



GED Scholars Initiative

Tossing Out Labels • Heidi's Story

Earning excellent grades and obtaining honors student status in high school, it would seem that Heidi Bauer had a successful high school career. But because of constant bullying that school administrators could not stop, she was diagnosed with "school phobia" and quit high school at the age of 17.

"This is why many GED students talk about dispelling the stigma of having a General Educational Development certificate. So many of us left school for a wide variety of reasons, most having nothing to do with our ability to succeed academically."

Bauer quickly began and completed the process of receiving her GED within four months of leaving high school. By the age of 29, she seemingly had everything a businesswoman would want—a steady career in Louisville, Kentucky as a quality assurance analyst for a large credit card processing company.

"I had a good job, my own home, and a new baby but something was just missing. I wanted more out of life and that motivated me to go to college."

*Given this opportunity
If I don't take it
Got no one to blame but me*

Her desires to hone her writing and pursue literature lead her on a journey to Kent State University.

With a father who attended Kent State University in the 60s and a mother who lives in the area, choosing Kent State became an option. After discovering that the university had what she needed as an adult student with specific needs, it was an obvious choice.

*Throw away that old label for me,
"You only got your GED"
I am able*

"I found KSU to offer the most things that I needed as a non-traditional student like family housing, adult student services, GED services, etc."

One of the most important services that Bauer found upon entering Kent State University was the Ohio Literacy Resource Center's GED Scholars Initiative. This program aids students who have received their GED with financial, social and emotional support on their journeys from GED to college graduate.

As a single mother, Bauer found support through the GED Scholars Initiative. She cites the program's most comforting feature as having people to talk to, vent to, and laugh with while feeling an unconditional acceptance and non-judgmental attitude toward GED holders.

"The GED Scholars Initiative understands the challenges that you face and treats you like an actual person and not just another body. I am in their debt for the support structure they provide."

With Bauer's leadership, a student-driven organization was created to champion the needs of students and work with the GED Scholars Initiative.

GUS (GED United Scholars) is a diverse group of students of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds, which meets with one goal in mind: eliminate the negative stigma attached to earning a GED.

"We unite together to share our experience and offer social, academic, and professional support to each other through our educational journey."

GUS is just one of many organizations that Bauer is involved with. Though spare time is limited as a college student and single mother, she works part-time at the Kent campus library's Helpdesk, is an editorial intern at the Kent State University Press, serves as web manager for Women's studies, Sigma Tau Delta, Xi Mu chapter, and the English National Honorary Society, and is a mentor for the GED Scholars Initiative Bridges Program.

The Bridges Program, funded by the Dominion Foundation, supports GED graduates planning to attend KSU. Participants are given advice and information about procedures and processes for being accepted into college, as well as resources on financial aid, academic policies, and programs. Prospective students have the opportunity to ask questions and receive information on anything related to transition-

ing into and attending Kent State University.

Through her affiliations with GED Scholars Initiative and GUS, Bauer was asked to become a Bridge mentor. After completing a series of workshops, each mentor invites one or two participants in the Bridge program to accompany him or her in a day in the life of a college student. Through this opportunity, her two students were able to attend classes and ask questions about her experience as a college student at Kent State University.

"I enjoyed helping people realize they could attain their goals and dreams even in the face of adversity. I see a couple of my mentees from time to time around campus or at events, and it always makes me smile to see them still persevering."

*I'm here to inspire you
But you inspire me*

Her devotion to her academics and these organizations shows in her success. One of her honors includes being named a top twenty-five finalist and honorable mention winner of the 2006 Iris Chang Memorial Essay Contest. She has also earned scholarships along the way, including GED Scholars, Honors Academic, the Richard Torner and Mildred Steiskal scholarships.



However, the greatest reinforcement in her life is her son, Keagen. Not only does she have to balance school, but she is first and foremost a full-time mother. Mastering time management and having a supportive family have lent to her success.

"I took full course loads and worked part-time as opposed to the other way around. My mother watches my son on the weekends so I can work on my thesis. She and my sister both help out when I need to go to appointments in the evenings when I don't have a sitter for Keagen."

Bauer finds strength in knowing that earning her degree will better provide for her family. She looks forward to the sense of accomplishment she will feel walking across the stage to receive her college diploma since she missed that experience after not obtaining her high school diploma.

"It can be difficult. For me, it is just sheer determination in reaching my goals. When I finally made the decision to go after my dreams, I told myself that failure was not possible."

That same philosophy has gotten Bauer to finally reach her destination: graduation. She graduated with honors, earning a bachelor's degree in May 2009. She is currently pursuing a Master's of Arts in Teaching from Kent State.

"Do not let labels define you. Do not let anyone else define who you are. Define yourself. Educate yourself. Respect yourself."

Able

1. in position to do something: *physically or mentally equipped to do something, especially because of circumstances and timing*

2. Capable or talented: *having the necessary resources or talent to do something*

3. Good at learning: *quick to learn in an educational environment*

4. Be able to do something: *to be able or have the ability to do something*

Synonym: See Intelligent

I'm not changing my tune for you

I'm marching to my own beat

You can not defeat

Me

I am able

to see between the lines and cracks

I've made a pact with myself

Given this opportunity

If I don't take it

Got no one to blame but me

Close that government study book

I am not your statistic

I am able

And if you were my friend

You wouldn't send me on this guilt trip

Teasing me because I want to learn

To be better equipped

To have a good life for myself

And my family

I am learning

I am able to wake up every morning

A day filled with endless possibilities

This tornado in my brain

is taking me to new heights

Showing you what I'm made of

I'm here to inspire you

But you inspire me

Being smart

Takes a lot of heart

Hard as nails but with a soft side

Filled an ocean with the tears I've cried

But I am precious

I am blessed

I have been put to the test

And I am good enough

I am able

I am tough

Out of society's chains

I am set free

Life is hard, let there be no doubt

But I'm trying a different route

Only one I am a slave to is me

I am able to read

Able to write

Forget the sword

The pen has more might

I'm a product not of where I came from

But of where I am going to be

I'm starting to see the forest

And not just the trees

I still have a way yet to go

But listen to how able I am

I am more than my income, my sex, and

the color of my skin

I'm speaking out loud

And writing with words

I will be heard

No longer obscured

I am choosing and perusing

The next course in my life

Throw away that old label for me,

"You only got your GED"

I am able

To learn and discern

I am able

Don't know yet where all I am going

But I know where I've been

Gonna rise up

Take paper and pen

And show you just

How ABLE I am.

—Heidi M. Bauer

The GED Scholars Initiative was created by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center and is the first of its kind in the nation. The center works with other programs and offices at Kent State University to meet the needs of GED Scholars. The Initiative addresses the needs of students who earned their GED and attend Kent State University. Through research and development, this initiative provides students with support to meet the university's academic standards, complete programs studies, gain technological expertise and become aware of career opportunities.