

Public Abstract

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Title:The Perceptions of At-Risk High School Students Regarding Their Early Childhood Educational Experiences

Research shows students who are at-risk of academic failure become a long-term liability on society. There is a large body of quantitative research which points at increased educational success for students who attend preschool. However, there is a disconnect in the research between at-risk high school students and whether they attended a preschool program.

This qualitative instrumental case study took place in a midwestern school district where 23 students at-risk of academic failure were interviewed as one of the three ways data was collected about their early childhood experiences. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group were being educated completely in the traditional high school setting. The second group of students were educated mostly in the traditional high school, but received support from the district alternative school. The final group of students received the majority of their education at the district alternative school. Five open themes emerged from the data as well as three focused themes.

The findings from the study revealed that more than half of the participants participated in preschool. While there was no difference between the three groups in regards to preschool attendance, students who participated in preschool education were able to remember more details about their learning than other students who had stayed at home or attended daycare. Relationships with adults, both personal and academic, were mentioned by the participants in both positive and negative examples.