

Self Sufficiency

Youth Cohort Project

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Our Experience

In brainstorming self-sufficiency we began to think of what we wished schools taught us, contrasting from what we learned through community and external resources. We focused on skills fundamental to financial stability, pursuing passions, and achieving careers. By hearing inputs from politicians, life coaches, business owners, and young adults with a variety of experiences, we found that Denver are pleased with their education experience and the career their own, most learned the most useful language, financial, and emotional skills from family and social outlets, but wished they could've learned through school. From the experts, we learned that robust non-academic and alternative education is imperative to furthering the success of our students.

Our Research

By speaking to community members, we found that students are frustrated with the narrow curriculums and expectations at most schools. Students most learned the most useful language, financial, and emotional skills from family and social outlets, but would've appreciated formal education. Similarly, experts we talked to discussed an utter lack of necessary life skills spotlighted in schools, a disparity they all agreed to prioritize.

Our Conclusion & Recommendation

As Gary moves forward with creating programs to help young adults become self sufficient we recommend special attention to researching and advocating for changes in school curriculum to include more classes with highly specialized teachers in fields like long-term financial education and emotional health, as well as researching alternative graduation paths for students whose passions don't follow the college-track. We recommend speaking to local politicians and school board experts on what a curriculum change can look like, and then beginning the petitioning process by showing the logistical values through experts and a wider respondent base. Among these, include parents, young children's representatives (teachers, counselors, child therapists, etc) middle-high schoolers, and leaders in fields students show great interest in.

The Four Categories of Self Sufficiency

A combination of input from surveys, interviews, and our own personal experiences, led us to the conclusion that there are four general categories of self-sufficiency. Within those categories, certain life skills are needed to help a young adult become self-sufficient. We asked what those are, how people learned these skills, and what can be done to improve education.

Language Literacy

Being able to read, write, and use languages that help you absorb culture, media, education, and overall are used to improve quality of life and interests.

Emotional Literacy

Being self aware, empathetic, and deeply understanding your own emotions in order to advocate for yourself and others for your health and long term well-being.

Financial Literacy

Being educated on, able to, and confident in financial skills such as budgets, investments, mortgages, credit on a daily basis and have long-term goals and plans.

Professional Development

Being able to understand your career, where it is going, how to expand your career and education, and what to do when your career isn't going as planned.

Our most notable findings

- 44.6% of respondents spend 0-5 hours a week consuming media and information outside of social media.
- There is more dissatisfaction in access and optimism for learning languages among respondents. (i.e. respondents want to learn new languages and be better at language, but cannot or do not think they can.)
- Respondents said they struggled with creating boundaries with others, including friends, family and professionals.
- The largest source of education in manners such as financial, emotional, and language literacy came from friends, and only marginally from school.
- 80% of respondents said they want to learn more about investing, and only 36.4% of respondents say they understand investing and mortgages.

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Meet Our Interviewees



Dr. Anne Keke

Dr. Anne Keke is a Native of Cote d'Ivoire, now a U.S. Citizen living in Aurora, Colorado since 2001 with her family. Dr. Anne Keke holds a B.A. in Criminal Justice from the University of Colorado Denver and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from Colorado Technical University. In 2019 she received a Doctorate (D.M) in Management with a Minor in Criminal Justice from Colorado Technical University Aurora, CO. In her free time, Dr. Keke likes to explore the mountains and dedicates most of her time to her family.



Cory Montalvo

Born and raised in Colorado, Cory reimagines and designs the learning spaces of the future with his community. His work with students and families is informed by his passions for storytelling, social justice, and the media arts. Prior to founding YEBO, Cory was a dean of students and culture, a K-5 teacher and paraprofessional, and a site coordinator for Reading Partners. Cory graduated summa cum laude from the University of Colorado Denver with a B.A. in English Literature and Creative Writing, and a minor in Ethnic Studies. He believes children hold magic; they remind him of comets.



Senator Micheal Bennet

Michael Bennet has represented Colorado in the United States Senate since 2009. Recognized as a pragmatic and independent thinker, he is driven by an obligation to create more opportunity for the next generation. Michael worked to restructure failing businesses and helped create the world's largest movie theater chain. As superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, he led one of the most extensive reform efforts in the country, resulting in substantial, sustained academic improvement for Denver's children. He lives in Denver with his wife and three daughters.

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Garfield Warren

“When I was a child I was the kid that would spend hours in the woods exploring plants, animals or any random thing I would find. Nature is where I feel the most alive and safe so hence why you may catch me on a hiking trail or just playing disk golf solely. I have always been the child that ask “why” a lot or “why” things are like this so I can understand them and make them better. As an educator I want to ensure that my students gain that same curiosity so that they can go out into the world and find that “Why” so they can make the world a better place for all humans.” - Garfield



Amyra Johnson

It’s Amyra , but I go by Danae. I am a highschool dropout getting ready to go back to school! I am going through what I did at Rangeview to help me understand my needs and necessities to grow and get my education. I’m glad things went the way they did because now I’m more motivated than ever!



Ousman Ba

Ousman Ba is originally from Senegal. He is a graduate of Colorado State University with a degree in political science and international studies. Upon graduation, Ousman committed to a year of service with Americorps City Year, where he worked at Miami Central High School preparing students with the social, emotional and academic skills and mindsets to succeed in school and in life. During his time at FirstBank, he volunteered with ALG as the Youth Empowerment Program facilitator. After two years as a volunteer, he joined the ALG Team as a Education Coordinator.

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Kanyinsola Oluwadare

Kanyinsola Oluwadare is an incoming Junior at Colorado Early College of Aurora (CECA). She is an aspiring model and she has won the IMTA New York Monologue and has already received a \$30,000 scholarship from the New York Conservatory School of Dramatic Arts. She also aspires to become a Neurosurgeon while pursuing a career in entertainment as well.



Lana Hailemariam

The beauty of Lana's dynamic approach is her diverse background and experience. She brings more than 20 years of combined experience in both for-profit and nonprofit sectors. More than 12 of those years include Sales, Marketing, Event Management, Health & Wellness, and Entrepreneurship, ministry, education, a tutoring organization and a teen mentoring organization. She uses the wisdom gained through life's challenges to lay the foundation to authentic, meaningful conversations that positively impact people, teams and organizations. I am most passionate about leadership, young people and making an impact.



Sparkle Lindsay

Sparkle Lindsay is a keynote motivational speaker, author, and Nationally certified Recovery Coach. Sparkle is also a recovery coach facilitator for Ccar and their Peer Recovery Coach Academy program. Sparkle Lindsay is based out of Colorado Springs, Colorado. As she put it herself, "I am an influential speaker and recovery coach for alcohol and addiction. I believe in meeting myself and people where they are at. Follow me into my journey of happiness, and if you need help, allow me to help you find where you fit in your puzzle."

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Dr. Martinez Anderson

Dr. Martinez Anderson is a vibrant native of Shreveport, The Founder and leading manager of Advocacy Clarity Transformational consulting. With years of extensive experience serving in Title 1 schools as an instructor, assistant principal, and district director he brings a plethora of experience conducting research, creating policy, organizational development, improvement plans, strategies, assessments, evaluations and much more in the private and public sector. He has had the privilege of leading real-life topics and matters centered around JDEI. In order to ensure social, political and economic equality, mind-stretching dialogues are created that produce proficiency and clear perception.



Allegra Haynes

“Happy” Haynes was an aide to Councilman Bill Roberts in 1979. From 1983 to 1990, she worked as an administrative aide to Federico Peña. Haynes served on the Denver City Council from 1990 to 2003 and was council president from 1998 to 2000. She was the first African American woman to serve on that body. In October 2005, Haynes joined Denver Public Schools as the Assistant to the Superintendent for Community Partnerships. In 2008, Governor Bill Ritter appointed Haynes to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. Haynes became the Chief Community Engagement Officer for Denver Public Schools in 2009. In 2011, she left the school district for a position with CRL Associates. Haynes was elected to the Denver School Board November 2011.



Sam Connor

Samuel Connor is a software engineer that obtained his GED and started his career in tech at a young age! He now works at a startup company and believes students can take alternative education routes!