading of existing



literature for this research study. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) define validity as the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect. The items on the instrument measured students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the scores obtained by an instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). To measure the internal consistency of the instrument, an alpha coefficient was calculated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Items 4 through 11 of the survey. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a general formula used in calculating the reliability of items (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). The alpha coefficient for Items 4 through 11 was 1.00. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) noted that reliability should be at least .70 or higher for research purposes.

### **Procedure**

The researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Mississippi State University to conduct this study. The researcher also obtained permission from the president of the rural Mississippi community college to conduct research. To collect the data, the researcher went to the classroom where ABE/GED classes were held. The researcher distributed the survey (See Appendix B) along with the consent form (See Appendix A) to the participants. Once all surveys were given, the researcher proceeded with the data analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which include percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations, as well as crosstabs to report the data. For research question two, a Chi-square test was used to determine if differences existed among students' perceptions based on age, race, or gender. The data gained from the study were used to report the findings from the rural community college represented in this study.

The following research questions were used as the basis for this study:

- 1) What are the perceptions of GED students regarding the ABE/GED program?
- 2) Are there differences among the perceptions of GED students based on the demographic factors of age, race, or gender?

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the data analysis and results of the study. This chapter includes the source of data and answering of the research questions. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of GED students regarding the ABE/GED program?
2. Are there differences among the perceptions of GED students based on the demographic factors of age, race, or gender?

#### **Source of Data**

The population for this study consisted of 64 ABE/GED students at a rural Mississippi community college. A survey was used as the method of data collection. Section I, items 1 through 3, of the survey instrument was used to gain demographic information about the participants. The participants were asked to identify their gender, race, and age. The information is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*Demographics of Participants (N=64)*

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	24	37.5%
Female	40	62.5%
<b>Race</b>		
African-American	42	65.6%
Caucasian	13	20.3%
Hispanic	1	1.6%
Other	8	12.5%
<b>Age</b>		
16-19	18	28.1%
20-24	12	18.8%
25-29	6	9.4%
30 or older	28	43.8%

Of the 64 participants, 24 (37.5%) were male and 40 (62.5%) were female. There were 42 (65.6%) African-American, 13 (20.3%) Caucasian, 1 (1.6%) Hispanic, and 8 (12.5%) Other. Of the 64 participants, 18 (28.1%) were between ages 16-19, 12 (18.8%) were between ages 20-24, 6 (9.4%) were between ages 25-29, and 28 (43.8%) were 30 or older.

**Research Question One**

Question 1: What are the perceptions of GED students regarding the ABE/GED program?

Items 4 through 11 of the survey instrument were used to examine research question one. The following Likert-type scale was used and coded for these items:

Strongly Agree = 5; Agree = 4; Undecided = 3; Disagree = 2; and Strongly Disagree = 1.

The researcher used crosstabs to present the results of students' perceptions. Table 3 provides mean scores and standard deviations for students' perceptions of each item.

Table 3

*Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Students' Perceptions*

Item #	Item Statement	M	SD
4	Class Location is Convenient	4.47	.666
5	Class Times are Convenient	4.56	.588
6	The Number of People in a Class is Good	4.34	.718
7	What is Being Taught is Meaningful and Useful	4.47	.816
8	The Classes are Interesting	4.45	.733
9	The Teachers are Caring and Understanding	4.70	.460
10	Teachers are Available to Talk to After Class	4.67	.506
11	I Would Recommend this ABE/GED Program to Someone	4.69	.560

Table 4 below shows that of the 64 participants, 35 (54.7%) strongly agreed that class location is convenient, 25 (39.1%) agreed, 3 (4.7%) were undecided, 1 (1.6%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 4 was 4.47. The researcher concluded that students perceived class location to be convenient.

Table 4

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 4*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	35	25	3	1	0

Table 5 below shows that of the 64 participants, 38 (59.4%) strongly agreed that class times are convenient, 25 (39.1%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (1.6%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 5 was 4.56. The researcher concluded that students perceived class times to be convenient.

Table 5

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 5*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	38	25	0	1	0

Table 6 below shows that of the 64 participants, 29 (45.3%) strongly agreed that the number of people in a class is good, 30 (46.9%) agreed, 3 (4.7%) were undecided, 2 (3.1%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 6 was 4.34. The researcher concluded that students perceived the number of people in a class is good.

Table 6

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 6*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	29	30	3	2	0

Table 7 below shows that of the 64 participants, 39 (60.9%) strongly agreed that what is being taught is meaningful and useful, 20 (31.3%) agreed, 1 (1.6%) was undecided, 4 (6.3%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 7 was 4.47. The researcher concluded that students perceived that what is being taught is meaningful and useful.

Table 7

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 7*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	39	20	1	4	0

Table 8 below shows that of the 64 participants, 36 (56.3%) strongly agreed that the classes are interesting, 23 (35.9%) agreed, 3 (4.7%) were undecided, 2 (3.1%)

disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 8 was 4.45. The researcher concluded that the students perceived that the classes are interesting.

Table 8

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 8*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	36	23	3	2	0

Table 9 below shows that of the 64 participants, 45 (70.3%) strongly agreed that the teachers are caring and understanding, 19 (29.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 9 was 4.70. The researcher concluded that the students perceived that the teachers are caring and understanding.

Table 9

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 9*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	45	19	0	0	0



Table 10 below shows that of the 64 participants, 44 (68.8%) strongly agreed that teachers are available to talk to after class, 19 (29.7%) agreed, 1 (1.6%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 10 was 4.67. The researcher concluded that the students perceived that the teachers are available to talk to after class.

Table 10

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 10*

Item	#10 Teachers are available to talk to after class				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	44	19	1	0	0

Table 11 below shows that of the 64 participants, 47 (73.4%) strongly agreed that they would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone, 14 (21.9%) agreed, 3 (4.7%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The mean found for Item 11 was 4.69. The researcher concluded that the students would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone.

Table 11

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions for Item 11*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	47	14	3	0	0

The students' perceptions for Items 4 through 11 indicate the students have an overall positive perception of the ABE/GED program. The items with the two highest means were Item 9 and Item 11. The statement for Item 9 is the teachers are caring and understanding. The mean found was 4.70. The statement for Item 11 is I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone. The mean found was 4.69. The two lowest means were for Item 6 and Item 8. The statement for Item 6 is the number of people in a class is good. The mean found was 4.34. The statement for Item 8 is the classes are interesting. The mean found was 4.45.

Items 12 through 14 were Yes or No response questions. Item 12 asked students if they have problems with transportation to class. Seven students said they have problems with transportation to class; two males and five females. Item 13 asked students if they have problems finding childcare to attend class. Only two students said they have problems finding childcare to attend class; two females. Item 14 asked students if they have any other problems that may affect their class attendance. Twelve students said they have other problems that may affect their class attendance; four males and eight females.

Item 15 was an open-ended question. Item 15 asked if the students had any other comments about the ABE/GED program. Some students, not all, had some additional comments about the program. The additional comments are presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12

*Students' Additional Comments about the ABE/GED Program*

<p>I have learned a lot and have enjoyed the time in my classes.</p> <p>It is a good class to be in.</p> <p>I'm glad I'm taking the ABE/GED program. It is very helpful.</p> <p>It is a good program and it has helped me a lot.</p> <p>My classmates are very helpful.</p> <p>I love the ABE/GED program simply because I'm going to get somewhere with this.</p> <p>Situations at work may sometimes interfere.</p> <p>I am so glad this GED class is here to help me get my life started.</p> <p>I think the board of education need to stop making the test so hard so people can pass it and we can get a GED.</p> <p>Even though I passed every test except for math and having to start over, I'm glad to have Mr. Walker as my teacher because I can get a better understanding in each subject.</p> <p>It is a good thing to be in.</p> <p>Proud to be a part of the program.</p> <p>I would love for other people to get involved and come out to get their GED.</p> <p>I wish the test wasn't so high.</p> <p>It is a great environment.</p> <p>I have some problems, but I will still attend class always.</p> <p>Why is some of the stuff we go over not on the test?</p> <p>It is good for me to come back to school so I can get a good job and make more money.</p>
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## Research Question Two

Question 2: Are there differences among the perceptions of GED students based on the demographic factors of age, race, or gender?

To answer research question two, the researcher used crosstabs to present students' perceptions based on age, race, and gender. Also, to answer research question two, a Chi-square test was performed to determine if differences existed among the perceptions of the GED students based on age, race, or gender. Table 13 below shows 9 (37.5%) males strongly agreed that class location is convenient, 12 (50%) agreed, 2 (8.3%) were undecided, 1 (4.2%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 26 (65%) females strongly agreed that class location is convenient, 13 (32.5%) agreed, 1 (2.5%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 13

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 4*

Item	#4 Class location is convenient				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	9	12	2	1	0
Female	26	13	1	0	0
Total	35	25	3	1	0

Table 14 below shows 11 (45.8%) males strongly agreed that class times are convenient, 12 (50%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (4.2%) disagreed, and 0 (0%)

strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 27 (67.5%) females strongly agreed that class times are convenient, 13 (32.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 14

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 5*

Item #5 Class times are convenient					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	11	12	0	1	0
Female	27	13	0	0	0
Total	38	25	0	1	0

Table 15 below shows 9 (37.5%) males strongly agreed that the number of people in a class is good, 13 (54.2%) agreed, 1 (4.2%) was undecided, 1 (4.2%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 20 (50%) females strongly agreed that the number of people in a class is good, 17 (42.5%) agreed, 2 (5%) were undecided, 1 (2.5%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 15

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 6*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	9	13	1	1	0
Female	20	17	2	1	0
Total	29	30	3	2	0

Table 16 below shows 11 (45.8%) males strongly agreed that what is being taught is meaningful and useful, 11 (45.8%) agreed, 1 (4.2%) was undecided, 1 (4.2%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 28 (70%) females strongly agreed that what is being taught is meaningful and useful, 9 (22.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 3 (7.5%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 16

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 7*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	11	11	1	1	0
Female	28	9	0	3	0
Total	39	20	1	4	0

Table 17 below shows 9 (37.5%) males strongly agreed that the classes are interesting, 12 (50%) agreed, 2 (8.3%) were undecided, 1 (4.2%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 27 (67.5%) females strongly agreed that the classes are interesting, 11 (27.5%) agreed, 1 (2.5%) was undecided, 1 (2.5%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 17

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 8*

Item #8 The classes are interesting					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	9	12	2	1	0
Female	27	11	1	1	0
Total	36	23	3	2	0

Table 18 below shows 15 (62.5%) males strongly agreed that the teachers are caring and understanding, 9 (37.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 30 (75%) females strongly agreed that the teachers are caring and understanding, 10 (25%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.



Table 18

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 9*

Item #9 The teachers are caring and understanding					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	15	9	0	0	0
Female	30	10	0	0	0
Total	45	19	0	0	0

Table 19 below shows 14 (58.3%) males strongly agreed that teachers are available to talk to after class, 10 (41.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 30 (75%) females strongly agreed that teachers are available to talk to after class, 9 (22.5%) agreed, 1 (2.5%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 19

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 10*

Item #10 Teachers are available to talk to after class					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	14	10	0	0	0
Female	30	9	1	0	0
Total	44	19	1	0	0

Table 20 below shows 15 (62.5%) males strongly agreed that they would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone, 6 (25%) agreed, 3 (12.5%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. The table also shows that 32 (80%) females strongly agreed that they would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone, 8 (20%) agreed, 0 (0%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 20

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 11*

Item #11 I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Male	15	6	3	0	0
Female	32	8	0	0	0
Total	47	14	3	0	0

Table 21 below shows 22 (52.4%) African-Americans strongly agreed that class location is convenient, 16 (38.1%) agreed, 3 (7.1%) were undecided, 1 (2.4%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 7 (53.8%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 6 (46.2%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 5 (62.5%) Others strongly agreed, 3 (37.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 21

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 4*

Item	#4 Class location is convenient				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	22	16	3	1	0
Caucasian	7	6	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	5	3	0	0	0
Total	35	25	3	1	0

Table 22 below shows 23 (54.8%) African-Americans strongly agreed that class times are convenient, 18 (42.9%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (2.4%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 9 (69.2%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 4 (30.8%) agree, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 5 (62.5%) Others strongly agreed, 3 (37.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 22

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 5*

Item	#5 Class times are convenient				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	23	18	0	1	0
Caucasian	9	4	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	5	3	0	0	0
Total	38	25	0	1	0

Table 23 below shows 18 (42.9%) African-Americans strongly agreed that the number of people in a class is good, 21 (50%) agreed, 2 (4.8%) were undecided, 1 (2.4%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 5 (38.5%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 6 (46.2%) agreed, 1 (7.7%) was undecided, 1 (7.7%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 5 (62.5%) Others strongly agreed, 3 (37.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 23

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 6*

Item	#6 The number of people in a class is good				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	18	21	2	1	0
Caucasian	5	6	1	1	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	5	3	0	0	0
Total	29	30	3	2	0

Table 24 below shows 24 (57.1%) African-Americans strongly agreed that what is being taught is meaningful and useful, 13 (31%) agreed, 1 (2.4%) was undecided, 4 (9.5%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 9 (69.2%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 4 (30.8%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 5 (62.5%) Others strongly agreed, 3 (37.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 24

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 7*

Item	#7 What is being taught is meaningful and useful				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	24	13	1	4	0
Caucasian	9	4	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	5	3	0	0	0
Total	39	20	1	4	0

Table 25 below shows 26 (61.9%) African-Americans strongly agreed that the classes are interesting, 15 (35.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (2.4%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 4 (30.8%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 6 (46.2%) agreed, 2 (15.4%) were undecided, 1 (7.7%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 5 (62.5%) Others strongly agreed, 2 (25%) agreed, 1 (12.5%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 25

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 8*

Item	#8 The classes are interesting				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	26	15	0	1	0
Caucasian	4	6	2	1	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	5	2	1	0	0
Total	36	23	3	2	0

Table 26 below shows 32 (61.9%) African-Americans strongly agreed that the teachers are caring and understanding, 10 (23.8%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 8 (61.5%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 5 (38.5%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 4 (50%) Others strongly agreed, 4 (50%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 26

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 9*

Item #9 The teachers are caring and understanding					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	32	10	0	0	0
Caucasian	8	5	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	4	4	0	0	0
Total	45	19	0	0	0

Table 27 below shows 30 (71.4%) African-Americans strongly agreed that teachers are available to talk to after class, 12 (28.6%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 9 (69.2%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 3 (23.1%) agreed, 1 (7.7%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agree; 4 (50%) Others strongly agreed, 4 (50%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.



Table 27

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 10*

Item	#10 Teachers are available to talk to after class				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	30	12	0	0	0
Caucasian	9	3	1	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	4	4	0	0	0
Total	44	19	1	0	0

Table 28 below shows 32 (76.2%) African-Americans strongly agreed that they would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone, 9 (21.4%) agreed, 1 (2.4%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 10 (76.9%) Caucasians strongly agreed, 3 (23.1%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 1 (100%) Hispanic strongly agreed; 4 (50%) Others strongly agreed, 2 (25%) agreed, 2 (25%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 28

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 11*

Item #11 I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
African-American	32	9	1	0	0
Caucasian	10	3	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	0	0
Other	4	2	2	0	0
Total	47	14	3	0	0

Table 29 below shows 8 (44.4%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that class location is convenient, 10 (55.6%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 8 (66.7%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 4 (33.3%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 4 (66.7%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 0 (0%) agreed, 1 (16.7%) was undecided, 1 (16.7%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 15 (53.6%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 11 (39.3%) agreed, 2 (7.1%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 29

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 4*

Item #4 Class location is convenient					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	8	10	0	0	0
20-24	8	4	0	0	0
25-29	4	0	1	1	0
30 or older	15	11	2	0	0
Total	35	25	3	1	0

Table 30 below shows 12 (66.7%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that class times are convenient, 6 (33.3%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 8 (66.7%) of 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 4 (33.3%) agree, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 3 (50%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 2 (33.3%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (16.7%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 15 (53.6%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 13 (46.6%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 30

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 5*

Item #5 Class times are convenient					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	12	6	0	0	0
20-24	8	4	0	0	0
25-29	3	2	0	1	0
30 or older	15	13	0	0	0
Total	38	25	0	1	0

Table 31 below shows 8 (44.4%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that the number of people in a class is good, 8 (44.4%) agreed, 1 (5.6%) was undecided, 1 (5.6%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 6 (50%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 4 (33.3%) agreed, 2 (16.7%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 2 (33.3%) 25-29 year olds strongly agree; 3 (50%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (16.7%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 13 (46.4%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 15 (53.6%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 31

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 6*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	8	8	1	1	0
20-24	6	4	2	0	0
25-29	2	3	0	1	0
30 or older	13	15	0	0	0
Total	29	30	3	2	0

Table 32 below shows 10 (55.6%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that what is being taught is meaningful and useful, 7 (38.9%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 1 (5.6%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 8 (66.7%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 2 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 2 (16.7%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 5 (83.3%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 1 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 16 (57.1%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 10 (35.7%) agreed, 1 (3.6%) was undecided, 1 (3.6%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 32

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 7*

Item	#7 What is being taught is meaningful and useful				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	10	7	0	1	0
20-24	8	2	0	2	0
25-29	5	1	0	0	0
30 or older	16	10	1	1	0
Total	39	20	1	4	0

Table 33 below shows 8 (44.4%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that the classes are interesting, 7 (38.9%) agreed, 1 (5.6%) was undecided, 2 (11.1%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 9 (75%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 1 (8.3%) agreed, 2 (16.7%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 5 (83.3%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 1 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 14 (50%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 14 (50%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 33

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 8*

Item	#8 The classes are interesting				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	8	7	1	2	0
20-24	9	1	2	0	0
25-29	5	1	0	0	0
30 or older	14	14	0	0	0
Total	36	23	3	2	0

Table 34 below shows 10 (55.6%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that the teachers are caring and understanding, 8 (44.4%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 10 (83.3%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 2 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 5 (83.3%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 1 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 20 (71.4%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 8 (28.6%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 34

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 9*

Item #9 The teachers are caring and understanding					
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	10	8	0	0	0
20-24	10	2	0	0	0
25-29	5	1	0	0	0
30 or older	20	8	0	0	0
Total	45	19	0	0	0

Table 35 below shows 10 (55.6%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that the teachers are available to talk to after class, 7 (38.9%) agreed, 1 (5.6%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 10 (83.3%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 2 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 5 (83.3%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 1 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 19 (67.9%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 9 (32.1%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.



Table 35

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 10*

Item	#10 Teachers are available to talk to after class				
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	10	7	1	0	0
20-24	10	2	0	0	0
25-29	5	1	0	0	0
30 or older	19	9	0	0	0
Total	44	19	1	0	0

Table 36 below shows 13 (72.2%) 16-19 year olds strongly agreed that they would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone, 3 (16.7%) agreed, 2 (11.1%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 10 (83.3%) 20-24 year olds strongly agreed, 1 (8.3%) agreed, 1 (8.3%) was undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 5 (83.3%) 25-29 year olds strongly agreed; 1 (16.7%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed; 19 (67.9%) of the 30 or older strongly agreed, 9 (32.1%) agreed, 0 (0%) were undecided, 0 (0%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 36

*Crosstabs of Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 11*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16-19	13	3	2	0	0
20-24	10	1	1	0	0
25-29	5	1	0	0	0
30 or older	19	9	0	0	0
Total	47	14	3	0	0

Table 37 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 4. Item 4, "class location is convenient," the Chi-square value is 6.006 and the p-value is .111. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 4.

Table 37

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 4*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	6.006(a)	3	.111
Likelihood Ratio	6.340	3	.096
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.872	1	.015

Table 38 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 5. Item 5, "class times are convenient," the Chi-square value is 4.029 and the p-value is .133. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 5.

Table 38

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 5*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	4.029(a)	2	.133
Likelihood Ratio	4.335	2	.114
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.910	1	.048

Table 39 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 6. Item 6, "the number of people in a class is good," the Chi-square value is 1.108 and the p-value is .775. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 6.

Table 39

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 6*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	1.108(a)	3	.775
Likelihood Ratio	1.111	3	.774
Linear-by-Linear Association	.655	1	.418

Table 40 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 7. Item 7, "what is being taught is meaningful and useful," the Chi-square value is 5.984 and the p-value is .112. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 7.

Table 40

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 7*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	5.984(a)	3	.112
Likelihood Ratio	6.255	3	.100
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.058	1	.304

Table 41 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 8. Item 8, "the classes are interesting," the Chi-square value is 5.735 and the p-value is .125. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 8.

Table 41

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 8*

	value	df	asymp. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	5.735(a)	3	.125
Likelihood Ratio	5.759	3	.124
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.281	1	.039

Table 42 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 9. Item 9, "the teachers are caring and understanding," the Chi-square value is 1.123 and the p-value is .289. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 9.

Table 42

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 9*

	value	df	asymp. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	1.123(a)	1	.289
Likelihood Ratio	1.107	1	.293
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.105	1	.293

Table 43 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 10. Item 10 "teachers are available to talk to after class," the Chi-square value is 3.062 and the p-value is .216. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 10.

Table 43

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 10*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	3.062(a)	2	.216
Likelihood Ratio	3.350	2	.187
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.177	1	.278

Table 44 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on gender for Item 11. Item 11, "I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone," the Chi-square value is 5.797 and the p-value is .055. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to gender for Item 11.

Table 44

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender for Item 11*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	5.797(a)	2	.055
Likelihood Ratio	6.693	2	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.306	1	.038

Table 45 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 4. Item 4, "class location is convenient," the Chi-square value is 3.176 and the p-value is .957. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 4.

Table 45

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 4*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	3.176(a)	9	.957
Likelihood Ratio	4.753	9	.855
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.131	1	.288



Table 46 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 5. Item 5 "class times are convenient," the Chi-square value is 1.957 and the p-value is .924. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 5.

Table 46

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 5*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	1.957(a)	6	.924
Likelihood Ratio	2.625	6	.854
Linear-by-Linear Association	.733	1	.392

Table 47 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 6. Item 6, "the number of people in a class is good," the Chi-square value is 3.976 and the p-value is .913. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 6.

Table 47

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 6*

	value	df	asymp. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	3.976(a)	9	.913
Likelihood Ratio	4.651	9	.864
Linear-by-Linear Association	.932	1	.334

Table 48 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 7. Item 7, "what is being taught is meaningful and useful," the Chi-square value is 3.533 and the p-value is .939. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 7.

Table 48

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 7*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	3.533(a)	9	.939
Likelihood Ratio	5.388	9	.799
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.372	1	.241

Table 49 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 8. Item 8, "the classes are interesting," the Chi-square value is 10.593 and the p-value is .305. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 8.

Table 49

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 8*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	10.593(a)	9	.305
Likelihood Ratio	11.696	9	.231
Linear-by-Linear Association	.385	1	.535

Table 50 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 9. Item 9, "the teachers are caring and understanding," the Chi-square value is 3.178 and the p-value is .365. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 9.

Table 50

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 9*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	3.178(a)	3	.365
Likelihood Ratio	3.330	3	.344
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.125	1	.145

Table 51 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 10. Item 10, "teachers are available to talk to after class," the Chi-square value is 6.136 and the p-value is .408. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 10.

Table 51

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 10*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	6.136(a)	6	.408
Likelihood Ratio	5.548	6	.476
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.059	1	.303

Table 52 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on race for Item 11. Item 11, "I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone," the Chi-square value is 9.201 and the p-value is .163. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to race for Item 11.

Table 52

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Race for Item 11*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	9.201(a)	6	.163
Likelihood Ratio	6.650	6	.354
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.797	1	.051

Table 53 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 4. Item 4, "class location is convenient," the Chi-square value is 17.792 and the p-value is .038. The test revealed that there is a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 4.

Table 53

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 4*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	17.792(a)	9	.038
Likelihood Ratio	15.674	9	.074
Linear-by-Linear Association	.056	1	.812

Table 54 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 5. Item 5, "class times are convenient," the Chi-square value is 10.874 and the p-value is .092. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 5.

Table 54

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 5*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	10.874(a)	6	.092
Likelihood Ratio	5.936	6	.430
Linear-by-Linear Association	.906	1	.341

Table 55 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 6. Item 6, "the number of people in a class is good," the Chi-square value is 11.439 and the p-value is .247. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 6.

Table 55

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 6*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	11.439(a)	9	.247
Likelihood Ratio	11.003	9	.276
Linear-by-Linear Association	.634	1	.426

Table 56 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 7. Item 7, "what is being taught is meaningful and useful," the Chi-square value is 6.529 and the p-value is .686. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 7.

Table 56

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 7*

	value	df	asymp. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	6.529(a)	9	.686
Likelihood Ratio	6.843	9	.653
Linear-by-Linear Association	.080	1	.777

Table 57 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 8. Item 8, "the classes are interesting," the Chi-square value is 17.329 and the p-value is .044. The test revealed that there is a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 8.



Table 57

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 8*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	17.329(a)	9	.044
Likelihood Ratio	18.422	9	.031
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.782	1	.182

Table 58 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 9. Item 9, "the teachers are caring and understanding," the Chi-square value is 3.357 and the p-value is .340. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 9.

Table 58

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 9*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	3.357(a)	3	.340
Likelihood Ratio	3.395	3	.335
Linear-by-Linear Association	.736	1	.391

Table 59 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 10. Item 10, "teachers are available to talk to after class," the Chi-square value is 5.170 and the p-value is .522. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 10.

Table 59

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 10*

	value	df	asymp. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	5.170(a)	6	.522
Likelihood Ratio	5.296	6	.506
Linear-by-Linear Association	.728	1	.393

Table 60 below provides the results of the Chi-square test for students' perceptions based on age for Item 11. Item 11, "I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone," the Chi-square value is 6.534 and the p-value is .366. The test revealed that there is not a difference, at  $p < .05$ , in students' perceptions when it comes to age for Item 11.

Table 60

*Chi-square Test for Students' Perceptions Based on Age for Item 11*

	value	df	asympt. sig. (2-sides)
Pearson Chi-square	6.534(a)	6	.366
Likelihood Ratio	7.780	6	.255
Linear-by-Linear Association	.092	1	.761

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations. The chapter begins with a summary of Chapters I through IV. Next, the chapter presents a discussion of the findings, followed by conclusions drawn from those findings. The chapter concludes with implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

#### **Summary**

Chapter I included an introduction for the study, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, theoretical framework of the study, and justification of the study.

Chapter II provided a review of the literature regarding the study. The topics covered in this chapter included history of the ABE program and GED, importance and purpose of the ABE program in Mississippi, characteristics of adult learners and ABE teachers, factors that influence persistence in ABE programs and retention strategies.

Chapter III discussed the methodology of the study. It included the research design, population, instrumentation, validity and reliability, procedure, and data analysis.

Chapter IV presented the data analysis and results of the study. This chapter contained the source of data and the results of the research questions.

The purpose of this study was to provide an opportunity for students to share their perceptions of the ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college in which they were enrolled. A survey was administered to 64 students in the ABE/GED program. The survey provided the data to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of GED students regarding the ABE/GED program?
2. Are there differences among the perceptions of GED students based on the demographic factors of age, race, or gender?

### **Discussion**

The literature review explained factors of why adults may stop attending ABE programs. The factors included situational factors which are problems with employment, finances, child care, family, transportation, and health. Institutional factors are problems with program level or content, location, and attendance/reentry policies. Dispositional factors include educational attitudes, self-efficacy, resilience, and attribution of failure. Demographic factors include age, gender, and cultural background. Emotional-relational factors include social support and encouragement. The findings from this study showed that students thought class location and class times were convenient. The students also thought the teachers were caring and understanding and available to talk to after class. The results of the study also showed that overall students did not have problems with transportation to class or finding child care to attend class.

The research noted the importance of conducting surveys or interviews with students early on in ABE programs. Quigley (2000) found that the first three weeks of an ABE program are critical to participants' success. However, the surveys for this research study were given during the fifth week of classes. The results of the surveys could possibly be attributed to the timing of when the surveys were given. By the fifth week of classes, the students that were going to drop out of the program probably already had. The students who were still in the program during the fifth week of classes perhaps had overcome barriers or problems or did not encounter problems at all in order to attend classes. The timing could possibly account for the positive perceptions students had about the program.

### **Conclusions**

The findings from research question one provided the students' perceptions of the ABE/GED program. Of the students, 60 either strongly agreed or agreed that class location was convenient; 63 either strongly agreed or agreed that class times were convenient; 59 either strongly agreed or agreed that the number of people in a class was good; 59 either strongly agreed or agreed that what is being taught is meaningful and useful; 59 either strongly agreed or agreed that the classes are interesting; all 64 students either strongly agreed or agreed that the teachers are caring and understanding; 63 either strongly agreed or agreed that teachers are available to talk to after class; and 61 students either strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend the ABE/GED program to someone.

The findings from research question two showed that there was not a difference in students' perceptions based on gender for Items 4 through 11. The findings also

showed that there was not a difference based on race for Items 4 through 11. The findings showed that there was a difference in students' perceptions based on age for only 2 items. A difference was found for Item 4, "class location is convenient," and Item 8, "the classes are interesting." For all other items, there was not a difference found in students' perceptions based on age.

This study was designed to determine students' perceptions of an ABE/GED program at a rural Mississippi community college. The findings from this study indicated that the ABE/GED students had a favorable perception of the ABE/GED program.

Although this study found that the ABE/GED students overwhelmingly had a positive perception of the program, some students indicated that they encounter some problems. A few students said they have problems with transportation to class, a couple of students said they have problems finding childcare to attend class, and a number of students said they have other problems that affect their class attendance. So, it is important for the ABE/GED program staff to learn about the problems that student face and address them before those problems lead to students leaving the program.

Administers of the ABE/GED program have a responsibility to ensure that the students are satisfied with the program and are getting what they need in order to be successful in the program. Perhaps, if more focus was put on students' needs, there would be fewer students leaving the program and more students completing the program and receiving their GED.

## **Implications**

The findings from this study revealed what administrators of the ABE/GED program should do to gain knowledge of how students perceive the program. First, the survey should be given the first or second week of classes. By giving the survey early in the program, administrators will possibly have a better chance of deterring dropouts. The results obtained from the survey could give administrators of the ABE/GED program valuable information about what students think of the program and if they encounter any problems to attend class. Then, administrators could use the information to better the program.

This study revealed that the ABE/GED students had a positive perception of the program; however, students' concerns about the program should be addressed. Administrators of the ABE/GED program should be interested in and committed to receiving student feedback on the program. Administrators would be abreast of any issues that students currently face and possibly of issues of future students. Then, administrators would be able to take a proactive approach in dealing with students' issues.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommendations for further research. First, the survey was conducted during one enrollment period of the ABE/GED program. There are several enrollment periods throughout the year. The survey should be given during every enrollment period to gain students' perceptions of the program.



Second, the study was conducted at only one Mississippi community college. Future research should include all Mississippi community colleges to gain insight on how students perceive the ABE/GED program at other institutions.

Third, a few students displayed an unfavorable perception on some aspect of the program. Future research should be done to further investigate the students' unfavorable perception and possibly find ways to make changes and improve on that aspect of the program.

Finally, many students stop attending the ABE/GED program. Further research on the retention of ABE/GED students is needed. Finding ways to keep students involved in the program is necessary for the success of the students as well as the program.

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APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

November 19, 2013

Trena Lee  
Department of Leadership & Foundations

RE: HRPP Study #13-346: An Assessment of the Adult Basic Education General Education Development Program in Mississippi Community Colleges

Dear Ms. Lee:

This email serves as official documentation that the above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 11/19/2013 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, in accordance with SOP 01-03 Administrative Review of Applications, a new application must be submitted if the study is ongoing after 5 years from the date of approval. Additionally, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the HRPP prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The HRPP reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

Once you have received permission from Mississippi Community Colleges to conduct research and have access to existing data, a copy of the permission must be submitted to our office.

Please note that the MSU HRPP accreditation for our human subjects protection program requires an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the HRPP approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. Your stamped consent form will be attached in a separate email.

Please refer to your HRPP number (#13-346) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at [nmorse@orc.msstate.edu](mailto:nmorse@orc.msstate.edu) or call **662-325-5220**.

Finally, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on the HRPP approval process. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZC7QQD>.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse, CIP  
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Advisor: James Davis

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

**Mississippi State University**  
**Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research**

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**Title of Research Study: Students' Perceptions of the Adult Basic Education  
General Educational Development Program at a Rural Mississippi Community  
College**

**Study Site: Meridian Community College**

**Researchers: Trena Lee (Mississippi State University)**

**Dr. James Davis (Mississippi State University)**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to provide an opportunity for students enrolled in the ABE/GED program at a rural community college to share their perceptions of the program.

**Procedures**

If you participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey about the ABE/GED program. There are 15 questions on the survey. The instructions for completing the survey will be provided on the survey. It should not take more than 10 minutes to complete the survey.

**Risks or Discomforts**

There are no reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts identified for this research study.

**Benefits**

Findings from this study could help administrators of the ABE/GED program find out if they are meeting the needs of the students. Additionally, it could help administrators increase retention in the program.

**Incentive to participate**

No incentives will be offered for participation in the survey.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of records will be maintained. No one, other than the researchers, will have access to the surveys. Participants will remain anonymous. There are no questions on the survey that can be used to identify participants, and no responses can be linked back to you.

Please note that these records will be held by a state entity and therefore are subject to disclosure if required by law. Research information may be shared with the MSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Trena Lee at 601-696-7462 or Dr. James Davis at 662-325-9258.

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact the MSU Research Compliance Office by phone at 662-325-3994.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Please understand that your **participation is voluntary**. Your **refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss** of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You **may discontinue your participation** at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. Please keep this form for your records.

APPENDIX C  
SURVEY

## **ABE/GED STUDENT SURVEY**

### **Part I. Student Demographics**

**Instructions:** Please put an X by your choice.

1. Gender:  Male  Female
2. Race:  African-American  Caucasian  Hispanic  Other
3. Age:  16-19  20-24  25-29  30 or older

### **Part II. Student Perceptions**

**Instructions:** Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by putting an X by your choice. Only choose one answer.

4. Class location is convenient:  
 Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Undecided  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree
5. Class times are convenient:  
 Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Undecided  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree
6. The number of people in a class is good:  
 Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Undecided  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree
7. What is being taught is meaningful and useful:  
 Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Undecided  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

8. The classes are interesting:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. The teachers are caring and understanding:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. Teachers are available to talk to after class:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. I would recommend this ABE/GED program to someone:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Instructions:** Please put an X by your choice.

12. Do you have problems with transportation to class?

- YES                       NO

13. Do you have problems finding childcare to attend class?

- YES                       NO

14. Do you have other problems that may affect your class attendance?

- YES                       NO

15. Do you have any other comments about the ABE/GED program?

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