

# FACT SHEETS<sup>4</sup>

## Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success

### Family factors

Fact sheet 1 – Value placed on education and parental involvement – childhood and adolescence

### Personal factors

Fact sheet 2 – Self-control and social and behavioural conduct – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 3 – Association with peers – adolescence

Fact sheet 4 – Nutrition and physical activity – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 5 – Tobacco, alcohol and drugs – adolescence

Fact sheet 6 – School/work balance – adolescence

Fact sheet 7 – Feelings of depression – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 8 – Self-esteem – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 9 – School performance in reading, writing and mathematics – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 10 – Motivation and engagement – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 11 – Educational and career aspirations – adolescence

### School factors

Fact sheet 12 – Student-teacher relationship – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 13 – Pedagogical and educational practices – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 14 – Management practices – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 15 – Support for students having difficulty – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 16 – School climate – childhood and adolescence

### Social (community) factors

Fact sheet 17 – Neighbourhood of residence – childhood and adolescence

Fact sheet 18 – Community resources – childhood and adolescence

## Analytical tools

Fact sheet 19 – A critical eye on a program evaluation

Fact sheet 20 – Basic principles of effective action

Consult the directory  
of effective actions

(available in French only)

[www.reunirreussir.org/outils-pratiques/repertoire.aspx](http://www.reunirreussir.org/outils-pratiques/repertoire.aspx)

[1] These fact sheets accompany the reference document *Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success*, Réunir Réussir, 2013.

# PERSEVERANCE

## Credits

### Research and writing

Marc St-Pierre

### Coordination

Marie-Josée Langlois

### Management

Mireille Jetté

### Text revision

Jérôme Belvisi

### Graphic design

Sylvie De Bellefeuille

## Reviewers

Nadine Arbour, Director, groupe Écobes

Éric Dion, Ph.D., UQAM

Véronique Dupéré, Ph.D., UdeM

Michel Janosz, Ph.D., UdeM

Jacinthe Loiselle, M.Sc., Consultant

Johanne McMillan, Director, CREVALE, Réseau des IRC

Hélène Rioux, Communications director, CTREQ

## Review Committees

### Réunir Réussir

Marie-Josée Béchar

Éric Cadieux

Jean-François Comeau

Mathieu Forgues

Mariane Kaliaguine

### Training, evaluation, research, Réseau des IRC

Marie-Claude Brosseau, RCA Nord du Québec

Cathy Froment, RCA Montérégie Est

## English version

### Translation and proof revision

Peter Christensen

### Reviewer

Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, Ph.D., Concordia University

### Financial contribution

Comité mauricien sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires (COMPERES)

Partenaires pour la réussite éducative en Chaudière-Appalaches (PRÉCA)

Projet Partenaires pour la réussite éducative en Estrie (Projet PRÉE)

Montreal Hooked on School (MHS)

Comité d'amélioration de la persévérance scolaire de l'Outaouais (CAPS)

# Value placed on education and parental involvement

The family exerts a pivotal influence on a child's development. Parental attitudes and behaviours such as encouraging children in their studies, congratulating them on their achievements, expressing affection, providing proper supervision, having high expectations and a positive attitude toward education, school, and school work, acting as a role-model by reading themselves, and involvement in children's school activities all have positive impacts on their success. On the contrary, when parents fail to provide emotional support, do not stay abreast of their children's progress at school, have a negative view of their children's ability to succeed, do not value education or have low expectations of their children's education, it can negatively affect school perseverance, especially in terms of career aspirations, motivation, and academic performance.<sup>1</sup>

## What the research says

According to a large-scale survey of 28,000 US high school students conducted in 1986, parental involvement has an indirect but nevertheless significant effect on students' success at school.<sup>2</sup> This is due to the influence of parents on the time and effort that students dedicate to their studies. A meta-analysis published in July 2012 clearly demonstrated the positive effect on school success of actions or initiatives aimed at increasing parental engagement from pre-school through the end of high schools.<sup>3</sup>

Most of these actions are based on the principle that all parents, regardless of socioeconomic status, want their children to succeed. However, many parents need help learning how to supervise their children at home, put in place conditions conducive to their success, or facilitate their progress through school. So who the parents are is not so important as what they do with their children. In this way, it is possible to guide parents toward providing better support and supervision of their children at home.



According to Desforges,<sup>4</sup> being a "good parent at home" is of primary importance by providing:

- a secure and stable environment
- intellectual stimulation
- parent-child discussions
- constructive role models
- a view of education as something of value
- high expectations

Numerous studies suggest that potential dropouts come most often either from families in which parents lack a high school diploma or from disadvantaged communities. However, one recent survey of 1,445 families conducted by Colletterte and Pelletier<sup>5</sup> identified one category of parents (22%) who are not from disadvantaged communities but whose attitudes toward school contribute to the high dropout rates observed in certain regions. These are middle-class and wealthy parents who believe in the value of education and the importance of a diploma. However, beyond this positive discourse about education, their attitude toward the school and the people who work there is rather negative. They may even go so far as to openly discredit the school, thereby harming their children's commitment to education and ultimately their success.

Parental involvement in their children's education occurs at two levels: at home and at school. However, for many researchers (Desforges,<sup>6</sup> Deslandes and Bertrand<sup>7</sup>), parental involvement in the home is the most important factor in improving academic performance.

## For more information

*Nouvelles tendances à l'égard de la petite enfance*

[http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/pdf/ACELF\\_volXXXIII-2\\_vf.pdf](http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/pdf/ACELF_volXXXIII-2_vf.pdf)

[1] The introductory paragraph to the fact sheet for each determinant is excerpted from *Les déterminants de la persévérance scolaire retenus par R<sup>2</sup>*, written by CRÉPAS in 2011 (Frédéric Tremblay).

[2] T. Z. Keith, T. M. Reimers, P.G. Fehrmann, S. M. Pottebaum, and L. W. Aubey (1986), Parental Involvement, Homework, and TV Time: Direct and Indirect Effects on High School Achievement, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 373–380.

[3] W. Jaynes (2012), A Meta-analysis of the Efficacy of Different Types of Parental Involvement Programs on Urban Students, *Urban Education* 47(4) 706–742. Downloaded at: <http://ue.sagepub.com/content/47/4/706.full.pdf>

[4] C. Desforges (2003), *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Research Report RR433, London: DfES. Downloaded at: [http://bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/files\\_uploaded/uploaded\\_resources/18617/Desforges.pdf](http://bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/files_uploaded/uploaded_resources/18617/Desforges.pdf)

[5] P. Colletterte and D. Pelletier (2013), *Étude comparative des dispositions des parents de neuf commissions scolaires à l'endroit de la scolarisation et de la persévérance scolaire*, financed in part by the Consortium Outaouais de recherche sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires (Coreper) and by the school boards of Rivière-du-Nord and Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles.

[6] Ibid. Desforges (2003).

[7] R. Deslandes and R. Bertrand (2004), Motivation des parents à participer au suivi scolaire de leur enfant au primaire, *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, 30(2), 411–434.

## Taking effective action

Actions should prioritize methods that guide parents toward being more supportive of their children at home. This is especially true of more disadvantaged communities, where it is important to make services and activities available that will assist parents in this way.

To improve parental involvement, it is also very useful to focus on the quality of parent-school interactions. Many parents who themselves had negative experiences at school may be uneasy about schools and will not enter one unless formally invited. Providing more situations where parents can interact with the school in an informal and pleasant setting, or put their own expertise to use, will increase the chances that they will convey a more positive image of the school system to their children. The same goes for any interactions with school staff where parents could perceive a judgment of their parenting. It is always beneficial to students that such perceptions be broken down. The earlier that parents get involved in their children's schooling, the more positive the effects on the student. To this end, closer cooperation and more systematic joint efforts between the preschool community and its different partners (health and social services network, municipalities, community organizations, etc.) is another way to reach out to families.

Complementary to this, it may be worthwhile to rethink campaigns to promote education, both regionally and province wide. While the value of education and a diploma must be emphasized, it is also important to restore a stature of respectability to schools and the people who work in them in order to counterbalance the negative discourse and attitudes of parental and social withdrawal that also impact success at school.

### Avenues for effective action related to the value placed on education and parental involvement

#### Target and provide guidance to parents who struggle to support their children's education:

- in helping with homework and class work and in setting educational expectations;
- in developing their children's social skills (living with others, sharing, conflicts, etc.);
- in stimulating children's motor, cognitive, and language skills (emergent literacy, physical development, etc.);
- in instilling healthy habits for their children's stage of development (sleep, nutrition, physiological changes, etc.);
- in properly preparing their children for the various transitions that they will experience as they go through school (starting school, elementary-high school transition, academic orientation, etc.);
- in establishing consistency in lifestyle, routine, and discipline at home;
- in supporting their child's emotional development and in establishing emotional bonds with significant adults.

#### Improve parent-school interaction:

- to create positive relationships between ALL parents and the school (appreciation events, activities that make use of parental expertise, activities that promote informal discussions and ties with the school staff, etc.),
- to encourage parental participation at the school (volunteering, committees, events, etc.).

#### Promote the value of education and the school:

- by fostering partnerships between the school and the community to have a complementary effect on parents and students (e.g., a partnership with a Carrefour jeunesse emploi to implement a youth psychosocial monitoring program that builds ties between parents and the school, and the establishment of a social pediatric committee that connects the school with workers from various sectors in order to support families),
- to improve public perception of education, the school, and the people who work in it, on a small and large scale.



# Self-control and social and behavioural conduct

Maintaining positive social interactions with peers and adults, having good social skills (e.g., empathy, mutual help, an ability to listen) and controlling one's impulses are linked to success at school. Greater self-control, meaning the ability to control one's behaviour and urges, is associated with higher reading, vocabulary, and mathematics performance, and is a recognized determinant of school perseverance.

## What the research says

An examination of the developmental paths of children who exhibit frequent behavioural problems in kindergarten reveals that many of them maintain high levels of behavioural problems throughout their schooling.<sup>1</sup> They are also at risk of having trouble academically, of dropping out,<sup>2</sup> and of exhibiting delinquency and social integration problems. Students with behavioural problems are also more likely to leave school before earning their high school diploma.<sup>3</sup> Developing mechanisms for self-control is therefore a strategic issue in improving the educational experience of these young people.

Self-control means giving up a behaviour that provides immediate gratification and replacing it with one that has more long-term benefits.

The three main behavioural problems encountered in schools are conduct disorder (CD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), and attention-deficit disorder, either with or without hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD). Conduct disorder is characterized by aggression toward people or animals, destruction of property, theft, or serious breach of established rules. Oppositional defiant disorder involves a range of persistent negative, hostile or provocative behaviours but that do not break laws or impact the rights of others. ADD-ADHD, while involuntary, can take on three forms. It can manifest as having trouble concentrating, in compulsive or hyperactive behaviour, or having all of these at once. Young people who are diagnosed with more than one of these behavioural problems have a higher risk of not finishing school.

## For more information

*Troubles du comportement externalisés*

<http://www.crifpe.ca/download/verify/1265>

*Guide d'implantation de programmes de développement d'habiletés sociales et de résolution de conflits*

<http://www.preventionscolaire.ca/doc/implantation.pdf>

*La réussite scolaire évaluée sous l'angle de l'attachement*

[http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/PSG/recherche\\_evaluation/prprsFiche14.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/recherche_evaluation/prprsFiche14.pdf)

[1] S. M. Côté, T. Vaillancourt, J. C. LeBlanc, D. S. Nagin, and R. E. Tremblay (2006), The Development of Physical Aggression from Toddlerhood to Pre-Adolescence: A Nation Wide Longitudinal Study of Canadian Children, *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 34(1), 71–85.

[2] F. Vitaro, M. Brendgen, S. Larose, and R. E. Tremblay (2005), Kindergarten disruptive behaviors, protective factors, and educational achievement by early adulthood, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(4), 617–629.

[3] Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2006), *Classe ordinaire et cheminement particulier de formation temporaire. Analyse du cheminement scolaire des élèves en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage à leur arrivée au secondaire*, Québec, Canada.

## Taking effective action

Among the effective programs for treating conduct or behavioural problems, those that incorporate both universal and targeted components show the most promise, for both boys and girls. Such programs have certain characteristics in common: they focus on behaviour-modification approaches and they systematically and explicitly teach social skills, problem solving, and self-control strategies. They are also based on positive reinforcement.

Most proven programs also have a component aimed specifically at parents and people who work directly with families. When parents and certain community members can support and build on interventions that occur at school, there is a much greater chance that these interventions will be effective.

Of all at-risk youth, those with behavioural troubles attract the least sympathy from the people who work with them. And yet there has been significant progress over the past 20 years in experimenting with and finding effective practices that offer alternatives to the withdrawal and isolation that such youth continually experience.

In a different vein, researchers conducting a longitudinal study of several cohorts of students followed since kindergarten examined the relationship between behavioural problems and reading problems.<sup>[1]</sup> They found not only that students who had behavioural problems in grade 1 were likely to have reading problems in grade 3, but also that students who had reading problems in grade 1 were likely to have behavioural problems in grade 3. This finding highlights the importance of dealing with both issues as soon as schooling begins.

### Avenues for effective action related to self-control and social and behavioural conduct

#### Put social skills development workshops in place for ALL children starting in early childhood:

- to work consistently with families from the beginning,
- to convey community expectations in terms of group behaviour and social code (i.e., rules of conduct, sharing, empathy, conflict resolution, politeness, respect, communication with peers and adults, etc.),
- to demonstrate the effects of behaviour on others rather than resort to punishment.

#### Involve parents in all actions related to their children's behaviour:

- to ensure that favourable developmental conditions are in place (sleep, nutrition, coping with disturbing events, choosing positive relations, etc.),
- to ensure that work with practitioners is consistent (shared discourse, clear messages, etc.).

#### Systematically screen youth upon entering school to take early action:

- Focus special attention on children entering school, especially boys, and on at-risk youth entering high school, and work intensively with them.

Implement measures that reward positive behaviour and reinforcement (e.g., interventions, code of conduct, expectations rather than criticism).

Implement measures that include and integrate troubled youth rather than excluding them (e.g., individualized help in developing skills to resolve problem situations, making use of a youth's strengths and expertise in various situations, activities that complement the youth's own interests to develop positive attitudes).

Offer extracurricular activities that attract such youth and that give them a chance to work hard, invest themselves, and experience success (e.g., sport, robotics, arts, martial arts, poetry slam, dance).

[1] Morgan et al. (2008), Are reading and behavior problems risk factors for each other? *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 41(5), Sept. 2008.

# Association with peers

Adolescence is a part of life during which individuals develop their personalities and refine their interests. Adolescents thus easily absorb influences, images, and models that they are exposed to. In this sense, spending time with friends who are motivated by school will shape young people's attitudes toward school. The Youth in Transition Survey<sup>1</sup> sheds significant light on this reality. Sixty-five percent of dropouts surveyed declared that their friends thought it was important to finish high school, while among high school graduates, this figure was 86 percent. No less than 50 percent of dropouts had a friend who had also dropped out, while only 20 percent of high school graduates had a friend who had dropped out.

## What the research says

Janosz<sup>2</sup> reported a number of studies showing that future dropouts tend to spend time with peers who have dropped out, who may potentially drop out, or who have low educational goals. Through modeling, a group of delinquent friends could harm a student's engagement with school and be a factor in their eventual dropping out. The work of Dishion<sup>3</sup> in particular illustrates clearly how modeling by peers, social pressure, and the positive reinforcement of inappropriate behaviour, all contribute to influencing behaviour and increasing delinquent conduct.

Vulnerable youth are easily influenced, and high-risk students are generally more receptive to the models presented by their peers. They are therefore more susceptible to influences coming from their social background and the educational environment. Insufficient or absent family support and supervision may put these youth at a disadvantage. However, time spent with family is a factor that can greatly moderate the effects of these influences, irrespective of their sphere of life.

Some studies also show that family environment, neighbourhood of residence, and social network have an influence on the dropout process. Young people who are part of a group of friends that reject school are much more vulnerable. In such situations, non-conformism becomes the group norm that must be adhered to in order to avoid rejection.

Studies tend to show that the greater involvement parents have in their children's lives, the less they tend to imitate the delinquent behaviour of others.

PARTNERSHIP

TRAINING

### For more information

*L'influence des pairs : un entraînement à la déviance*

[http://rire.ctreq.qc.ca/media/pdf/champs/1221\\_DesbiensAQETA2010Hand-out.pdf](http://rire.ctreq.qc.ca/media/pdf/champs/1221_DesbiensAQETA2010Hand-out.pdf)

*L'impact des loisirs sur la persévérance scolaire*

[http://www.loisirquebec.com/uploads/Biblio\\_perseverance.pdf](http://www.loisirquebec.com/uploads/Biblio_perseverance.pdf)

[1] Youth in Transition Survey: <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4435>.

[2] M. Janosz (2000), L'abandon scolaire chez les adolescents : perspective nord-américaine, *VEI Enjeux*, 122, Sept. 2000.

[3] T. J. Dishion and K. A. Dodge (2006), Deviant peer contagion in interventions and programs: An ecological framework for understanding influence mechanisms. In K. A. Dodge, T. J. Dishion, & J. E. Lansford (Eds.), *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth*. New York: Guilford.

## Taking effective action

At-risk youth need more opportunities to interact with positive and conventional peers, and these interactions must foster the development of friendships. Extracurricular activities are an especially promising opportunity. Access to rich and varied activities open to all students, and especially to those at risk, is a protective factor that acts on students' sense of belonging at school, self-esteem, and in the development of positive social networks.

Participating in extra-curricular activities should be used starting in elementary and continue on into high school. Such activities benefit from being run jointly by schools, cities, and community organizations, with a view toward continuity of services and a holistic approach to dealing with at-risk youth. For these youth in particular, whether the activity takes place at school or in the community, the goal is not so much to enrich the services offered but rather to stimulate the demand for them. Targeted recruitment must be carried out to encourage involvement and participation, such that peer-group leaders are attracted to these activities.

It is vital to implement, both at school and in the family, proactive disciplinary strategies that focus on positive reinforcement, modeling of expected conduct, frequent feedback, and providing the support the youth needs.

It is also essential to focus on positive relationships between youth and adults at school in order to reinforce the quality of adult-youth relations. A good way to do so is to implement mentoring or guidance programs with adults at the school or in the community. Parents must also be encouraged to get involved with their children's schooling, even at a time when youth are trying to distance themselves from their parents. It is also important to target the parents of at-risk students and find ways to maintain a balance between parental supervision and the need for self-affirmation and experimentation that is inherent to adolescence.

Schools, families, and communities must also be especially attentive to the moments and places when youth are likely to engage in at-risk behaviour so that suitable means of early intervention can be undertaken.

Programs exist with a proven track record of training youth to develop what are called "resistance skills," or means of countering negative peer influence. For example, the Keepin' it REAL program was designed to teach kids to resist peer pressure to smoke, drink and use drugs.<sup>1</sup> This program has also shown that the strategies it teaches can be used by youth to avoid other harmful conduct as well.

## Avenues for effective action related to association with peers

### Increase opportunities to interact with positive peers:

- through inclusive activities that strengthen youths' sense of belonging, self-esteem, and feelings of competency and engagement (sports tournaments, improvisation activities, group artwork, graffiti, talent shows or contests, poetry slams, music, dance, cultural and sports outings, outdoor activities, travel, etc.).

Offer varied extracurricular activities that interest youth, including outreach activities to specifically ensure the participation of vulnerable youth.

Identify high-risk locations, moments, and situations to facilitate rapid interventions that offer alternative activities for youth with the purpose of equipping them to better resist negative influences from their peers during these high-risk circumstances.

Build positive partnerships with families, despite the greater distance between parents and children when youth enter high school (look for shared solutions, take complementary action, focus on youths' strengths, etc.).

Establish a positive disciplinary system at home and at school (expectations rather than criticism, consequences of actions on others rather than punishment, emphasis on the benefits, etc.).

### Promote joint school-family-community actions:

- by offering a range of activities attractive to youth (extracurricular activities, access to facilities, etc.),
- by promoting activities that allow youth to develop their social skills in a setting outside of school and the family, while maintaining a connection with them (mentoring, resistance skills training, psychosocial monitoring, etc.).

[1] <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=133>

# Nutrition and physical activity

Children's lifestyle, including nutrition and physical activity, is fundamental to the development of their well-being, self-esteem, personal and social fulfillment, and health; all of these factors are thus closely connected to their success at school. Children who take part in sports generally have a greater attention span at school and better cognitive performance. On the other hand, poor nutrition and a sedentary lifestyle can hinder learning and academic performance.

## What the research says

Many studies have made connections between the development of a healthy lifestyle, student health, and the risk of dropping out. And while health can affect school performance, that performance can, on the other hand, affect the health of some young people.

Researchers in California conducted a large-scale literature review on the links between health and education.<sup>1</sup> They concluded that the links between health and dropping out take three pathways:

1. Physical health problems → Disparities in care and follow-up → Worsening of symptoms → Problems at school (absenteeism, poor grades, etc.) → Dropout
2. Behavioural problems (attention, hyperactivity, nutrition, etc.) → Learning and behavioural problems in elementary school → Learning and behavioural problems in high school (motivation, psychoactive substance use, delinquency, etc.) → Dropout
3. Poor school performance → Risky adolescent behaviour (psychoactive substance use, risky sexual behaviour, etc.) → Associated health conditions (addiction, pregnancy, etc.) → Dropout

Certain factors such as socioeconomic status, education level of mother, literacy level of parents, family income, or single-parenthood are predictors both of the physical and mental health of adolescents and of their performance at school. In general, we can say that health and school problems have a certain number of socioeconomic precursors in common.

Childhood poverty is associated with various health problems (premature birth, intrauterine growth restriction, infant and young child mortality, infectious diseases, chronic diseases, asthma, injury, hospitalization, and developmental and learning problems). Poverty and low socioeconomic status during childhood are also associated with future health problems in adulthood: higher rates of obesity, smoking, adult mortality, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and cognitive problems.

Moreover, the Québec Health Survey of High School Students<sup>2</sup> shows that while 69 percent of youth have a normal weight, 71 percent of them take measures to change it (59 percent try to control or lose weight, while 12 percent try to gain weight). Among those trying to lose or control their weight, 66 percent use potentially dangerous methods (skipping meals, intensive training, cutting sugar and fat, restrictive diets, etc.). This highlights the excessive attention youth pay to their physical appearance, which can eventually lead to nutritional and psychological imbalances and to health problems. Paradoxically, this state of affairs goes along with a less than stellar portrait of youth lifestyle in terms of nutrition and level of physical activity.

## For more information

*Alimentation et poids corporel avant l'entrée à l'école*

<http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/sante/bulletins/zoom-sante-200612.pdf>

[1] J. Breslau (2010), Health in Childhood and Adolescence and High School Dropout, California Dropout Research Project Report #17 March 2010. Downloaded at: <http://www.thrivingstudents.org/sites/default/files/Health%20&%20Dropout%20Report.pdf>

[2] ISQ (2012), Québec Health Survey of High School Students (in French). Downloaded at: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/sante/enfants-ados/alimentation/sante-jeunes-secondaire1.pdf>



## Taking effective action

Because a better health and lifestyle contribute to better school performance and vice versa, the health, education and family services sectors must work together strategically at both the institutional and community levels. Priority interventions should target underprivileged areas and ensure continuity of services, since it has been clearly shown that physical activity in such areas is limited and that nutrition is often poor or inadequate for optimal youth development.<sup>1</sup>

In all cases, however, parents must be involved very early on in the development of a healthy lifestyle among young people, in particular by providing an environment that encourages physical activity and good eating habits.

### Avenues for effective action related to nutrition and physical activity

#### Offer activities that are attractive to both girls and boys:

- by organizing workshops that promote the discovery of healthy foods (cooking activities that feature fruits, vegetables, whole foods, etc.),
- by promoting a diversity of ideas related to body image,
- by promoting healthy behaviours (physical activity, diet, food experiences, balanced portions, etc.);
- to encourage participation in sports (teams, varsity leagues, etc.).

#### Make agreements with various organizations to make it easier to use their facilities or equipment in the community (cities, CEGEPs, universities, etc.):

- to arrange to use and make accessible local facilities (parks, playgrounds, community kitchens, sports and outdoor infrastructure, etc.),
- to encourage youth participation in activities run by organizations that have facilities and equipment (accessibility, low cost, promotion, etc.).

#### Facilitate active transportation by setting up safe pedestrian and bicycle routes.

#### Encourage municipalities to create regulations to limit fast food restaurants and junk food advertising, especially around schools.

#### Promote a healthy lifestyle on both small and large scales:

- to support parents in establishing a healthy lifestyle for their children's success (nutritional variety, healthy diet, balanced portions, regular physical activity, active transportation, good sleep habits, stress management, physical development, etc.),
- by providing environments that foster a healthy lifestyle in youth environments (healthy snacks in child care and daycare centres, healthy food in school cafeterias, sporting activities, safe environments, sports equipment for schoolyards, active transportation, etc.).

[1] N.H. Falkner D. Neumark-Sztainer, M. Story, R. W. Jeffrey, T. Beuhring, and M.D. Resnick (2001), Social, educational, and psychological correlates of weight status in adolescents, *Obesity Research*, 9, 32–42. Downloaded at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11346665>

# Tobacco, alcohol and drugs

Abuse of tobacco, alcohol and drugs can be symptomatic of youth being unhappy at school or in their personal or family lives. In some cases, alcohol and drug use is a strategy to avoid or escape school responsibilities, including the choice of a career. Drug and alcohol use is also harmful to their overall physical and mental development at a time when neither the brain nor the body have completely matured. Drug and alcohol use is also a predictor of dropping out of school, and of society.

## What the research says

In a recent report,<sup>1</sup> the Institut de la statistique du Québec investigated the academic characteristics of youth as related to their introduction to smoking, drinking, and drugs during the transition from elementary school to high school. The report's main findings were:

- family structure and socioeconomic status are associated with early introduction to smoking and drinking;
- living in an underprivileged area is a clear risk factor for drug use;
- smoking, drinking, or taking drugs is associated with a poor sense of belonging to school, poor grades in mathematics, English/French (depending on language of instruction), and lower academic goals;
- the transition from elementary to high school is a key step, characterized by a significant increase in the percentage of youth who are introduced to smoking, drinking, and drugs.

In addition to harming physical and mental health, both in the short and long term, the use of psychoactive substances can affect motivation and grades, which can lead to dropping out of school.<sup>2</sup>

Youth enrolled in the first year of high school are just starting adolescence. This phase of development is characterized by experimentation and the adoption of risky behaviours. This is therefore a vulnerable age group with whom it is preferable to intervene as early as possible to prevent their introduction to psychoactive substances. And while the use of these substances can affect their schooling, poor grades can also influence their use of these substances. For example, some students may interpret their poor grades as a limitation on their goals, and this perception leads them to gradually disengage with school and seek gratification in risky behaviour, in particular the use of tobacco, drugs, or alcohol.

Lower engagement at school can also be amplified by association with delinquent peer groups, who can reinforce risky behaviours. These findings seem to indicate that actions undertaken to promote school achievement may also help to prevent risky behaviours and the use of psychoactive substances among youth.

### For more information

*Keepin' it REAL: Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave*

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=239>

*Programmes de prévention universelle et ciblée de la dépendance chez les jeunes : facteurs prédictifs de l'efficacité*

[http://droguess.whc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/vol9\\_no1\\_3.pdf](http://droguess.whc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/vol9_no1_3.pdf)

*L'usage de substances psychoactives chez les jeunes québécois, meilleures pratiques de prévention*

[http://www.inspq.qc.ca/pdf/publications/1488\\_UsageSubstPsychoactJeunes\\_MeillePratiquesPrev.pdf](http://www.inspq.qc.ca/pdf/publications/1488_UsageSubstPsychoactJeunes_MeillePratiquesPrev.pdf)

[1] V. Nanhouv, A. Ducharme, H. Eid (2013), L'initiation au tabac, à l'alcool et aux drogues : un aperçu lors du passage de la 6<sup>e</sup> année du primaire à la 1<sup>re</sup> année du secondaire, *Portraits et trajectoires*, 16, Feb. 2013, Institut de la statistique du Québec.

[2] H. Gagnon and L. Rochefort (2010), *L'usage de substances psychoactives chez les jeunes Québécois : conséquences et facteurs associés*, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, July 2010, publication no. 1102, 43 p.

## Taking effective action

Even if they do not specifically address the issue of substance use, prevention programs that are put in place as early as preschool can be effective in tackling certain risk factors associated with tobacco, drug, or alcohol use by promoting self-control and the development of social and cognitive skills. It is preferable to focus on getting young people to develop healthy life habits rather than to merely convey information about psychoactive substances or to warn youth about social pressures for using them.

According to some studies,<sup>1</sup> universal prevention programs for youth require a minimum intensity of 45 to 60 minutes per week for 10 weeks. Various refresher programs in subsequent years have proven to be most effective. It is also preferable that programs be designed based on participant age and their level of drug or alcohol use.

Next, it is essential that youth have access to a range of support services throughout their schooling, in particular to prevent and detect problems, and to quickly intervene both at a psychosocial level and at a school learning level, with priority going to implementing services in underprivileged areas and among youth transitioning from elementary to high school.

In some cases, it may be necessary to offer direct services, both for targeted youth and for their friends and family, so that these are able to later provide support at the right time. Whether it be to assist with prevention or to intervene directly, it is important to take action on risk factors related to the use of psychoactive substances, for example, by intervening at the level of cultural background, on substance abuse by peers, or on the family environment.

Again, the family plays a vital role here. Working with families is a key to intervening in coherent and in complementary ways.

Parents must be encouraged to take part in prevention. Parents' monitoring of their children's behaviour and developing a harmonious relationship with them are directly related to reduced drug and alcohol use among adolescents.

## Avenues for effective action related to tobacco, alcohol and drugs

**Implement universal intensive prevention activities, especially at school, where ALL students can be reached:**

- to take action with 11–12-year-olds from underprivileged areas transitioning from elementary to high school;
- to promote links between different networks and organizations by making services available for vulnerable or exposed youth (health, social services, education, justice, etc.);
- by organizing prevention activities for youth, their friends, and families that focus on developing a healthy lifestyle rather than on the effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs;
- to guide parents in supporting their children (good family communications, emphasis on children's strengths, provision of supervision and limit-setting, development of an open and positive relationship, etc.).

**Implement targeted prevention activities with the support of qualified personnel:**

- to reach groups who are more highly exposed to psychoactive substance use (street workers, psychosocial follow-up, etc.),
- to reach youth of similar age groups whose substance use is about the same level, and to take specific action with them (interests, problems, goals, etc.),
- to provide meaningful models that youth can identify with (mentor, facilitator, employer or boss, street worker, community worker, etc.).

[1] National Institute on Drug Abuse (2003), *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents*, U.S. National Institutes of Health, 2003. Downloaded at: [http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/preventingdruguse\\_2.pdf](http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/preventingdruguse_2.pdf)

# School/work balance

Finding a balance between school and work schedules is a reality for an increasing number of young people. On one hand, working while going to school can give students valuable experience in the job market, help them set their educational and professional goals, gain skills, and develop both autonomy and a sense of responsibility. For some young people, working is the only means for them to access post-secondary studies. On the other hand, for more vulnerable students, having an overly full schedule can lead to other dropout risk factors. This is especially true at certain times of the year when increased demands at school (e.g., final exam period) coincide with employers' needing more staff (e.g., the holiday season for businesses, the start and end of summer for the tourism sector).

## What the research says

According to a report by the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*,<sup>1</sup> a higher percentage of Quebec students hold paid jobs during the school year than students in the rest of Canada. They also tend to work more hours. In the early 2000s, 40 percent of full-time Quebec students aged 15–24 also had a paid job. This high rate of employment translates into nearly 15 hours of work per week—nearly an hour more than students in other provinces. About half of these students work 15 hours per week or more, a significant increase over previous decades. The report also showed that six percent of youth aged 15–19 worked over 25 hours per week, and this percentage rises to 14 percent among 20–24-year-olds.

Given that the rate of school perseverance and qualification in Quebec is lower than the Canadian average, it seems natural to ask whether having a job negatively affects the school performance of students at or returning to school. Laberge<sup>2</sup> posits that it is the accumulation of various non-school activities (work, leisure, social, etc.), rather than the total number of hours worked, that leads young people to spend less time on their studies, which in turn leads to poorer grades and lower school engagement.

### Students who work long hours stand out from other students in various ways:<sup>3</sup>

- get poorer grades
- have little hope of graduating or attending college or university
- come from less advantaged areas
- are under-represented in higher education preparation programs
- do poorer on standardized tests

Overall, studies indicate that the negative effects of paid work is lower on students who work less than 15 hours per week than on those who do not work. In other words, students who work a little less than 15 hours per week get better grades and drop out less than those who do not work at all. However, for students who work more than 15 hours, the negative effect is higher than that observed in students who do not work, and the negative effect increases for students working over 30 hours per week.

These findings should be interpreted with care, however. If working can negatively impact school performance, it is also possible that the decision to get a job is motivated by a lack of interest in school and poor grades. One US study of 1800 high school students<sup>4</sup> shows that students who work long hours, either by choice or out of necessity, were less engaged in their studies and less interested in school even before they started working. Thus, while paid work can affect school engagement, school engagement can also influence the decision to get a job.

### For more information

Réseau des instances régionales de concertation (IRC), Chantier national conciliation travail-études  
<http://www.perseverancescolaire.com/en/travail-etude/>  
 Travail pendant les études, la performance scolaire et l'abandon  
<http://www.cirano.qc.ca/pdf/publication/99s-41.pdf>

[1] M.-A. Gauthier, M. P. Labrie (2013), Le travail rémunéré chez les étudiants québécois. *Coup d'œil sociodémographique*, 23, Institut de la statistique du Québec, February 2013. Downloaded at: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/population-demographie/bulletins/coupdœil-no23.pdf>

[2] L. Laberge (2012), Effets du cumul d'activités et de contraintes de travail sur la SST des jeunes travailleurs aux études, Presentation of research, Écobs group. Downloaded at: <http://www.irsst.qc.ca/-webtv-contraintes-travail-SST-jeunes-travailleurs-etudes.html>

[3] L. D. Steinberg, S. Fegley, S. M. Dornbusch (1993), Negative Impact of Part-Time Work on Adolescent Adjustment: Evidence From a Longitudinal Study, *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 171–180.

[4] J.-R. Warren, P.-C. LePore and R.-D. Mare (2000), *Employment During High School: Consequences for Students' Grades in Academic Courses*, Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences University of Washington.

## Taking effective action

Action to promote school/work balance in order to improve school perseverance can involve more than simply adjusting work hours. The current social consensus is that it is important to limit the negative effects of paid work on student success. With this in mind, the school/work balance awareness campaigns that are occurring in most regions of Quebec are necessary.

On the other hand, these programs must encompass all of the issues related to working students and not simply the adaptation of work schedules and work hours during school. Researchers have studied the links between school success and paid work; what emerges is that it is also important to tackle the reasons why some students may want to find jobs and spend long hours working, such as poor marks, low educational and career goals, or a tendency toward overconsumption.

### Avenues for effective action related to school/work balance

Make sure the school is a vibrant place to be (e.g., student life, extracurricular activities, one-day internships, possibility of paid work at the school).

Engage staff in charge of educational and career guidance in school/work balance activities (e.g., guidance-oriented approach, internships, mentoring).

Raise awareness among school staff about the importance of students' career aspirations as well as paid work, and incorporate these important considerations into their educational plans.

Raise awareness among parents of their role in school/work balance, and assist them in fulfilling this role (e.g., course schedule; time spent on school work, at work, and in leisure activities; consumption; career goals, expectations related to school, work and family).

Raise awareness among parents about the importance of promoting and valuing education, and of not focusing solely on the financial aspects of the student job.

Heighten employer and community responsibility as partners in student success (e.g., flexibility of work hours, adaptation of job responsibilities, recognition of students' academic records, giving messages that support school perseverance, sponsorships, mentoring).

Offer students training and awareness activities (e.g., priority management, time management, stress management, budget management, consumer habits).



# Feelings of depression

Throughout their development, young people may encounter various troublesome events that can affect one aspect of their lives or another, such as repeated academic failures, romantic breakups, rejection by peers, difficult family circumstances (e.g., economic instability, divorce of parents, loss of a relative). Depending on a youth's resilience and whether or not they are equipped to adapt and solve problems, such events can lead to episodes of depression of varying intensity. In addition, the structural effects on brain development, as well as mental health problems including depression, can affect a young person's motivation at school and, as a result, their school perseverance.

## What the research says

A longitudinal study conducted by a research team at CRIRES in three regions of Quebec identified depression as the second-most important variable in predicting dropout in the first year of high school, just after poor grades in mathematics and French.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is estimated that about 16 percent of Quebec high school students of all grades—10 percent of boys and up to 25 percent of girls—have symptoms of depression that are intense and frequent enough to warrant intervention.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike youth with behavioural problems, young people with depression are less disruptive and attract less attention from teachers and other interveners/practitioners.

Because they are less disruptive than hyperactive students or those who have behavioural problems, youth suffering from depression often go unnoticed at school. Among the risk factors mentioned in the research are age, gender, socioeconomic status, family history of depression, mental health problems among parents, conjugal conflicts, divorce of parents, stressful life events, despair, cognitive distortion (e.g., dramatization, overgeneralization, negativity), attributional style (causes attributed to events), low self-esteem, and poor grades.<sup>3,4</sup>

Some individual characteristics have also been identified as factors that protect against depression. Those most often listed are good grades, motivation, feelings of personal and social competence, and positive relationships with adults outside the family. These are more related to depression than other protective factors such as positive body image, intellectual competence, popularity, and presence of adequate social support.<sup>5</sup>

RESULTS

### For more information

#### Depression in young people

<http://www.douglas.qc.ca/info/depression-jeunes?locale=en>

#### Children, youth and depression

[http://www.cmha.ca/mental\\_health/children-and-depression](http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/children-and-depression)

[1] L. Fortin, D. Marcotte, P. Potvin, E. Royer (1996–2007), *Étude longitudinale sur la persévérance et le décrochage scolaire*.

[2] D. Marcotte (2000), La prévention de la dépression chez les enfants et les adolescents. In F. Vitaro and C. Gagnon (Eds.), *Prévention des problèmes d'adaptation chez les jeunes* (Vol. 1) 221–270, Quebec City: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

[3] M. Windle and P. Davies (1999), Depression and heavy alcohol use among adolescents: Concurrent and prospective relations, *Development and Psychopathology*, 11, 823–844. Downloaded at:

[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/12689021\\_Depression\\_and\\_heavy\\_alcohol\\_use\\_among\\_adolescents\\_Concurrent\\_and\\_prospective\\_relations](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/12689021_Depression_and_heavy_alcohol_use_among_adolescents_Concurrent_and_prospective_relations)

[4] K. R. Merikangas and J. Angst J. (1995), Comorbidity and social phobia: evidence from clinical, epidemiologic and genetic studies, *Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 244, 297–303.

[5] Ibid.

## Taking effective action

Feelings of depression manifest themselves first by poor motivation at school, feelings of low personal competence, and poor grades. To take action on feelings of depression, and ultimately on the student's school perseverance, one must consequently take action on these "intermediaries."<sup>1</sup>

Given the difficulty in effectively identifying depressed adolescents in school and the high dropout rate of these students, two types of priority action can be considered. First, implement systematic screening mechanisms and ensure good information flow between partners and front-line workers. Then roll out accessible and effective intervention programs, especially those that make use of cognitive behavioural therapies, meaning interventions based on practical exercises that focus on the observed behaviours.

Schools and the community should also undertake universal prevention measures to ensure that the primary protective factors are preventing depression and are promoting the mental health and well-being of youth and their feelings of personal and social competence. While some of these measures can take place directly in schools, many of them can also take place through community and institutional partnerships.

### Avenues for effective action related to feelings of depression

#### Organize universal prevention activities for ALL youth, especially among adolescents:

- to promote dialogue about the issue of depression,
- to reduce isolation and demystify the topic,
- to promote youth mental health and well-being,
- to inform youth about the issue and make them aware of resources and emergency services they can use for themselves or a peer,
- to encourage youth participation in activities with peers while enhancing protective factors (e.g., motivating their interest, building on their strengths and skills),
- to support families in guiding youth, in particular by creating positive and rewarding relationships.

#### Organize targeted interventions for vulnerable youth by partnering with organizations in various networks:

- to implement systematic screening and intervention mechanisms for targeted youth (e.g., screening applications, individualized monitoring programs),
- to ensure good information flow between partners and various stakeholders working with young people and their families,
- to build positive connections with families in order to determine the best ways to intervene with troubled youth,
- to offer specialized services to youth in need (e.g., social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists).

[1] C. Quiroga, M. Janosz, S. Bisset, and A. Morin (2013), Early Adolescent Depression Symptoms and School Dropout, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(2) 552–560.

# Self-esteem

Self-esteem is one's awareness of one's own worth in various areas. It also implies recognition of both one's strengths and one's weaknesses and personal limitations. Youth gain awareness of their worth through interactions with their parents, friends, teachers, and other significant adults. Young people who are confident in their skills and abilities will not hesitate to engage and persevere in learning activities. On the other hand, youth who have difficulties, encounter failure, and lose confidence in their abilities may avoid engaging in schoolwork in order to protect themselves and maintain a positive self-image.

## What the research says

Self-esteem, also called one's "self-concept," is not considered either a positive or negative factor in school performance. Rather, it is seen as a reflection of previous successes and failures at school. It is therefore unlikely that by trying to increase a young person's self-esteem, one will directly improve the student's academic results. However, it is almost certain that if the way is opened for students to get better grades, their self-esteem will improve.

Self-concept is multi-faceted. Researchers<sup>1</sup> agree that it is preferable to consider self-concept that is specific to certain areas of activity rather than a general self-concept. A young person may have a very positive social or professional self-concept but have a negative scholastic self-concept. And it is this scholastic self-concept that is most closely related to school performance. In order to help more young people stay in school and succeed, it is therefore more effective to take action on scholastic self-concept than on overall self-esteem.

On the other hand, Martinot<sup>2</sup> asserts that self-concept is closely related to self-awareness and that good self-awareness makes it easier to set realistic goals that are less likely to end in failure. In addition, positive self-concept, regardless of whether it is scholastic, professional, or social, fosters physical and mental health. Thus, because they affect motivation and one's sense of capability and adaptability, having numerous successful self-concepts is a favourable condition for perseverance and effort at school.

In short, acting on self-esteem and on overall self-concept will not directly affect school perseverance and success but will positively reinforce factors of success, which subsequently contribute to young people's success by allowing them to develop a sense of capability in difficult situations and to have confidence in their abilities, while at the same time protecting against depression.

Self-esteem → Motivation → Engagement and effort → Feeling of capability

Physical and mental well-being

### For more information

*Les enfants et l'estime de soi*

[http://www.cmha.ca/fr/mental\\_health/les-enfants-et-lestime-de-soi/](http://www.cmha.ca/fr/mental_health/les-enfants-et-lestime-de-soi/)

*L'estime de soi chez l'enfant*

[http://naitreetgrandir.com/fr/etape/1\\_3\\_ans/comportement/fiche.aspx?doc=ik-naitre-grandir-comment-batir-confiance-estime-de-soi-enfant](http://naitreetgrandir.com/fr/etape/1_3_ans/comportement/fiche.aspx?doc=ik-naitre-grandir-comment-batir-confiance-estime-de-soi-enfant)

[1] J.-A. Gueyoud and C. Dessa (1998), La configuration des corrélations entre le concept de soi et le rendement scolaire : une méta-analyse, *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, 24(2) 299–332. Downloaded at: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/rse/1998/v24/n2/502013ar.pdf>

[2] D. Martinot (2001), Connaissance de soi et estime de soi : ingrédients pour la réussite scolaire, *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, 27(3) 483–502. Downloaded at: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/rse/2001/v27/n3/009961ar.pdf>

## Taking effective action

To improve young people's scholastic self-concept, then, one must prioritize actions that help them experience success at school. All efforts must converge towards this goal. Obviously, the most direct way to achieve this is to act on the pedagogical approaches used in class and on student-teacher relations.

A recent study conducted in the Estrie region indicates that focusing special attention on a school's pedagogical practices and on following up on results with students contributes the most to reducing failure rates.<sup>1</sup> Implementing and maintaining a harmonious, safe, and respectful environment for students also contributes to improving their grades.

Given that to intervene more effectively on overall self-concept, and to help youth develop numerous self-concepts associated with success, it would appear to be equally important to involve parents on a daily basis, since self-esteem is useful in all areas of a student's life.

### Avenues for effective action related to self-esteem

#### Guide parents in fostering the development of their child's self-esteem:

- to establish clear rules and expectations that allow children to experience success at home and at school (logical consequences rather than punishments, expectations rather than criticism, etc.);
- to promote conflict-management based on openness, empathy, and expression of emotions;
- to implement activities that stimulate and develop academic skills (help with homework, vocabulary development, talking about subjects brought up in class, etc.);
- to create harmonious relationships with children (positive reinforcement, listening, validation of the child's strengths, respect, acceptance of mistakes, means and strategies, etc.);
- to prepare children for difficulties and transitions by helping them find ways to minimize stress and anxiety, to find solutions, and to make choices (possible choices, pros and cons, trial and error, etc.);
- to help children set goals and make the effort required to achieve them (realistic goals, steps toward achieving them, finishing a project, etc.);
- to lead children toward autonomy (encouraging them to try things, allowing them to do things imperfectly, etc.).

#### Implement activities outside the school that promote student success at school:

- to allow them to do their homework (mentoring, homework help, remediation, etc.);
- to give them a chance to take part in hands-on motivating projects related to a school subject (newspaper, model, film, cooking, recipe book, etc.);
- to establish clear rules and expectations that allow children to experience success (logical consequences rather than punishments, expectations rather than criticism, etc.);
- to allow youth to feel a sense of worth before their peers by putting their skills, expertise, and strengths to good use;
- to allow youth to develop a sense of belonging at school and positive friendships (extracurricular activities, shows, contests, fieldtrips, travel, etc.);
- to build harmonious relationships between youth and adults at school (positive reinforcement, listening, respect, etc.);
- to promote conflict management based on listening and empathy.

[1] P. Colletette, D. Pelletier, and G. Turcotte (2013), *Relations entre les pratiques de gestion des directions d'écoles secondaires et les résultats des élèves*. Study funded by the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation in research by the Université de Sherbrooke, Chaire de recherche de la Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke sur la réussite et la persévérance des élèves.

# School performance in reading, writing and mathematics

School performance in reading, writing and mathematics is another determinant of school perseverance. The Youth in Transition Survey<sup>1</sup> reveals that dropouts get lower scores than high school graduates, especially in their ability to understand, use, and analyze written texts. Given that reading and writing are essential for learning all subjects, including mathematics, difficulty in reading and writing is not without consequence on young people's performance in all subjects and on the continuation of their studies. In fact, passing language arts and mathematics is a condition of the Quebec high school curriculum for obtaining a diploma.

## What the research says

Numerous studies on the dropout issue show close ties between poor grades and the likelihood of dropping out. The authors of a recent report based on the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development maintain that having reading problems at age 7 is a reliable predictor of dropping out.<sup>2</sup> Difficulties in French (reading and writing) appear to be as important a risk factor as socioeconomic status. However, paradoxically, logical and mathematical skills measured at age 4 are a good predictor of mastery of reading and mathematics in grade 4.


Janosz<sup>3</sup> developed a classification for dropouts that group them into four types: maladjusted, quiet, disengaged, and low-achievers. According to Janosz, maladjusted dropouts represent 40 percent of all dropouts. Their academic and psychosocial profiles are very negative, both in terms of grades and behavioural problems. They also get less family support. Behaviours of maladjusted dropouts are characterized by indifference, negativity, absenteeism, and drug and alcohol consumption.

Quiet dropouts also represent 40 percent of all dropouts. They like school, feel engaged and have no behavioural problems. However, they get low grades and often have had learning problems since elementary school.

Disengaged dropouts represent 10 percent of dropouts. They get average grades and have no behavioural problems, but they say they are disengaged with their education and do not like school.

Finally, low-achievers are very similar to quiet dropouts and represent 10 percent of dropouts. They have no behavioural problems but struggle with learning disabilities and say they are very disengaged with school. They are simply waiting for school to be over.

In short, dropouts differ from each other in whether they have behavioural problems in addition to their academic problems. In fact, 90 percent of dropouts get poor grades, and for about half of them, their academic difficulties could be one of the factors that trigger the dropout process.



To foster school perseverance and prevent dropout, one must concentrate on reading, writing and mathematics, while focusing on student engagement at school. This is true from kindergarten through high school, with even greater intensity during transition years, in particular during the switch from elementary to high school.

## For more information

Recension des écrits scientifiques sur la littératie familiale et communautaire

[http://www.crie.ca/recherches/Documents/Beauregard\\_Carignan\\_MELS\\_litteratie\\_familiale.pdf](http://www.crie.ca/recherches/Documents/Beauregard_Carignan_MELS_litteratie_familiale.pdf)

[1] Description of the Youth in Transition Survey: <http://www.pisa.gc.ca/eng/yits.shtml>

[2] M. Janosz, S. Pascal, L. Belleau, I. Archambault, S. Parent, and L. Pagani (2013), Les élèves du primaire à risque de décrocher au secondaire : caractéristiques à 12 ans et prédicteurs à 7 ans, Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Downloaded at: <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/education/frequentation-scolaire/dcrochage.pdf>

[3] M. Janosz (2000), L'abandon scolaire chez les adolescents : perspective nord-américaine, *VEI Enjeux*, 122, Sept 2000. Downloaded at: <http://www2.cndp.fr/revueVEI/122/10512711.pdf>



## Taking effective action

Given the foregoing, it is vital to intervene before youth encounter these difficulties, especially difficulties in reading and mathematics. Quick action must be taken to reduce the gap between good and poor readers because this gap tends to get wider over time and affect all school subjects. From an academic standpoint, effective, evidence-based programs can significantly reduce the number of at-risk students in terms of reading proficiency from kindergarten through high school.

More broadly, implementing family literacy programs in the community can also develop and promote reading proficiency among children. Such programs improve and enhance family literacy practices and parent-child interactions related to written language.

### Avenues for effective action related to performance in reading, writing and mathematics

**Establish emergent literacy programs in day- and child-care centres.**

**Mobilize families and the community to put in place literacy, numeracy, and academic support activities:**

- to guide parents in helping their children with school work (offering courses to develop parenting skills, offering occasional workshops, providing reading material, giving advice on how to encourage children or on how to support them without doing things for them, etc.);
- to organize literacy and numeracy activities in the community (parent-child reading circles, reading activities with the elderly, etc.);
- to organize events that promote books, writing, and mathematics (book festival, story hour, science fair, poetry contest or slam, etc.);
- to organize reading activities at vaccination clinics, public celebrations, or any other event involving young children;
- to ensure continuity between school and family in order to encourage learning;
- to quickly identify children at risk for low reading proficiency and act immediately by offering supplementary activities, in partnership with the family (preschool screening and stimulation camp, remediation, peer-based support groups, specialized intervention, etc.);
- to quickly identify school engagement and motivation problems and provide support;
- to carry out literacy and numeracy promotion campaigns, in collaboration with parents and community partners;
- to implement homework help and tutoring services;
- to build ties between families and schools by paying special attention to families from underprivileged areas, immigrant families, or at-risk youth (sponsorship, pairing, etc.);
- to continuously monitor students' grades and data on attendance, punctuality, and discipline;
- to organize events that celebrate effort and achievements;
- to encourage parental engagement in academic achievement by involving them in various transitions (kindergarten-elementary, elementary-high school, etc.).

# Motivation and engagement

Students who are motivated by what they learn at school engage naturally in the classroom activities and tasks they are assigned. They participate actively in class (e.g., taking notes, speaking, participating in group work), do the assignments and homework teachers give them, spend time on learning activities, and put enough effort into their work to succeed. This investment is necessary to learn, succeed, and graduate. However, students who lack motivation tend to adopt behaviours that are incompatible with learning and success at school, behaviours such as passiveness, lack of effort, and rushed work, which can compromise their schooling.

## What the research says

Studies on motivation and self-concept have clearly shown that these two factors are linked to success in school. In her research, Bouffard showed that a sense of self-efficacy, strongly associated with motivation, is the top determinant of academic performance, above even intellect.<sup>1</sup> Students' perceptions of their control and abilities are the most powerful determinants of success in school.

Most researchers today believe that students' most important sources of motivation are rooted in their perception of their ability to carry out an activity and their own control over how it is carried out.

In his book on motivation at school, Viau states that motivation is a dynamic concept that has its origins in students' perception of themselves and their environment, one that induces them to select an activity, engage in it, and work at it until the end goal has been reached.<sup>2</sup> While motivation is one of the most determinant factors in school success, it is also sensitive to environmental conditions and tends to decline as students progress through the education system. The move from elementary to high school is the most difficult transition, and this is when the decline in motivation appears most prominent.

Data collected from about 5,000 elementary and high school students by Bouffard's research team show that as students get older, their sense of self-efficacy declines and becomes a better predictor of school performance than their actual potential.<sup>3</sup>

## For more information

### Motivation, Support and Evaluation

[http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/PSG/recherche\\_evaluation/MotivationSoutienEvaluation\\_ClesReussteEleves\\_a.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/recherche_evaluation/MotivationSoutienEvaluation_ClesReussteEleves_a.pdf)

### Motivation scolaire

<http://rire.ctreq.qc.ca/thematiques/motivation-scolaire/>

[1] La Clé de la Motivation Scolaire, a report featuring Ms. Bouffard in the Télé-Québec program *Le Code Chastenay*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsXIXkBJzIA>.

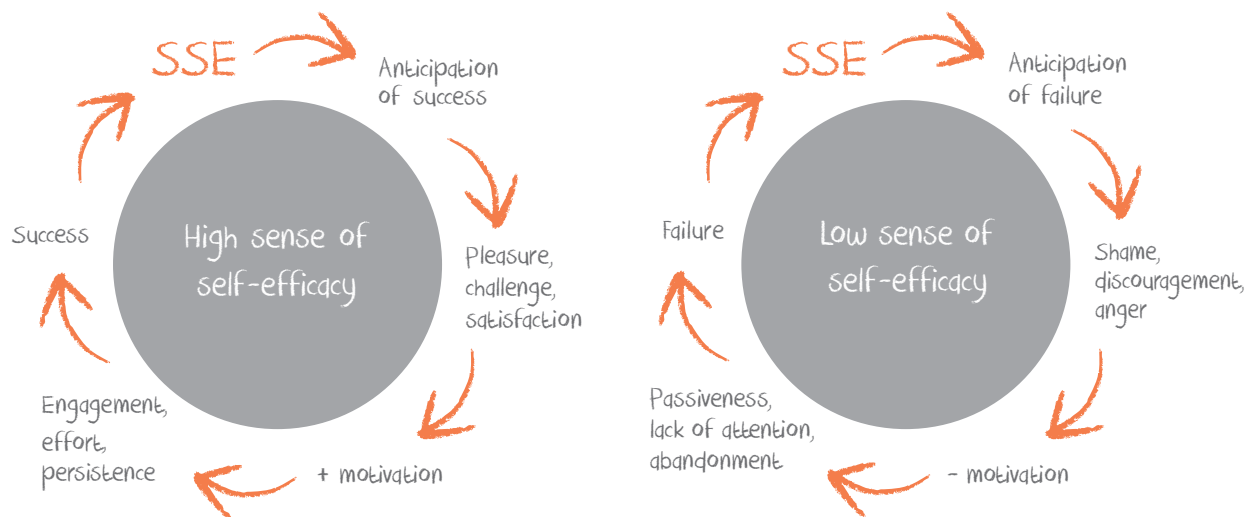
[2] R. Viau (1994), *La motivation en contexte scolaire*, Montréal: Éditions du Renouveau Pédagogique.

[3] T. Bouffard, M. Brodeur and C. Vezeau (2005), *La motivation des élèves au primaire : un élément essentiel de la réussite scolaire*, research data, SQRSC. Downloaded at: [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/PSG/recherche\\_evaluation/prprsFiche1.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/recherche_evaluation/prprsFiche1.pdf)

## Taking effective action

Motivation is related to anticipation. Students anticipate the success or failure of an action; they set goals and find means of achieving things that hold value for them. Students are more interested and show greater engagement if the action is meaningful and offers a challenge while still being achievable. Motivation and behaviour regulation thus stem from a perception of the future; in other words, you are more likely to succeed if you believe you can succeed. So it is vital that parents and people working with youth believe that students can succeed and provide activities that are compatible with their abilities.

### SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY (SSE)<sup>1</sup>



Studies of parental attitudes that promote student motivation for school have primarily concluded that the best way for parents to motivate their children is to have high but realistic expectations and demands, believe in their abilities, create a climate of support and human warmth, and be models of learning by creating situations that allow their children to watch them learn. Verbal and non-verbal cues that may seem inconsequential, such as making disparaging remarks about their children's abilities or about the school and its teachers, can have negative consequences on children's motivation.

## Avenues for effective action related to motivation and engagement

### Put in place activities that guide parents in supporting their children's motivation:

- to foster the continuation or development of meaningful relationships with adults at home,
- to help youth set motivational goals and objectives and to encourage their efforts by maintaining high expectations (steps to take, adaptation of goals, choices, etc.),
- to provide positive and regular feedback on young people's performance and achievements (reinforcement, praise, encouragement, etc.).

### Implement screening and support programs at school and in the community that focus on student motivation:

- to ensure that youth who lack in motivation are individually monitored ("hall workers", brainstorming or orientation workshops, etc.),
- to promote the development of meaningful relationships with adults at the school and in the community and with peers (tutoring, mentoring, pairing, employers, etc.),
- to organize activities that youth find attractive and that offer them realistic challenges (contests, artistic presentations, sports, creative activities, extracurricular activities, recognition events, hands-on projects, etc.).

[1] Presentation by Thérèse Bouffard (2010–2011), *Le sentiment d'efficacité de l'élève*: [http://www.crevale.org/upload/File/2011-12/CREVALE\\_2010-11\\_TBouffard.PDF](http://www.crevale.org/upload/File/2011-12/CREVALE_2010-11_TBouffard.PDF)

# Educational and career aspirations

School perseverance is highly influenced by students' educational and career aspirations. Students who have well-defined educational and career goals find the motivation they need to stick with their studies. Setting such goals is often related to students' self-perception of their cognitive abilities (ease of learning, satisfaction with grades, considering oneself as smart as anyone else, etc.), to the effort they put into their studies, to their prior school record (successes or failures), and to the education level of their parents. Students who do not set specific educational and career goals are more likely to change programs or abandon their studies. This is why it is important to help students gain better self-awareness and set educational and career goals for themselves.

## What the research says

In general, research has indicated that a number of factors influence how young people set educational and career aspirations. These include family history, socioeconomic background, place of residence, school grades, self-perception of cognitive abilities, family debt, and peer influence. Each of these factors could be the target of specific interventions. However, it is also possible to take a broader approach to acting on youth aspirations. It should be pointed out that everyone in a young person's life—from their friends to any significant adult they encounter (whether or not they are family members)—can contribute to nourishing their educational and career aspirations.

### A few facts about the aspirations of Canadian youth for higher learning

- Girls do better at school than boys and have higher educational goals.
- Parental encouragement has more influence on young people's plans than their socioeconomic status.
- Young people going to school in small communities (rural as opposed to urban areas) have lower aspirations.
- Grades have a significant effect on students' educational plans and on the efforts they put into their studies.

However, the decision to stay in school is greatly influenced by students' self-perception of their academic ability. The feeling of competency is a basic psychological need that allows a person to rise to challenges. Because people tend to undertake activities at which they feel they can succeed, and to avoid those at which they expect to fail, their choices in life often depend on their own perception of their abilities.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not a student has repeated a year, their academic results, and the program they are in are all indicators that help evaluate their predisposition for educational success. These indicators are decisive, in that they have direct effects on the youth's educational and career aspirations.

Numerous studies show that these factors are among the most significant determinants of high educational aims and enrolment in post-secondary studies. A study conducted by the ÉCOBES group<sup>2</sup> showed that the most important obstacle to educational aspirations was difficulty doing schoolwork (56%), while boredom and lack of interest was in second place (22%). A Canada-wide study<sup>3</sup> of 29,687 youth born in 1984, based on data from the Youth in Transition Survey<sup>4</sup> and the Programme for International Student Assessment<sup>5</sup> drew similar conclusions about the influence of grades and experiences at school on the development of aspirations.

### For more information

*L'influence des aspirations scolaires sur l'accès aux études postsecondaires*

[http://www.cirst.uqam.ca/Portals/0/docs/projet\\_transitions/Capsule\\_Note5.pdf](http://www.cirst.uqam.ca/Portals/0/docs/projet_transitions/Capsule_Note5.pdf)

[1] A. Bandura (1986), *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

[2] Groupe ÉCOBES (2010), *Comprendre les aspirations, les habiletés cognitives et l'engagement scolaire des jeunes des Laurentides*. Downloaded at: [http://www.prel.gc.ca/files\\_a-propos/05\\_Comprendre\\_les\\_aspirations.pdf](http://www.prel.gc.ca/files_a-propos/05_Comprendre_les_aspirations.pdf)

[3] D. Looker and V. Thiessen (2004), *Aspirations of Canadian youth for higher education*, Learning Policy Directorate, Strategic Policy and Planning, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Downloaded at: <http://www.pisa.gc.ca/eng/pdf/SP-600-05-04E.pdf>

[4] Youth in Transition Survey: <http://www.pisa.gc.ca/eng/yits.shtml>

[5] Programme for International Student Assessment: <http://www.pisa.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml>

## Taking effective action

Certain observations thus pave the way for courses of intervention that improve school performance by emphasizing the role of parental encouragement, extracurricular activities, students' sense of belonging at school, their sense of self-efficacy, and their living environment.

For instance, it has been observed that parents play an important role in developing their children's educational aspirations, regardless of their socioeconomic situation. This is likely due to the clear messages they send to their children about the importance of education as well as to the encouragement they provide during their children's school years.

One may assume that other types of encouragement could have a similar effect. In other words, children who do not receive encouragement at home may be urged by other significant people in their lives to continue their education. The fact that young people whose peers are more focused on their studies tend to have higher educational goals lends support to this argument. The same goes for youth who are surrounded by models of success.

### Avenues for effective action related to educational and career aspirations

#### Put in place activities that guide parents in encouraging their children to develop and pursue educational and career aspirations:

- to act as role models at home (finishing tasks, valuing education, setting goals, persevering, finding solutions to problems, etc.),
- to help youth identify their aspirations (goals, possible choices, exploration, discussions, etc.),
- to promote success and motivation at school (help with and interest in school work and extracurricular activities),
- to foster mastery of reading in particular (literacy activities from early childhood, fun reading activities, etc.).

#### Put in place youth mentoring and guidance activities (tutoring, mentoring, pairing, sponsoring, buddying, etc.):

- to provide positive role models for youth,
- to give youth a chance to talk about their problems and find acceptable solutions,
- to provide a source of encouragement to youth both inside and outside the family,
- to promote career exploration, especially for students at risk of dropping out,
- to explore options for the future and their respective requirements (degrees, careers, prerequisites, registration, programs, etc.).

#### Put in place activities for vulnerable youth

- to provide guidance for youth who lack motivation at school (individualized follow up, brainstorming workshops, etc.);
- to promote the development of meaningful and positive relationships with adults at school, in the community, and with peers;
- to get youth interested in improving their skills, especially with their scholastic abilities and their sense of belonging at school (contests, artistic presentations, sports, creative activities, various extracurricular activities, recognition events, social activities, hands-on projects, etc.).



# Student-teacher relationship

Just like parents, teachers are significant adults in young people's lives. The quality of a student-teacher relationship has a powerful influence on students' success at school, one that is sometimes underestimated by teachers. Students must feel a certain level of safety and well-being in order to engage in the intellectual endeavour of learning, and teachers can contribute to this by way of warm and positive interactions. Teachers also have a major impact on students' self-perception of their abilities, on their engagement at school, on the value they place on school subjects, on their expectations of success, and on their performance at school. The student-teacher relationship is even more important for students exposed to a number of risk factors for dropping out. Conflicts with teachers are often cited by dropouts as a reason for leaving school.

## What the research says

Researchers are unanimous in ascribing an impact of student-teacher relationship on school perseverance and success, in particular for at-risk students. The student-teacher relationship is especially important for children with behavioural or learning problems. It has been shown that establishing meaningful relationships with adults outside the family at a very early age allows more vulnerable children to learn social and behavioural skills necessary to develop and remain in school.<sup>1</sup>

Students with behavioural problems show a better ability to adapt and get better grades if they have experienced positive relationships with their teachers upon starting school.

As part of the Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD), the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* revealed that students from disadvantaged environments who have favourable and helpful relationships with their teachers early on in their schooling have a more positive view of school.<sup>2</sup>

A good student-teacher relationship is also an important protection factor during periods of school transition, whether upon entering school, from preschool to elementary, or from elementary to high school.<sup>3</sup> Data from a longitudinal study in the US also indicate that high school students who form meaningful relationships

with their teachers have lower rates of psychological distress, suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts, violent behaviour, drug use, and risky sexual behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, when youth do not have meaningful relationships, at-risk students are particularly susceptible to these negative behaviours.

The QLSCD also sheds light on how student-teacher relationships change over time. It shows that while 68 percent of kindergarten teachers feel they have a close and warm relationship with the young children, this rate drops to 47 percent by grade 4 for the same students. Similarly, the percentage of students who say they like their teacher drops from 89 to 75 percent between grade 1 and grade 4.

## For more information

*Persévérance ou décrochage : que deviennent des élèves de maternelle 12 ans plus tard ?*  
<http://www.pierrepotvin.com/6.%20Publications/AQETA%20AAnime%20190309FIN-DL.ppt>

[1] K. Hamre and C. Pianta (2006), *Student-Teacher Relationships*. Downloaded at: <http://www.pearweb.org/conferences/sixth/pdfs/NAS-CBIII-05-1001-005-hamre%208%20Pianta%20proof.pdf>

[2] H. Desrosiers, C. Japel, P. R. P. Singh, and K. Tétreault (2012), *La relation enseignante-élève positive : ses liens avec les caractéristiques des enfants et la réussite scolaire au primaire*. Je suis, je serai, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 6(2), June 2012. Downloaded at: [http://www.jesuisjeserai.stat.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/publications/feuille/ELDEQ\\_fasc6no2.pdf](http://www.jesuisjeserai.stat.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/publications/feuille/ELDEQ_fasc6no2.pdf)

[3] K. Wentzell (1998), Social Relationships and Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Parents, Teachers, and Peers, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(2) 202–209.

[4] The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescents Health (1994–2008), More information can be found at: [http://ucdata.berkeley.edu/pubs/addhealth\\_data\\_presentation\\_suli.pdf](http://ucdata.berkeley.edu/pubs/addhealth_data_presentation_suli.pdf)

## Taking effective action

While the quality of the student-teacher relationship can affect students' behaviour or learning, the inverse is also true. According to the QLSCD, teachers generally feel they have poorer relationships with students who have behavioural problems or those from disadvantaged environments.

The fact that teachers have generally poorer relationships with these types of students has also been reported in a number of studies from the US. These findings are of concern given that such students who experience positive relationships with teachers early on in their schooling have a more positive view of school. In addition, when students with behavioural problems experience positive relationships with teachers early on, they show a better capacity to adapt and get better grades. It would therefore seem essential to take priority action on the student-teacher relationship to improve the situation for these types of vulnerable students.

### Avenues for effective action related to student-teacher relationship

**Make sure that teachers form supportive and positive relationships with students as soon as they enter school, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, by making the entire school staff aware of this reality:**

- to foster smooth transitions during various stages of schooling (entry into school, elementary-high school, high school-CEGEP, etc.);
- to put conditions in place very early on for active and positive parental involvement before, during, and after entry into school;
- to attenuate the negative effects of conduct or behavioural problems by certain students on the quality of the student-teacher relationship (early intervention programs that encourage behavioural and emotional self-control and the development of social and cognitive skills, as well as training designed to help teachers take positive measures with these youth rather than isolate or exclude them).

**Develop positive disciplinary models that maintain high expectations for all youth:**

- by implementing a constructive conflict-management system (conflict mediators, positive communication, etc.);
- by rolling out systems to support positive behaviour that are based on explicit instruction and reinforcement of expected attitudes and behaviours;
- by putting in place an individualized follow-up system for students with difficulties (mentoring, psychosocial monitoring, brainstorming workshops, etc.);
- by focusing on positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than on systems of punishment, rewards, and exclusion.

**Put activities in place that help increase the quality time that students, teachers and school staff spend together (extracurricular activities, mentoring, community involvement, tutoring with teachers, stable groups, etc.).**

**Broaden the network of adults who are able to support and guide youth:**

- to give non-teaching staff and practitioners from the community a chance to work on or take part in projects with students,
- to create networks of supportive adults around certain youth and their families.

# Pedagogical and educational practices

Because getting a high school diploma involves acquiring knowledge and passing certain school subjects, how this knowledge is transferred also plays a role in school perseverance. Teachers' pedagogical and educational practices will affect students' overall interest in the subject being taught and, more broadly, their enjoyment of the learning experience. In this respect, successful pedagogical strategies stem as much from classroom management as from the actual teaching techniques employed.

## What the research says

Pedagogical decisions, meaning what is taught and how it is taught, have a major influence on how students perform and what they learn. In the end, these decisions also influence the long-term results of students who experience difficulties and ultimately, whether or not they graduate.

New Zealand researcher Hattie studied over 800 meta-analyses, which summarized some 50,000 individual studies, involving over 250 million students, on what constitutes good teaching.<sup>1</sup> Below are some of the 136 factors that Hattie examined in his book. They indicate which factors, taken individually, promote or hinder learning.

### Factors that HINDER learning

- Repeating a year
- Too much TV
- Long summer vacations

### Factors that DO NOT HINDER but DO NOT HELP either

- Open education
- Multi-age classrooms
- Web-based teaching and learning

### Factors that HELP MINIMALLY

- Small classroom size
- Financial resources
- Discovery-based learning
- Homework

### Factors that PROMOTE learning

- Regular monitoring of results
- Encouragement in preschool
- Teacher-directed learning (direct instruction)
- Enrichment for gifted students

### Factors that SIGNIFICANTLY PROMOTE learning

- Teacher feedback
- Problem-based learning
- Continuing teacher training in the subject being taught
- Effective programs for teaching literacy
- Student-teacher relationships based on trust

The key finding of Hattie's work is that teachers are the most determinant factors in student success. This is based primarily on two points: the choice of teaching methods and the quality of classroom management. With respect to teaching methods, those based on direct instruction<sup>2</sup> are considered most effective, while "discovery-based" pedagogies only help minimally and are even inadvisable for students with difficulty or from disadvantaged environments.

At an international symposium, William presented the results of a study on the importance of the teacher's role in student learning.<sup>3</sup> In the best teachers' classes, students learn twice as fast as those in the classes of average teachers. Indeed, in the classrooms of the most effective teachers, students from disadvantaged families and students with behavioural problems learned just as well as students from well-off families or who did not have behavioural problems.

### For more information

Comment enseigne-t-on dans les écoles efficaces ?

<http://www.pulaval.com/produit/comment-enseigne-t-on-dans-les-ecoles-efficaces-efficacite-des-ecoles-et-des-reformes>

[1] J. Hattie (2009), *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement*, New York, NY: Routledge.

[2] C. Gauthier, M. Mellouki, D. Simard, S. Bissonnette, M. Richard (2005), Quelles sont les pédagogies efficaces ? Un état de la recherche, *Les Cahiers du débat*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, Jan. 2005, p.31–32.

[3] D. William (2011), *How do we prepare students for a world we cannot imagine?* Paper presented at the Salzburg Seminar, Optimizing Talent: Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide, 6–11 December. Salzburg.

## Taking effective action

An international study conducted in nine countries on four continents examined teaching practices in schools whose effectiveness was deemed good, average or poor.<sup>1</sup> The authors concluded that teachers working in effective schools had more behaviours associated with direct instruction than those in schools deemed less effective. There is thus reason to believe that using direct teaching methods, whose effectiveness has been demonstrated at both the classroom level<sup>2</sup> and the school level,<sup>3</sup> should be emphasized as a pedagogical approach in order to ensure the success of all students, but especially those for whom school must make a difference, such as students who have difficulties or students from disadvantaged environments.

### What teachers from effective schools do:

#### Classroom management

- Use a reward system to manage behaviour
- Continuously supervise classes
- Have high expectations of students
- Show enthusiasm
- Use display boards that are attractive, stimulating and relevant

#### Teaching management

- Present material clearly
- Provide precise instructions and explanations
- Emphasize essential aspects of the lesson
- Focus on the academic dimension
- Check to make sure students understand
- Ask questions frequently to students
- Ask questions related to the subject
- Ask open questions
- Provide support when students answer incorrectly
- Use students' answers to delve deeper into the subject

## Avenues for effective action related to pedagogical and educational practices

### Put in place initiatives to attract and keep competent teachers:

- by making sure teachers get continuous training,
- by providing the best classroom teaching techniques (direct instruction, problem-solving, emphasis on teaching literacy, monitoring and following up on learning, support for students having trouble, verification of student comprehension, asking questions to students, summarizing material, providing clarity and precision of instructions, etc.),
- by offering the best classroom management techniques (positive climate, quick feedback, positive reinforcement, classroom supervision, realistic expectations of students, attractive materials and environment, disciplinary systems centred on expectations and problem-solving, etc.),
- by promoting the development of warm and positive student-teacher relationships (teacher awareness, coaching, activity ideas, etc.),
- by ensuring that teachers believe that their students can succeed,
- by promoting a favourable attitude of teachers toward their profession.

### Encourage a positive attitude of parents and the community toward the teaching profession, people working in schools, and in particular, the teachers of their children (presence at school, participation in meetings and activities, school interventions, etc.):

- to make sure that parents provide support for their children's school work (confidence and support of the teacher, importance placed on school work, attendance at school, etc.).

[1] D. Reynolds, B. Creemers, S. Strinfield, C. Teddlie and G. Schaffer (2002), *World Class School, International Perspectives on School Effectiveness*, London: Routledge/Falmer Press.

[2] CRIFPE (2005), *Écoles efficaces et réussite scolaire des élèves à risque, Un état de la recherche*. Downloaded at:

<http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/gauthier2005e?616d13afc6835dd26137b409bec9f87=4d34101224fa8bcc8a53050fda55c277>

[3] Ibid. 1.

# Management practices

Is the school adapted to the social makeup and various characteristics of its environment? For instance, does it pay attention to the concentration of students from underprivileged areas in its classrooms? If it is situated in a well-off area, does it tailor activities for students arriving with a broader and more diversified base of knowledge and experiences? What sorts of educational and career guidance does it provide for students? Does it promote two-way and effective communication with families and the community? How does it support its teachers? Is teamwork encouraged among the various interveners working with students? The importance placed on school perseverance and monitoring student success by administrators will be reflected in the organizational structures and educational practices put in place. And the quality and relevance of such measures will influence graduation rates.

## What the research says

For years, researchers have studied the factors that cause students at some schools to do better than others. More recently, work has focused on certain schools, generally located in disadvantaged areas, where students achieve exceptional results, stay in school, and succeed better than in other comparable schools. These are called "effective schools."<sup>1</sup>

### Characteristics of effective schools

- Leadership of the school principal (shared leadership)
- High expectations of all students
- Safe, ordered and positive environment
- Protected school hours (viable, guaranteed curriculum)
- Parental involvement
- Regular evaluations
- Fixed goals and constant fine-tuning
- Celebration of academic achievements
- Effective, harmonized teaching practices

Researchers have closely examined how these schools are organized, how they make decisions, what teachers do in class, and how parents are involved. A series of specific characteristics has gradually been unanimously accepted among education researchers. It has become clear that the leadership provided by these schools' administrations plays an important role in their success. However, this leadership does not have a direct influence on student performance; rather it occurs through other indirect channels.

The research shows that in effective schools, the school principal acts to focus community efforts and develop the capacity of individuals to promote student success. The influence of the principal's administration is visible in how it affects the school's objectives and orientations, its structure, its interactions with families and the community as a whole, behavioural changes, personal development, organizational model and culture, as well as the learning climate. The principal's and the administration's influence is thus felt daily through key and tangible gestures.

### For more information

*La gestion scolaire : une situation à améliorer ?*

[http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/pdf/XXXII\\_2\\_158.pdf](http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/pdf/XXXII_2_158.pdf)

*Effective Schools*

[http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/CODE\\_Advisories/Downloads/CODE%20Advisory%20No%209%20WEB.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/CODE_Advisories/Downloads/CODE%20Advisory%20No%209%20WEB.pdf)

[1] S. Bissonnette (2007), *Les écoles efficaces favorisant la réussite scolaire des élèves à risque : une revue de littérature*. Paper presented at the 68th annual Canadian Psychological Association Convention, Ottawa, Ontario

## Taking effective action

In a recent study conducted in the Estrie region on the links between school administration practices and student performance, Colletette et al. reported that four types of management practices have positive effects on student learning and perseverance.<sup>1</sup> The greater the degree to which a school implements these practices, the more likely it is to improve factors that directly influence student performance. This effect can be enhanced even further by sharing power and initiatives among teachers, parents, students, and administrative staff, using what is generally called participative leadership.

### Establish school orientations

- Build a shared vision
- Encourage commitment to shared goals
- Demonstrate high expectations for student performance

### Enhance the skills of teaching staff

- Provide individualized support and be considerate
- Stimulate intellectual thought
- Act consistently with the desired model of behaviour

### Review the organizational model

- Develop a collaborative culture
- Review the organizational structure
- Build constructive ties with families and the community
- Maintain contacts with the local neighbourhood

### Manage the education program

- Recruit, retain, and encourage loyalty from competent staff
- Provide educational support (teaching and learning)
- Monitor student progress
- Minimize factors that may distract staff from their work

## Avenues for effective action related to management practices

### Recruit the best leaders and develop the leadership skills of current managers in the school administration:

- to assign the best leaders to schools that need them most;
- to benefit from strong, positive leaders who share their power, vision, and goals with their team;
- by reducing irritants that discourage people from rising to administrative positions in schools (isolation, high demands of position, challenging or violent behaviours, difficult relationships with some parents, media intrusion, etc.);
- to maintain a high level of skill and professionalism among teaching staff;
- to set up the services and structures required to ensure student success, especially for students at risk or having difficulty;
- to monitor students' learning and achievements by maintaining high expectations of them.

**Establish a climate of achievement at all levels within the school (respect, high expectations, support, consistency, partnership, low staff turnover, solidarity, safety, etc.).**

**Encourage family involvement and participation (meetings, events, committees, decision-making bodies, etc.).**

**Promote community partnerships that benefit youth (screening, extracurricular activities, family or youth support organizations, etc.).**

**Make parents aware that the importance they place on school attendance and how they value teachers affects their children's performance (supporting the school rather than criticizing it, always speaking positively about school, helping with homework, working with teachers, expressing confidence in the school, etc.).**

[1] P. Colletette, D. Pelletier, and G. Turcotte (2013), Relations entre les pratiques de gestion des directions d'écoles secondaires et les résultats des élèves. Study funded by the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation in research by the Université de Sherbrooke, Chaire de recherche de la Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke sur la réussite et la persévérance des élèves.



# Support for students having difficulty

A school's capacity to intervene with youth at risk of dropping out is an important factor in preventing dropout. When youth who are experiencing problems—whether academic, family, or social—are left to their own resources, they are at a higher risk of dropping out. The earlier they receive help, the better their results will be. Daycares, elementary schools, and high schools that work together and provide continuity are better at identifying students with multiple risk factors and at facilitating interventions and transitions. Deciding which services are provided should be based on the problems youth are experiencing and will therefore be different for different people, such as educational and career guidance, monitoring academic results, referrals to external resources, contact with parents and determination of their involvement, and coordination of interventions by various professionals working with young people.

## What the research says

In recent years, research has shown that it is possible to considerably reduce the number of students having difficulty, both academically and behaviourally, by organizing student services into a three-tier system.<sup>[2]</sup> This model organizes interventions, whether universal or targeted, such that their frequency and intensity increase based on individual students' needs. This is effective in managing interventions with students who exhibit both learning and behavioural difficulties.

This approach provides solutions to several real problems in schools. First, it uses evaluation procedures that allow for early screening of at-risk students,<sup>[3]</sup> for monitoring their progress, and for identifying students whose performance or behaviour deviates from the expected path. Second, it ensures that before a student is labelled, effective and evidence-based teaching and supervision measures are put in place.

Third, the intervention program is systematically differentiated so that it can meet the needs of all students, including those that respond poorly to universal interventions.

Fourth, by implementing this differentiation, the roles of various professionals, such as teachers, educational consultants, remedial teachers, school psychologists, psychoeducators, speech therapists, and external professionals are clearly defined, according to the means available at the specific school and in the surrounding community.

Finally, this program pulls together all educational services around the students. This is called the "wraparound approach."<sup>[4]</sup>

The "wraparound" is a model of services and support for youth and their families that relies on the community to create an enveloping support network. The approach centres on the strengths of youth, their families, members of the community, and the professionals that make up the intervention team. This approach is especially effective for solving complex problems.

## For more information

*La mise en œuvre d'un modèle de réponse à l'intervention dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de la lecture du français (p.41 -47)*  
<http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs2101109>

[1] M. Winston (2007), *Pyramid of Interventions, Parent Guide*. Cincinnati Public School. Downloaded at: <http://www.cps-k12.org/sites/www.cps-k12.org/files/pdfs/school-pyramidParGuide.pdf>

[2] See the reference document that accompany these fact sheets: *Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success* (2013), p. 12.

[3] "At-risk" students are preschool, elementary and/or high school students with vulnerabilities that are likely to affect their learning or behaviour—especially with respect to their success in school or their socialization—if they do not receive early intervention.

[4] <http://www.pathwayschildrencyouth.org/index.cfm?CategoryID=1&SubCategoryID=10>

## Taking effective action

Providing services for youth having difficulty is a collective responsibility, one that benefits from taking a territorial view. While individual stakeholders have a certain level of autonomy in organizing services that fall under their immediate purview, as needs, problems, and the demand for services, grow in intensity, collaborations become necessary. A territorial view for providing services for youth at risk or having difficulty should be based on the engagement of all community stakeholders. This approach is characterized by inter-sectorial joint-effort and intervention that focuses on improving the situation of youth in the territory and their families. Thus, while stakeholders act individually, they coordinate with others, based on their individual areas of expertise, organizational missions, and fields of action in order to provide services that complement each other.

The following table illustrates this situation. Implementing effective universal interventions is primarily the responsibility of the school and the family. As the need for more intense services rises, school-family-community collaboration becomes more important.

### INTENSITY OF NEEDS AND SERVICES

Low	Moderate	Sustained
<b>Universal interventions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early screening and intervention</li> <li>- Effective teaching</li> <li>- Effective classroom management</li> <li>- Development of social skills</li> <li>- Positive behaviour support</li> </ul>	<b>Targeted interventions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individualized intervention plans</li> <li>- School-family partnerships</li> <li>- Differentiated interventions</li> <li>- Intensive interventions</li> <li>- Crisis interventions</li> <li>- School-community partnerships</li> </ul>	<b>Personalized interventions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individualized and inter-sectorial service plans</li> <li>- Customized and intensive individual interventions</li> <li>- Services provided by specialized external organizations</li> <li>- Wraparound services</li> </ul>

### Avenues for effective action related to support for students having difficulty

#### Put in place screening and intervention mechanisms:

- to ensure early screening and intervention,
- to facilitate ongoing monitoring and evaluation of both academic and behavioural interventions.

#### Put in place organizational models that make use of universal, targeted, and personalized measures:

- to facilitate universal prevention measures,
- to ensure continuity of services,
- by basing interventions on effective and research-based approaches,
- to differentiate interventions according to needs,
- to optimize resource use.

#### Promote a climate of achievement and learning in the school:

- by initiating a system of positive discipline,
- by ensuring that staff is highly skilled,
- by continually upgrading the expertise of staff.

#### Work closely with families:

- to promote parental support at home that complements efforts at school (school work, following up with the school, etc.),
- to celebrate young people's efforts and build on their abilities.

#### Create collaborative spaces with community partners:

- to roll out interventions that complement their work,
- to maximize community resources,
- to make use of outside expertise or specialists,
- to direct parents to appropriate resources

# School climate

When including courses, extracurricular and leisure activities, young people spend an average of over 30 hours per week inside the school walls. It is their primary living environment, where their friends are, where they experience successes and failures, and where they are confronted with different realities. School is a microcosm of society whose characteristics include problems (violence, bullying, etc.) but also positive phenomena such as solidarity and working toward common goals. Schools also reflect the local environment they are situated in. A study by the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport, conducted among 3,682 young people, revealed that 72 percent of students who have a very positive opinion of their school climate also state that their grades are good or very good. Among students who feel their school has a poor climate, less than half (49%) say their grades are good or very good.<sup>1</sup>

## What the research says

Though the first study about this issue dates back to 1908, to this day there is no single definition of school climate. However, in general, when researchers speak about school climate, they often refer to how parents, teachers, students, and the community judge their experience of living and working within the school.<sup>2</sup> It reflects collective standards, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and management. It grows out of the collective life and realities that occur on a daily basis within the school.<sup>3</sup>

According to Cohen et al. at the National School Climate Center,<sup>4</sup> school climate is composed of five elements: interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, safety, physical environment, and sense of belonging.

Along the same lines, the Ontario government recently introduced resources for schools and communities to develop positive school climates, aimed at fostering student success and promoting the public education system.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Ontario government, a school has a positive climate when:

- students, parents and staff feel safe, at ease and accepted;
- all members of the school community are expected to maintain healthy and respectful relationships;
- students are encouraged to be leaders and role models;
- parents and members of the community actively participate;
- positive behaviours are reinforced and students are allowed to develop relationships that are free from racism, discrimination, and harassment;
- there is a culture of high expectations, with the focus on improving the learning outcomes of all students;
- all cultures are respected and appreciated.

For over 30 years, an increasing number of studies tend to show that establishing and maintaining a positive school climate are linked with a reduction of certain risky behaviours and with the development of healthy lifestyles. A positive climate is also linked with better academic and social learning, better grades, higher graduation rates, and greater stability of school staff. Thus, there is an interconnection between climate and that which it affects. While a good school climate can encourage students to put more effort into their studies or their lives at school, the inverse is also true. In fact, some studies have shown that the quality of school climate can play an important role in reducing the negative effects of low socioeconomic status.<sup>6</sup>

[1] Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2003), *Et si la participation faisait la différence... Les activités parascolaires des élèves du secondaire et la réussite éducative*, Survey report.

[2] *Questionnaire sur l'environnement socioéducatif des jeunes du secondaire*: <http://www.ctreq.qc.ca/realisation/qes-web/>

[3] National School Climate Center: <http://www.schoolclimate.org>

[4] J. Cohen, E. M. McCabe, N. M. Michelli, and T. Pickeral (2009), School climate: Research, Policy, Teacher Education and Practice, *Teachers College Record*, 111180–213.

[5] Ontario Ministry of Education (2010), *Promoting a Positive School Climate*. Downloaded at: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/climate.html>

[6] R. Benbenishty and R. A. Astor (2005), *School Violence in Context: Culture, Neighborhood, Family, School, and Gender*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

## Taking effective action

The quality of school climate is a shared responsibility. While much of this responsibility may fall to the school's staff and administration, especially in terms of relationships with students, sense of belonging, and the place for parents at the school, the involvement of students, parents and the community at large should not be minimized.

Community-driven initiatives should be aimed at developing social and community capital within schools, for example by encouraging citizens and organizations to take part in projects at the school. Employers can also encourage their employees and working students to volunteer in schools by being more flexible with work hours. Other initiatives might include a campaign to celebrate local schools, students and the staff who work in them, or actions that focus on safety, violence prevention, quality of relationships, or partner engagement.

### For more information

*Le climat scolaire : définition, effets et conditions d'amélioration*

[http://www.cndp.fr/crdp-nancy-metz/fileadmin/Stockage2/selections\\_thematiques/climat-scolaire\\_Rapport2012.pdf](http://www.cndp.fr/crdp-nancy-metz/fileadmin/Stockage2/selections_thematiques/climat-scolaire_Rapport2012.pdf)

## Avenues for effective action related to school climate

### Develop and maintain harmonious relationships among people at the school and in the community:

- by fostering respect (diversity, differences, opinions, etc.);
- by encouraging and celebrating the potential, abilities, and strengths of young people (positive reinforcement, making use of talents or knowledge, etc.);
- by developing positive, supportive, and warm adult-student relationships (trust, attachment, etc.);
- by sharing power and responsibilities with students, school staff, and members of the community (code of conduct, organization of activities, etc.);
- by developing partnerships that are beneficial to young people and their families (extracurricular activities, facilities, etc.);
- by promoting maximum participation and engagement from partners, especially from parents (fundraising, event organization, etc.).

### Ensure high-quality teaching and learning:

- by maintaining high but realistic expectations of students in terms of academic success (celebrate results and efforts, be specific about expectations, believe that students can succeed, etc.),
- by providing support for youth in need (screening, arranging services, follow-up, working with the family, etc.),
- by making sure that school staff is competent and receives ongoing training (recruitment, training plans, monitoring, etc.),
- by providing strong leadership and a shared and clear vision of the school's future.

### Ensure that there is a climate of physical, material, and psychological safety and justice in and around the school.

Provide a clean, attractive, and pleasant environment, along with suitable materials for students and for community members who attend the school.

Develop a sense of belonging to the school among students and the community (events, tournaments, social activities, etc.).

# Neighbourhood of residence

According to the Montreal health and social services agency,<sup>1</sup> children are influenced by their peers and tend to imitate and conform to characteristics they see around them. In other words, children living in the same community are inclined to adopt the behavioural models—whether positive or negative—of their immediate surroundings. Obviously, this determinant is closely aligned to sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods, distant rural regions, and areas with high concentrations of immigrants all present their own challenges, of which, dropout is frequent. When assessing sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, parental levels of unemployment, inactivity, and education (especially among mothers) should be taken into consideration.

## What the research says

Children and youth living in less advantaged neighbourhoods are more at risk of having trouble with the requirements of school. While dropouts come from all types of neighbourhood,<sup>2</sup> numerous studies have shown that they are twice as likely to come from poor areas. Intervention in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is thus a priority.

The socioeconomic status of youth has a significant influence on their development, especially before they start school and during their first years of schooling. Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas generally start school with less knowledge. According to one study,<sup>3</sup> depending on where they live, some students can enter school with up to two times less communication experience than others (i.e., vocabulary exposure is 2.5 million words in disadvantaged areas, compared with 4.5 million words in more prosperous areas). It is important to point out that children from more disadvantaged areas do not necessarily have lower abilities; they just do not start school with the same experience as others.

However, beyond socioeconomic status, researchers have also observed that children's readiness for school is also strongly linked to the social cohesion of the neighbourhood they live in.<sup>4</sup>

Social cohesion, as defined by the Council of Europe, is the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members. This includes equal access to resources and services, respect for dignity, personal and collective autonomy, and responsible participation.

It is characterized by:

- Shared values and civic culture
- Shared identity
- Sense of belonging to a single community
- A sense of trust among individuals and in local institutions and organizations

As children grow and assimilate into their environment, risk factors related to peers, the school, the neighbourhood, and the community start to play an increasing role. But in early childhood, the risk factors with the greatest influence on educational achievement come from within the family.

However, parental behaviours toward their children are influenced by the social context in which they live. Neighbourhoods characterized by high poverty, low social cohesion, family break-ups, and high mobility tend to weaken social networks and exacerbate ineffective parental behaviour.

The connections between social cohesion and child development can be explained in particular by differing access, depending on the environment, to positive role models, to the support of friends and acquaintances, or to high-quality services (e.g., health care, daycare, libraries, parks, playgrounds, schools, and community centres).

[1] Direction de santé publique, Agence de santé et de services sociaux de Montréal (2008), *Enquête sur la maturité scolaire des enfants montréalais, rapport régional*. Downloaded at: [http://publications.santemontreal.qc.ca/uploads/tx\\_assmpublications/978-2-89494-630-5.pdf](http://publications.santemontreal.qc.ca/uploads/tx_assmpublications/978-2-89494-630-5.pdf)

[2] M. Janosz (2000), L'abandon scolaire chez les adolescents : perspective nord-américaine, *VEI Enjeux*, 122, Sept.

[3] J. Hattie (2009), *Visible Learning. A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement*, New York, NY: Routledge.

[4] D. E. Cohen, C. Hertzman, and J. Brooks-Gunn (1998), *Neighbourhood Influences on Children's School Readiness*, Human Resources Development Canada, Applied Research Branch, Catalogue no. MP32-28/98-15E.

## Taking effective action

When community members can access and take part in community initiatives and actions, it can help to develop a sense of belonging and pride that can counterbalance the effects of material disadvantage. From the standpoint of prevention, there are clear advantages to strengthening support and cooperation within at-risk environments.

Among the available courses of action, it is important to support parents in developing their sense of competence so that they can learn more positive parenting skills, especially in at-risk areas. This is true from birth right through their children's schooling.

Communities with greater social cohesion are more likely to be heard in matters and decisions that affect them.

### For more information

*Approche territoriale intégrée versus lutte à la pauvreté*

<http://www.eve.coop/?a=48>

*Persévérance scolaire : aux réalités territoriales*

[http://www.visaj.ca/documents/1\\_Decembre\\_PersvScolAdapterStrategie.pdf](http://www.visaj.ca/documents/1_Decembre_PersvScolAdapterStrategie.pdf)

## Avenues for effective action related to neighbourhood of residence

### Put in place activities that help to integrate families into neighbourhood life:

- by organizing neighbourhood festivities or community and social activities,
- by developing social and mutual-aid networks in communities,
- by organizing activities to promote solidarity (community kitchen, book or clothing exchanges, daycare, respite care, community gardens, etc.).

### Organize initiatives at schools or daycares in which families and community organizations take part:

- by allowing the school to run or host family support and guidance activities,
- by using the school or daycare to promote neighbourhood activities (invitations to activities and events, social groups, facilities, etc.),
- by holding networking activities (reading clubs, movie nights, group cooking, etc.).

### Organize activities to facilitate the various personal and educational transitions of youth in the neighbourhood:

- by furnishing information to parents and community organizations on the various steps involved and difficulties,
- by assisting parents in supporting students going through these stages.

Put in place an outreach system to get in touch with families who are hard to reach or to identify new families (neighbour or mutual-aid networks, etc.).

Put in place child stimulation activities for parents (emergent literacy, fine motor skills, crafts, etc.).



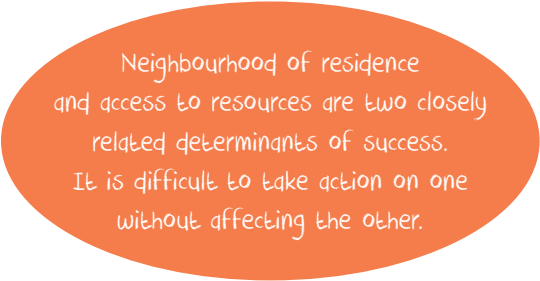
# Community resources

Schools are surrounded by various community resources to assist youth and families, such as social services, childcare centres, youth centres (*Centres jeunesse*), youth employment centres (*Carrefours jeunesse-emploi*), healthcare services, libraries, sports facilities, and community workers. It may be difficult for youth and families to access such services because of, for example, geographical location, availability of services, or how resources are distributed on the territory. Coordination between services and defining their respective roles in preventing dropout are also major issues.

## What the research says

Social cohesion in a community relies on the presence of resources such as services for housing, education, health care, daycare, day camps, and for extracurricular, cultural, and sporting activities. These all help to support children, youth and families.

However, families living below the poverty line face the challenge of meeting their basic needs every day.<sup>1</sup> Since dropouts most often come from underprivileged neighbourhoods, the resources in these areas must seek to compensate for the social and material disadvantages brought about by poverty and low social cohesion. These resources must serve to find ways to break the cycle of poverty.



Neighbourhood of residence and access to resources are two closely related determinants of success. It is difficult to take action on one without affecting the other.

Moreover, as Coleman et al. have pointed out, youth from disadvantaged environments do not feel they have the capacity to succeed or have control over what would allow them to succeed.<sup>2</sup> They also state, however, that the negative effects of a poor socioeconomic environment tend to decline toward the end of schooling.

In a similar vein, a survey conducted by the Quebec Ministry of Education shows that a significant proportion of students with adaptive and learning difficulties come from disadvantaged environments.<sup>3</sup> This fact is even more significant considering that young people with learning disabilities are at increased risk of dropping out.

## For more information

*Les milieux à risque d'abandon scolaire. Quand pauvreté, conditions de vie et décrochage scolaire vont de pair*

[www.crepas.qc.ca/userfiles/ancien\\_site/editeur10/DOC\\_9\\_16.pdf](http://www.crepas.qc.ca/userfiles/ancien_site/editeur10/DOC_9_16.pdf)

*Un regard territorial pour soutenir l'action des instances régionales*

[http://visaj.ca/documents/Savoir\\_Juin08.pdf](http://visaj.ca/documents/Savoir_Juin08.pdf)

[1] CREPAS (2001), *Les milieux à risque d'abandon scolaire. Quand pauvreté, conditions de vie et décrochage scolaire vont de pair*. Downloaded at: [http://www.crepas.qc.ca/userfiles/ancien\\_site/editeur10/DOC\\_9\\_16.pdf](http://www.crepas.qc.ca/userfiles/ancien_site/editeur10/DOC_9_16.pdf).

[2] J. S. Coleman, E.Q. Campbell, C. J. Hobson, J. McPartland, A. M. Mood, F. D. Weinfeld and R. L. York (1966), *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Washington: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 737 p.

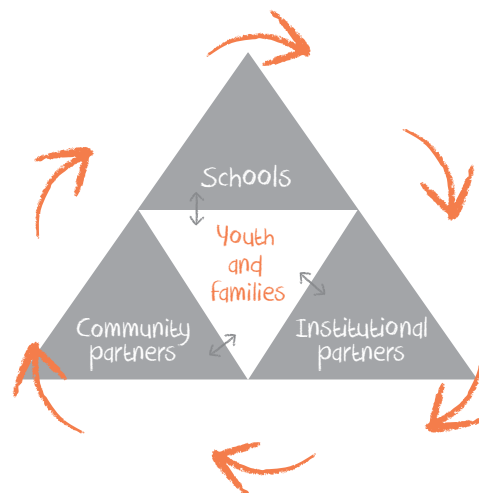
[3] Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (1997), *La situation des jeunes non diplômés de l'école secondaire. Sondage sur l'insertion sociale et l'intégration professionnelle des jeunes en difficulté d'adaptation et d'apprentissage et des autres jeunes non diplômés de l'école secondaire*, Direction de la recherche, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires, 175 p.

## Taking effective action

According to Perron, schools in underprivileged areas face the three-faceted challenge of providing adequate schooling, supporting students' academic goals, and dealing with the negligence, abuse and lack of resources endured by some students, especially younger children.<sup>1</sup> Not to mention that students with difficulties or who are at-risk require intensive and ongoing intervention. It would therefore seem beneficial to build a safety net for at-risk youth by mobilizing the community around school perseverance factors related to poverty and the lack of resources in these neighbourhoods.

This is the goal of the Ontario program Wraparound, which aims to provide services and support for youth and their families by drawing on community resources to create a support network around them.<sup>2</sup> Depending on the identified needs, a team made up of family members and representatives from community organizations and institutional services is formed to support the youth and the family by creating an intervention plan that adapts as needs change. The approach is centred around the strengths of youth and their families.

In Quebec, a network of regional consulting authorities (RCAs) has spread throughout the province over the past 10 years and acts in a similar spirit of partnership. RCAs have helped mobilize regional decision-makers in various sectors to pool resources and work with local stakeholders to reduce the inequalities that make young people more likely to drop out.



## Avenues for effective action related to community resources

**Ensure that regional and local strategic plans are established throughout Quebec to provide better access to services and better service continuity from “birth to high school”:**

- by mobilizing communities around the issues of reducing social inequality and of educational success at the national, regional, and local levels (decision-makers, institutions and community organizations, local stakeholders, etc.);
- by analysing the needs of local youth and their families with respect to school perseverance, academic success, and conditions of vulnerability;
- by implementing regional and local joint-action plans based on effective actions and the pooling of resources and expertise;
- by monitoring this implementation and by evaluating the actions' effects on the conditions of youth vulnerability and, ultimately, their success at school.

**Provide resources to guide parents from disadvantaged communities in supervising their children's education, in working with schools (reading, emergent literacy, homework help, development of social skills, sense of effort, school/work balance, etc.).**

**Raise awareness among local employers of the importance of education for youth in the area.**

**Put in place services to help develop the educational and career goals of youth and their parents, especially for those in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (value of education, orientation, high expectations, etc.).**

**Make sure that vulnerable youth develop in a healthy and safe environment, free from violence and negligence (family support services, follow up with the school, etc.).**

[1] M. Perron (1997), *Sociodémographie de la santé à micro-échelle : un modèle de différenciation spatiale au Saguenay-La c-Saint-Jean*, Doctoral thesis in health geography, Montpellier III, Université Paul Valéry, 470 p.

[2] <http://www.pathwayschildreneyouth.org/index.cfm?CategoryID=1&SubCategoryID=10>

# A critical eye on a program evaluation<sup>1</sup>

## Rigorous experimental framework

### Determination of research topic

- Clear and precise evaluation objectives and questions
- Targeted clienteles and representative as well as sufficient samples from the research topic
- Identification of indicators linked to the targeted objectives and determinants

### Objectivity of evaluation and tools

- Impartiality of evaluator throughout the process
- Systematic, neutral and reliable collection tools

### Range of perspectives

- Evaluation process based on research literature
- Numerous points of view when collecting data in order to thoroughly describe the subject of study

+

+

+

## Demonstrated, measurable effects

### Tools that measure change (effects)

- Use of tests at different times (pre- and post-test, change measurement, control groups)

### Demonstration of effects

- Analysis and recommendations related to objectives, clienteles, indicators, and measured effects
- Production of positive outcomes (improved behaviours, perceptions, etc.)
- Use of benchmarks to interpret results

+

+

## Reproducible effects

- Collection of implementation data that provide information about the conditions under which program effects can be reproduced in similar circumstances
- Comparison of effects with other actions or previous experiments

=

ACTION'S EFFECTIVENESS

[1] See the reference document *Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success*, Réunir Réussir, 2013.

A critical eye on a program evaluation	Level			Notes
	Not at all	Partially	Fully	
<b>RIGOROUS EXPERIMENTAL FRAMEWORK</b>				
<b>Determination of research topic</b>				
Are the research objectives and questions stated clearly and accurately?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the goal of the evaluation directly related to the action's anticipated effects on youth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the clientele targeted by the evaluation representative of the clientele for which the action is intended?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the number and characteristics of the respondents of the evaluation representative of the clientele for which the action is intended?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are indicators related to short- and long-term effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Objectivity of evaluation and tools</b>				
Was the study led by an evaluator in a position to be impartial and neutral?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the evaluation tools allow systemized data collection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the evaluation tools allow objective data collection (e.g., unbiased by a point of view)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have the evaluation tools been validated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Range of perspectives</b>				
Is the evaluation based on research literature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all points of view on the action's effect represented?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all dimensions of the evaluation subject covered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>DEMONSTRATED, MEASURABLE EFFECTS</b>				
<b>Tools that measure change (effects)</b>				
Have tests been used to measure the action's effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do these tests measure the effects of action over time (pre- and post-test, change measurement)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Demonstration of effects<sup>1</sup></b>				
Does an analysis of the results show the various effects of the action on youth and their families?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are benchmarks used to interpret results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there recommendations on how to improve the action's effectiveness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>REPRODUCIBLE EFFECTS</b>				
Does the study provide information on the implementation conditions and on how to reproduce the action's effects in a similar context (essential partners and resources, frequency, intensity, duration, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were the results achieved in the evaluation compared to the results of other actions designed to have the same effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

[1] To determine whether an action is effective, it is vital to demonstrate its effects. On the other hand, certain reservations may be stated regarding other factors that may be less accurate, clear, or present.

# Basic principles of effective action<sup>1</sup>

## Consideration of determinants

Focus on the main factors that influence school perseverance and success when planning which actions to implement

## Precise, relevant objectives with logical connections

Ensure objectives are clearly defined

- SMART → specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound

Ensure objectives are part of a logical model

- ACTION → resources → relevance → performance → results → effectiveness → OBJECTIVE

## Early action

Make sure the action occurs as early as possible in the youth's development

- Early preventive intervention
- Rapid intervention, meaning upon initial appearance of vulnerability and during critical transition phases

Use the Response to Intervention model

- Universal prevention measures (80%) → targeted interventions (15%) → individualized interventions (5%)

## Continuity of services

Ensure continuity of services throughout the youth's development

- Uninterrupted support for vulnerable families and youth
- Various sectors coordinate so that youth do not experience a breakdown of services

## Direct action

Ensure that actions are closely connected to youth's living environments

- Implement individualized and direct interventions
- Prioritize direct intervention over awareness activities

## Frequent and intense action

Ensure that the frequency, duration, and intensity of actions are sufficient to produce results

- The frequency, duration, and intensity of actions must be sufficient to instill new attitudes and bring about changes in perceptions and behaviours in targeted youth and their families
- The effectiveness of an intervention relies on the cumulative effect of relevant, repeated actions that occur frequently enough and over a long enough period of time

## Effective practices based on research data

Ensure actions are based on solid and rigorous science with recognized efficacy

- Level 1, 2, or 3 research

Ensure actions are based on knowledge from research according to three broadly recognized criteria

- Rigorous experimental framework
- Demonstrated and measured effects
- Reproducible effects

## Partnership between stakeholders within the community

Ensure that interventions involve different aspects of youths' lives

- To make use of the various available resources and expertise in working toward a youth's educational success
- To partner in intervening with young people (education, health and social services, employment, leisure, etc.)
- To enrich society with educated citizens by involving all stakeholders

# HIGH QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE ACTIONS

[1] See the reference document *Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success*, Réseau Réussir, 2013.

Basic principles of effective action <sup>1</sup>	Level			Notes
	Not at all	Partially	Fully	
Consideration of determinants				
Have the main determinants that the action targets been determined?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are these determinants directly related to identified needs and objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Precise, relevant objectives with logical connections				
Does the action target a prioritized need?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will the action help achieve a targeted objective, given the initial clientele and problem (ambition of project and characteristics of clientele)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the target clientele been clearly identified (number, age group, environment, characteristics, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have the anticipated effects on the youth or their family been identified (improvement in . . . increase in . . . reduction in . . . etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the indicators measure anticipated effects (% of youth who . . . number of families who . . . etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is it realistic to achieve these effects on youth or their families (resources, strengths/weaknesses of environment, investment, expertise, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has enough time been set aside to complete the action and observe the results on youth and their families (planning, hiring, fulfillment, adjustments, evaluation, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Early action				
Does the action occur as early as possible in the youth's development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the action occur before a critical transition phase?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the action a quick and enduring response to the identified vulnerability in the youth or their family?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the action act preventively (universal or targeted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Continuity of services				
Is the action part of a series of interventions that meet an identified need?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the action coordinated with various community stakeholders to avoid service breakdowns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the action coordinated with services in the community so that partners' actions are complementary to one another?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Direct action				
Do the interventions act as directly as possible on youth or their families?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the interventions involve various aspects of the youth's environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Frequent and intense action				
Are the interventions numerous enough to produce the expected results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the interventions occur close enough together in time to produce and maintain the expected results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the interventions occur over a long enough period of time to produce the expected results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Effective practices based on research data				
Has the action ever been evaluated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have the anticipated results been demonstrated through an evaluation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the action use practical, proven means (e.g., extracurricular activities → motivation, literacy stimulation → academic performance)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the action based on effective research principles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Partnership between stakeholders within the community				
Do the interventions make use of various local resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the interventions engage all partners who should be involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

[1] See the reference document *Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success*, Réunion Réussir, 2013.