



Golden Courage

INTERNATIONAL

What is Great Expectations? Through the Great Expectations (GE) program, high school-age youth from extreme poverty who have shown academic promise are given the opportunity to earn high school diplomas. GE provides scholarships that cover all tuition, fees, lunches, textbooks, uniforms, after school activities, medical care, as well as individualized mentoring, through the three years of high school.

Students in the program attend No. 2 High School in Yan Qing County. All GE students live in a dormitory next to the school, seven days a week during the school year. When school is not in session, students live with their parents, grandparents, or for those with no family, a host family identified by GCI staff.

Students supported by GE attend the same schools and sit in the same classrooms as students not participating in the program, and they receive the same instruction. However, they also join after school programs such as singing, dancing, Kung Fu, science, and debate. Furthermore, the students receive individualized mentoring and counseling.

Teachers receive special training if they have students from the GE program in their classroom. This training prepares them to support children with trauma in the family, who have been homeless, sexually abused, or experienced other

extreme challenges.

Enrollment and Matriculation. Since 2006, over 1,155 GE students have graduated high school, with another 180 currently enrolled. Every student enrolled has remained in school with a 100% graduation rate and a 100% college admission rate.

Great Expectations Students. In June 2015, GCI administered a 120-question survey to all 198 students in the Great Expectations program at that time plus all 180 of their schoolmates. The survey results tell a compelling story of these amazing students and their success in the GE program.

Survey Summary. In sum, despite the fact that Great Expectations students come from families with few economic resources, they have relatively strong relationships with their parents and friends compared to their non-GE schoolmates. Moreover, they have a more positive experience in school, are more likely to be happy, and less likely to have negative feelings. As the students look to the future, GE students are much more likely to believe they will complete high levels of schooling. Details of the survey results follow.

Survey Results in Detail:

Parent’s education and employment. To be eligible for Great Expectations students must come from low-income families, and this is evident from the survey. Just 15% of fathers of Great Expectations students have more than a high school education, while 28% of their classmates’ fathers did. More significantly, less than half (47%) of the fathers of Great Expectations students had a full or part-time job.

Parental involvement. Although their parents have fewer years of education and lower-status jobs, as shown in the table, their relationships with their parents are stronger and their parents are more engaged in their lives.

| | GE students | School-mates |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| Parental involvement | | |
| Mother gives lots of care and attention | 78% | 67% |
| Parents know most/all friends | 52% | 43% |
| Experience at school | | |
| Felt part of school | 60% | 46% |
| Felt happy at school | 48% | 29% |
| Felt safe at school | 61% | 44% |
| Negative feelings and happiness | | |
| Felt sad often | 9% | 19% |
| Felt like crying many days or every day | 8% | 17% |
| Happy every or almost every day | 69% | 60% |
| Expectations for the future | | |
| Pretty likely or certain to graduate 4-year college | 69% | 60% |

Experience at school. Students in the Great Expectations program have stronger social relationships and more positive experiences at school than their classmates on many dimensions. In particular, program students are 15-20 percentage points more likely to report that they feel like they are part of the school, happy to be at school, and safe at school.

Negative feelings and happiness. Classmates are twice as likely to experience negative feelings. Great Expectations students on the other hand are more likely to be happy every or almost every day: 69% vs 60%.

Expectations for the future. Despite coming from disadvantaged families, expectations for completed years of schooling are actually higher for Great Expectations students: 69% of students in the program but just 60% of their classmates expect to complete a 4-year college degree.

It is quite likely that the Great Expectations program is responsible for the relatively attractive outcomes and characteristics of the students. Academic accomplishment and confidence, psychosocial well-being, and creating optimism about the future are goals of the program. In the future we plan to administer the survey to students before they begin the Great Expectations program (and their classmates), and then periodically reassess their outcomes, allowing us to examine how their social relationships, psychosocial outcomes, and expectations for the future change as they move through high school.