R²
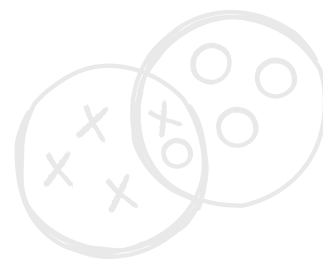
Réunir
Réussir
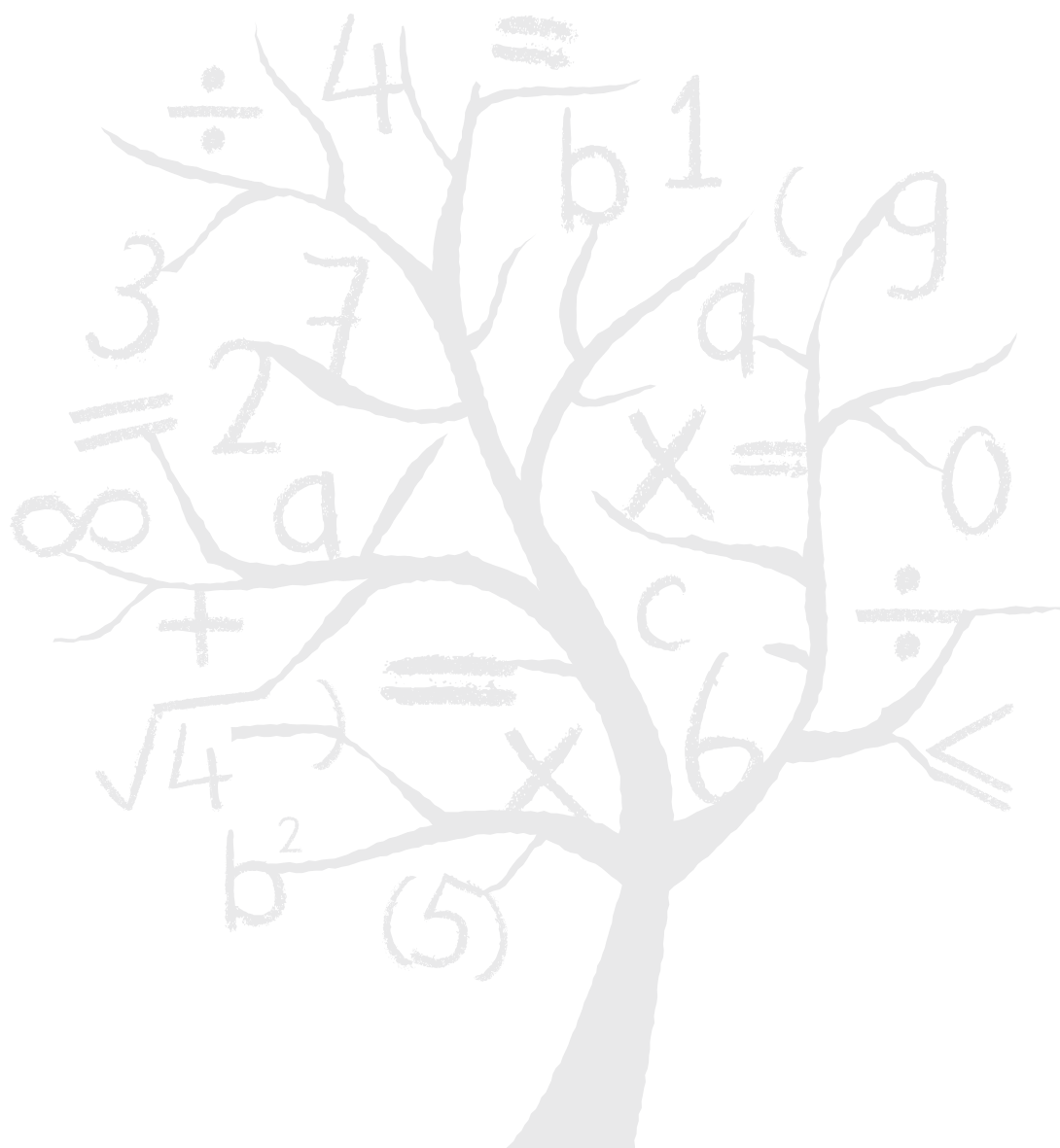
Agir ensemble
pour la réussite éducative

Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success
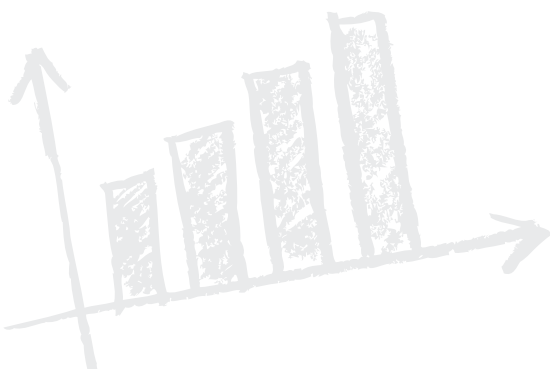
This reference document is the result of the collective effort of **Réunir Réussir,**
its partners, and **regional consulting authorities**. Its purpose is to provide resources,
guidance and support for front-line workers striving to address the complex and
compelling "equation" of school perseverance. We must work together with young people
and their parents to take effective action on the determinants of school perseverance
and educational success. It is precisely in this spirit of solidarity and teamwork that
this guide was produced.

I hope you enjoy reading the document.

Sophie Harnois

Working together

R²

Table of Contents

MOBILIZATION

INTRODUCTION

The movement to promote school perseverance among young Quebecers has gained momentum in recent years and now extends province-wide. Today, all of Quebec's 17 administrative regions have at least one regional consulting authority (RCA) in which decision-makers from various sectors work together to support local communities. The RCAs and their partners seek long-term and effective solutions to keep youth in school until they graduate or earn a qualification.

> Dropping out or failing at school does not happen overnight; it is the result of a process during which numerous factors and influences intersect to alter the course of a young person's life.

The goal of this reference document, produced by Réunir Réussir (R[2]), is to support RCAs and their partners in developing regional-local action plans. More specifically, it should help them assess the potential of actions[1] that have been implemented as well as their effects, given identified needs. It aims to provide front-line workers with a solid foundation on which to plan and implement their own actions, and to make informed choices, without imposing actions or processes.

MOBILIZATION AND REGIONAL-LOCAL ACTION PROCESS[2]

ACT together

ASPIRE together

OBSERVE together

6 — Follow-up and evaluation

5 — Regional and local action plan

4 — Priorities and strategies for change

3 — Common vision

2 — Evaluation of situation — ongoing monitoring

1 — RCA nucleus — start-up / consolidate mobilization

The guide should be useful at various points in the planning or evaluation processes for stakeholders developing actions in the field. While designed to be used independently, in whole or in part, users will gain more from it if a facilitator walks them through it.

The guide draws on a review of relevant literature in the fields of education, health and social services, as well as territorial and community development, along with research on planning practices on each determinant. This review provided perspective on the range of factors that must be considered to implement effective actions or improve those already in place. Several documents on best practices were especially useful in this respect.[3] [4] [5] However, this guide claims neither to be comprehensive nor to reflect all the nuances and variations of the concepts involved. Above all, the guide is meant to provide a summary of the technical data, in which content is presented in a thorough and accessible manner.

> 20 fact sheets and a directory of effective actions accompany this reference document.

The basic principles of effective action are presented below. This reference document is accompanied by 20 fact sheets, 18 of which deal specifically with determinants of school perseverance and educational success, while the remaining two are analytical tools aimed at providing a practical approach to the information in the guide. Additionally, a directory of effective actions (available in French only) complements these resources to offer alternative solutions to front-line workers.[6]

---

[1] The term "action," like an initiative or a project, can refer to several interventions or activities aimed at the same objective.
[2] *Plateforme de financement*, Réunir Réussir, 2009.
[3] F. McKenzie (2009), *Un guide pour soutenir la réflexion et... mieux faire grandir les tout- petits*, Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal. Downloaded at:
http://www.csssdll.qc.ca/fileadmin/csss_dll/CSSS_DLL/Publications/Maturite_scolaire/Guide_pratiques_0_5_ans.pdf
[4] G. Malcuit & A. Pomerleau (2005), *Les principes qui se retrouvent dans les pratiques efficaces pour le développement optimal des jeunes enfants*. Downloaded at: http://www.cssspnql.com/docs/concours---mon-mieux-etre/principes.pdf?sfvrsn=0
[5] *Common Principles of Effective Practice (CPEP)*, Minnesota Department of Education. Downloaded at: http://archive.tadnet.org/uploads/File/CPEP%20model.pdf
[6] Répertoire d'actions efficaces: www.reunirreussir.org/outils-pratiques/repertoire.aspx

Consideration of determinants

page 9

Any **effective action** seeks to build **capacity**, of both individuals and communities, by focusing on the main **determinants** of school perseverance and educational success.

+

Precise, relevant objectives with logical connections

page 10

The action must have **well-defined objectives** that fall into a **logical framework** based on needs and the desired results.

+

Early action

page 12

The action encourages **early intervention**, meaning as soon as a **need** or problem is identified **at any point during** a youth's **educational path**.

+

Continuity of services

page 14

Partners from all **spheres** and **sectors** must develop linkages and **ensure continuity** so that youth receiving services or support experience a **continuity of services.**

+

Direct action

page 16

It is vital that the actions affect youth **directly**. However, this principle does not exclude **parents**, **educators** and other **practitioners** who play a major role in youth's lives at various times.

+

Frequent and intense action

page 17

The **frequency** and **intensity** of intervention must be sufficient to produce the desired results. Stable, frequent interventions, and multiple actions carried out using a variety of methods will further the achievement of intended outcomes.

+

Effective practices based on research data

page 18

The action should be based on **solid and rigorous science**, and its efficacy should be backed up by research data. **Evaluation** is the best way to determine an action's effectiveness and to improve it.

+

Partnership between stakeholders within the community

page 21

Community stakeholders and sectors must **work in partnership** and **complement** each other to achieve objectives. Ideally, **all stakeholders** should take part in supporting school perseverance and educational success.

= High-quality and effective actions

Fact sheet no. 20 proposes a series of questions to quickly assess the underlying principles of an effective action.

While the principles are presented in a specific order, actions are generally not planned in a linear fashion; there is usually some back-and-forth along the way. So adding up the principles of an effective action is a somewhat ideal process. However, the more an action puts these principles into practice, the more likely it is to have the desired effect on youth. Modifying an existing action so that it adheres to one or more of these principles is also sure to improve its efficacy.

R²

What are the factors that influence school perseverance and educational success of young people?

A variety of influences, both positive and negative, affect a young person's educational pathway. These factors intertwine, can be diverse in nature, and can affect all or a part of a young person's developmental continuum.

The accumulation of several risk factors increases the likelihood that a young person will drop out of school. Inversely, protective factors reduce the risk that the problem will appear or materialize.

There are many determinants of perseverance; however, different researchers with a range of complementary approaches have agreed that the determinants documented in this guide are important targets for actions aimed at reducing dropout rates.[1] The committee of experts[2] has therefore decided to reduce the list of determinants to those that have been thoroughly evaluated and that demonstrate significant and measurable effects on dropout rate or school perseverance.

Prioritizing certain determinants favours those that can be affected through social and community actions implemented through regional and local mobilization in conjunction with efforts by schools. In general, the determinants are grouped into four categories: family factors, personal factors, educational factors, and environmental/social factors. Additionally, they follow childhood and adolescence, two important developmental phases.[3]

Determinants of school perseverance and educational success[4]

Family factors – childhood and adolescence
1. Value placed on education and parental involvement

Personal factors
2. Self-control and social and behavioural conduct – childhood and adolescence
3. Association with peers – adolescence
4. Nutrition and physical activity – childhood and adolescence
5. Tobacco, alcohol and drugs – adolescence
6. School/work balance – adolescence
7. Feelings of depression – childhood and adolescence
8. Self-esteem – childhood and adolescence
9. School performance in reading, writing and mathematics – childhood and adolescence
10. Motivation and engagement – childhood and adolescence
11. Educational and career aspirations – adolescence

School factors – childhood and adolescence
12. Student-teacher relationship
13. Pedagogical and educational practices
14. Management practices
15. Support for students having difficulty
16. School climate

Social (community) factors – childhood and adolescence
17. Neighbourhood of residence
18. Community resources

A detailed fact sheet covering each of these determinants accompanies this document.

R²

Are objectives clearly defined?

Any action that impacts the success and perseverance of youth is made up of a range of complementary interventions aimed at achieving clearly defined objectives within a specific timeframe and using specific resources. These objectives must be **SMART**:[1]

1) **S**pecific: What are the desired effects and for whom? Are the objectives specific enough and adequately adapted?
2) **M**easurable: Do the objectives contain indicators that can measure whether (or not) the desired effects have been achieved?
3) **A**ttainable: Given the starting point, the need, or the problem and the characteristics of the targeted clientele, are the objectives attainable or ambitious enough?
4) **R**ealistic: Are the capacity and means to produce the desired effects in place? Are the objectives accepted by or acceptable to key stakeholders?
5) **T**ime-bound: When will the effects occur? Are the deadline and timetable realistic for achieving the desired results?

Objectives act as reference points for each phase of an intervention project. They also help to understand the purpose of the actions being undertaken and to specify the contributions expected of each stakeholder throughout the process.

Having clear objectives helps to focus on the anticipated results rather than on the tasks to accomplish. Given that actions can be modified along the way, it is important to monitor them throughout the process to ensure that they contribute to the final goal.

> An objective is the final destination on the road from an unsatisfactory situation to one deemed satisfactory.

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES

SMART
- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ttainable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound

CLEARLY STATED

PROVIDES A MONITORING/REGULATION PROCESS

PRECISE, RELEVANT OBJECTIVES

DEVELOPED COOPERATIVELY

CONSIDERS DETERMINANTS
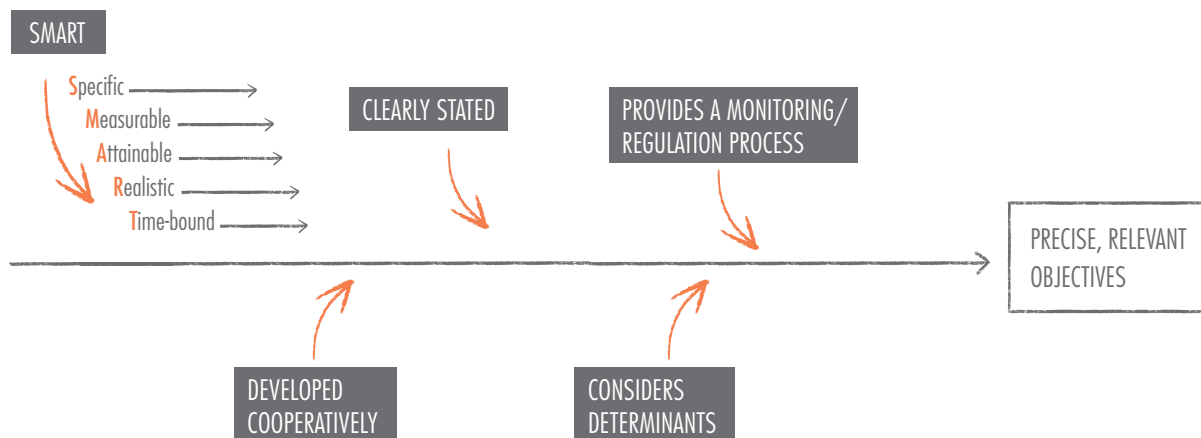
[1] The first mention of the acronym SMART dates back to a 1981 article in *Management Review* by Georges T. Doran: G. T. Doran (1981), "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives," *Management Review*, *70* (11) (AMA FORUM) 35–36.

Are the objectives part of a logical model?
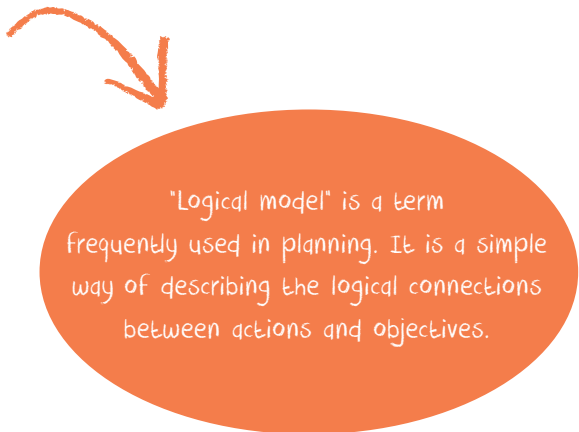
By acting logically, one should be able to carry out actions in order to achieve precise results so that one ultimately achieves both specific and end goals. Logic also allows one to determine the relevance of the actions carried out, the efficiency of the process, and the proper use of resources to ensure the action's effectiveness and impact.

When working within a logical model, explicit and clear problems or needs must be identified. This ensures that the actions being considered will be relevant to the problems or needs.

In carrying out actions, therefore, the appropriate resources must be allocated, whether they be human, material or expertise, and these resources must be used optimally. Moreover, the end results should be worthy of the resources employed; this is a measure of the action's efficiency.

The question of efficacy arises when assessing the extent to which the action's results make progress toward the objectives. By comparing the objectives attained with the rate of perseverance and qualification, it is possible to compare them with the impact or initial effects of the action.

This logical sequence of course depends on properly evaluating needs, choosing relevant actions, and ensuring adequate resources. But without clearly defined operational objectives, it is extremely difficult to assess the actual effects of the action or to make adjustments along the way if necessary.

"Logical model" is a term frequently used in planning. It is a simple way of describing the logical connections between actions and objectives.

LOGICAL SEQUENCE
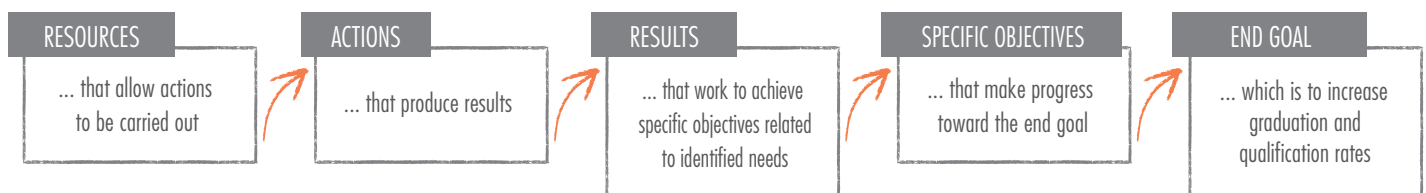
RESOURCES	ACTIONS	RESULTS	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	END GOAL
... that allow actions to be carried out	... that produce results	... that work to achieve specific objectives related to identified needs	... that make progress toward the end goal	... which is to increase graduation and qualification rates

R²

Do actions focus on early interventions?

Stimulation at an early age is an excellent predictor of school success, especially for young people coming from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Early intervention is all the more effective if it is structured and carried out intensively by competent practitioners. Thus, the earlier that intervention takes place and the more intensive it is, the greater its impact. However, while necessary, early intervention is not a panacea and should not rule out later interventions in a young person's education.[1]

In general, early intervention refers to actions and initiatives aimed at altering, as early as possible in the young person's life, behaviours, perceptions, or overall development that points to vulnerability in one or more determinants of school perseverance and educational success.

Early intervention means, above all, taking action early on in a child's life, but it also means acting in advance, before major transitions, in order to provide the best possible support for at-risk young people at critical stages, such as when they first start school, or when transitioning from elementary to high school. It also means taking action as soon as a problem appears. Early intervention thus strives to prevent problems from escalating to serious issues that require more intensive interventions that are both more costly and possibly less effective.
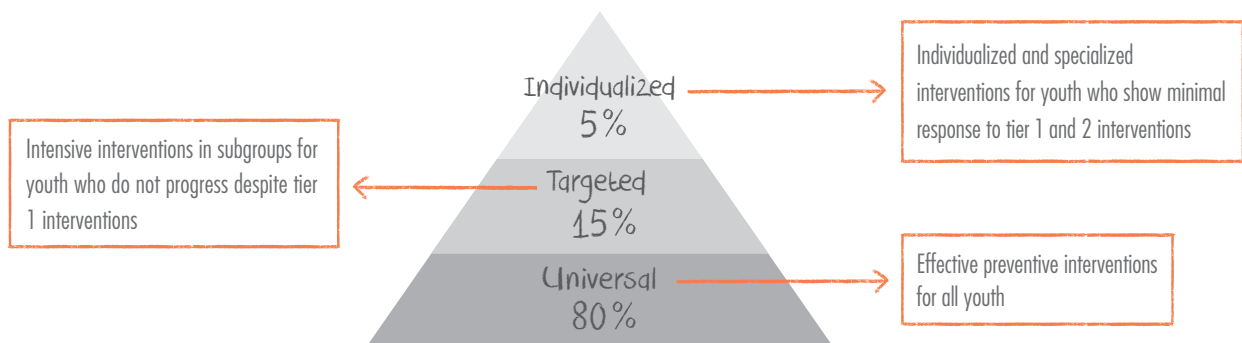
> This means being responsive so that intervention can occur as soon as possible when a problem appears.

The Response to Intervention (RTI) model [2] [3]

The RTI model recommends not waiting for a problem to manifest itself before taking action, but rather to intervene before the problem arises. It therefore suggests implementing universal programs that have proven track records, whether it be for prevention of learning disabilities, especially with respect to reading, for behavioural difficulties, or for disengagement with school.

This means that the entire population benefits from high-quality services. In theory, such universal programs will meet the needs of about 80 percent of the targeted population. About 15 percent of young people will benefit from more targeted, higher frequency, and more intense interventions. The remaining five percent of young people will require intensive intervention programs that are often highly individualized. The RTI model also calls for continuous progress assessment of anyone benefiting from interventions, whether they be universal, targeted or individualized, because these data can then be used to adjust subsequent interventions.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION MODEL

Individualized 5%

Targeted 15%

Universal 80%

Individualized and specialized interventions for youth who show minimal response to tier 1 and 2 interventions

Intensive interventions in subgroups for youth who do not progress despite tier 1 interventions

Effective preventive interventions for all youth

[1] J. Brooks-Gunn (2003), *Do You Believe in Magic? What We Can Expect For Early Childhood Intervention Programs*, Society For Research in Child Development (SRCD), Social Policy Report, *17*, 3-14.

[2] *Essential Components of RTI: A Closer Look at Response to Intervention*, National Center on Response to Intervention, April 2010. Downloaded at: http://www.rti4success.org/sites/default/files/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf

[3] The concepts of "universal preventive interventions," "selective preventive interventions," "indicated preventive interventions" come from M. E. O'Connell, T. Boat, and K. E. Warner (Eds.), (2009), *Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People: Progress and Possibilities*, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

The advantages of early intervention are clear

It requires far fewer resources to implement early preventive actions and interventions than to invest later in specialized services, to have students repeat a year, or to create special classes that make up for accumulated academic lag. The same can be said for behavioural control and the development of social skills.

> "[C]omprehensive early intervention at the preschool level is the single most effective strategy available for the prevention of later delinquency."[4]

Researchers have noted that early intervention reduces the dropout rate and delinquency. According to Kazdin,[1] after the age of eight, antisocial behaviours and serious behavioural problems can be considered chronic and costly to treat. This is why professors Royer[2] and Tremblay[3] maintain that it is imperative to intervene very early with children who are violent or display behavioural problems, especially since there are proven and effective approaches for doing so. Similarly, a study by Janosz[5] on elementary students at risk of dropping out in high school illustrated the importance of early intervention to prevent students from dropping out.

This is precisely the goal of the universal program Fluppy,[6] which, from preschool, unites parents and community organizations around the development of children's social skills, or the targeted program First Step to Success,[7] which is aimed at early diagnosis of behavioural problems by involving parents and the community.

The links between falling behind academically and dropping out are well documented. Schweinhart and Weikart[8] noted that while early intervention can help prevent students from dropping out, it also helps to reduce delinquency.

Studies in the United States have put dollar figures on the relationship between the cost of certain intervention measures and their outcomes. In Minnesota, for example, it was noted that every dollar invested in a mentoring program such as Check'n Connect[9] generated savings of five times the amounts invested, not counting the actual benefits to the youth in the program.

In fact, creating adapted services or keeping students in high school by setting up special educational streams is more costly than implementing effective programs for early childhood literacy and social-skills development — and again, this does not include the impact of failure on the long-term well-being of young people.

> It's all a question of perspective. It's never too late, but earlier is always better.

For more information
Lutter contre la pauvreté et ses effets? Les programmes d'intervention précoce
http://www.erudit.org/revue/SMQ/1989/v14/n2/031523ar.pdf

[1] A. E. Kazdin (1987), "Treatment of Antisocial Behavior in Children: Current Status and Future Directions," *Psychological Bulletin, 102*, 187–203.

[2] N. Breton and E. Royer (2008), "Dépistage précoce des problèmes émergents de comportements," Paper presented at the 2nd biennial CQJDC conference, Quebec City. Downloaded at: http://cqjdc.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/5.06.pdf

[3] R. E. Tremblay (2008), *Prévenir la violence dès la petite enfance*, Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob.

[4] E. Zigler, C. Taussig and Y. Black (1992), cited in H. M. Walker, B. Stiller, H. H. Severson, E. G Feil, and A. Golly (1998), "First Step to Success: Intervening at the Point of School Entry to Prevent Antisocial Behavior Patterns," *Psychology in the Schools, 35*(03) 259–69

[5] M. Janosz et al. (2013), "Les élèves du primaire à risque de décrocher au secondaire: caractéristiques à 12 ans et prédicteurs à 7 ans," *ISQ*. Downloaded at: http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/education/frequentation-scolaire/decrochage.pdf

[6] http://www.santeestrie.qc.ca/sante_publique/promotion_prevention/fluppy.php

[7] http://www.firststeptosuccess.org/

[8] L. J. Schweinhart and D. P.Weikart (1985), "Evidence that Good Early Childhood Programs Work," *Phi Delta Kappan, 66*(8), 545–551. Republished in J. P. Bauch (Ed.) (1988), *Early Childhood Education in the Schools*, Washington, DC: National Education Association

[9] http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/

R²

Continuity of services

How can one ensure the continuity of services?

The issue here is knowing whether the action or project put into place is connected with other services, without replacing or duplicating existing programs, so as to provide uninterrupted support to the most vulnerable communities, families, and youth throughout their schooling. The principle of continuity means that merely intervening at various points in the lives of at-risk youth is not enough; they should have access to a wide range of services from the cradle to the end of high school.

PIPELINE OF SERVICES

Early childhood	Preschool	Elementary	High school

Programs in education, health and social services, family support, etc.

Community building programs
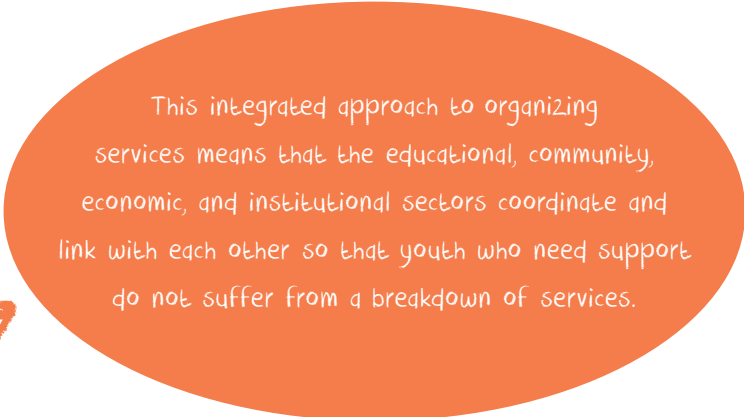
The Harlem Children's Zone[1] is an example of continuity. Launched in the early 1990s, this program provides ongoing academic support for youth in an underprivileged area of Harlem, New York from birth to high school in order to tackle the many problems faced by these youth and their families. It also undertakes various actions with both parents and children as well as community-building projects.

$$x^1 = ax + by$$
$$y^1 = cx + dy$$

Closer to home, the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse provides an example of an initiative to integrate services around an elementary school and its neighbourhood:

> The list of activities carried out as part of the **École et son quartier en santé** program in Saint-Jérôme is impressive. Like many dropout prevention programs, it translates into a determined desire to make the school a vibrant part of the community that people often visit. Its innovations included [the complementarity of actions to support parents and improve the well-being of their children (reception, volunteering, food assistance, community kitchen, breakfasts, etc.)], an increased presence of front-line workers (social workers, nurses, community workers), projects on self-esteem and respect supported by community organizations, having seniors help raise awareness of the community's history, community organizations offering drug-awareness workshops, breakfasts offered by local organizations, homework help by both peers and seniors, workshops and activities on conflict resolution and violence prevention, along with afterschool sports offered by community and youth organizations.[1]

Unlike some programs with narrower scopes, this type of integrated approach starts from the principle that exclusion, delinquency and dropping out are part of a "culture of failure." The goal of such projects is thus to reach a significant percentage of youth and parents living in at-risk neighbourhoods or areas. More specifically, as with the Harlem Children's Zone, the idea is to create a critical threshold beyond which youth can escape destructive frameworks and start moving toward more constructive objectives.

This ambitious and integrated service plan starts even before a child is born by teaching health and parenting skills to mothers, and by providing continued support from preschool through high school, including support for housing, health and social services, recreation, and healthy lifestyles for youth and their parents. Obviously, such approaches generate enormous benefits, and they are less expensive than the significant and recurring costs of the dropout problem.

> This integrated approach to organizing services means that the educational, community, economic, and institutional sectors coordinate and link with each other so that youth who need support do not suffer from a breakdown of services.

FACTOR

[1] Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (2002), *Je décroche, tu décroches, est-ce que nous décrochons ? Avis sur le décrochage scolaire et social au secondaire,* Gouvernement du Québec. .

Are interventions closely connected to youth's living environments?

"Direct action" is a fairly new term which encompasses actions that connect as closely as possible to youths' living environments. Direct actions are characterized by a holistic approach and by building relationships of trust, especially through the presence of stable and significant adult figures in youths' lives. The goals of effective preventive actions include integrating new attitudes and practices from these significant adults.

Effective interventions to promote school perseverance and educational success generally act as directly as possible on at-risk or troubled youth. Such direct actions, in addition to overarching solutions and awareness activities, provide a more individualized response. This applies not only to students' academic journey, but also to their overall supervision and to providing guidance for parents.

Many awareness-raising activities are aimed at changing the perceptions, attitudes and even behaviours of various stakeholders. Occasionally, the goal is also to change environments or living conditions. In such cases, one might think that the actions will have an effect on the young people, even if only indirectly. While this is theoretically true, it may take some time to bring such changes about, meaning that some young people will not have access to the direct support they need for a long period of time. One could therefore say that while such actions are necessary, they are insufficient.

In addition, direct action does not exclude parents, front-line workers, nor the community. The key is that if an action is to impact at-risk youth, it must be aimed directly at them, and the youth must benefit from the intervention or support.

> "Direct action" means working with youth in their natural environment and with the significant adults in their lives.

> Dropout data show that one must focus on the "hardcore": on youth for whom universal or targeted actions are not sufficient.

RELATIONSHIPS

R²

Frequent and intense action

Is the frequency, duration and intensity of intervention sufficient to produce the desired outcomes?

It is vital that actions to promote school perseverance and educational success are carried out regularly and at a rate that allows the target audience to acquire new attitudes, perceptions, or behaviours. It is also important that they be carried out over a long enough period to observe tangible effects.

It is wishful thinking to believe that 10 stimulation workshops can reverse the harm done to a child who has been under-stimulated for two years.

Given that the concept of learning implies repetition in order to acquire new knowledge and know-how, effective interventions must include frequent activities with appropriate time-distribution (intensity). In this case, effectiveness is based on the cumulative effect of actions that occur relatively frequently and that extend over a certain period of time. Hence, one cannot expect that an overly short intervention will achieve much, even if it occurs early and the action itself is appropriate. Intervention activities must always occur over a "reasonable duration," the definition of which will vary depending on the end goal.

One must also avoid the temptation—often arising from a lack of human resources or funding—to reduce the intensity of an action with a proven track record, with the rationale that "it's better than nothing." In doing so, one runs the risk of the intervention not having the desired effect.

For instance, reading with children only leads to benefits if it occurs as part of a daily routine, either in the family or at the daycare (at least three times a week according to some sources).[1] On the other hand, reading with a child only once a month will have no impact if it is the only type of intervention used with the child. This goes for most types of intervention. An activity must be repeated with the youth and occur over a certain length of time for any hope of a real, lasting effect on their success to occur.

Hence, the longer an intervention continues over a reasonable length of time, the greater its effects will be. For example, it took three months of intervention among children in a prosperous neighbourhood of New Brunswick for a community language development program (ELF[2]) to produce positive effects, while it took six months for comparable results to occur in an underprivileged neighbourhood.

The lever analogy illustrates the relationship between the duration, frequency and intensity of an intervention and its effects. In general, actions or programs with rigorous evaluations have shown to be effective and will also provide information about the recommended duration, frequency and intensity of the interventions.

⤷ LEVER EFFECT

+ Frequency

Outcomes +
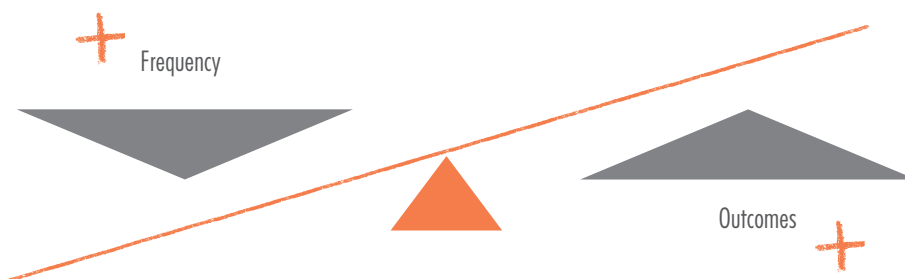
[1] Description of the effects of an interactive reading activity program: http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/pdf/XXXIII_2_182.pdf
[2] Elementary Literacy Friends: http://www.elfnb.com/what-we-do/program-overview/

Are actions based on sound theoretical principles?

Before spending time and resources on an action or project, it is useful to ask oneself if the same type of action has previously produced the desired outcomes in similar circumstances. In other words, it is important to ensure that the actions carried out rest on accepted theoretical principles and that they have produced conclusive results based on thorough testing.

Though one strives to base one's decisions on reliable and credible data, it is sometimes hard to distinguish the good from the bad when it comes to scientifically valid findings. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of documentation and research available on a given topic.

This isn't a new issue, and now it is possible to consult directories of programs that have been evaluated using rigorous scientific criteria. These directories can be used to find actions or programs with proven track records for meeting specific needs and for affecting the determinants one wishes to take action on.

For more information
What Works in Education Clearinghouse
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/
Répertoire Cœuréaction
http://www.coeureaction.qc.ca/en/directory-presentation.aspx

Types of research

Not all research is created equal. Ellis and Fouts,[1] two researchers from the University of Tennessee, came up with a system to classify the numerous studies in the field of education.

Level 1 comprises "basic or descriptive" research. As the name implies, these studies describe phenomena and expose correlations between their various components and influences. Such research is useful in so much as it helps in developing hypotheses.

These hypotheses must then be tested scientifically in applied research on educational outcomes in Level 2 experimental research. In such studies, an intervention is carried out in an educational setting and the results are compared with those of a class that did not receive the intervention (control group). This allows researchers to determine whether the action made a real difference in terms of outcomes.

To provide even more solid foundations for these findings, experimental research must be carried out on a larger scale, reproducing the experiments in different locations using a larger number of control groups. These large-scale comparative studies make up Level 3 and provide the highest degree of scientific reliability as to the effect of an action.

Because Level 3 studies have significant logistical and funding requirements, it is often decided to instead compare a certain number of previous Level 2 studies in order to evaluate the impacts of the approaches they strive to measure. This is called a meta-analysis. In some cases, analyses are done of several meta-analyses.

When available, Level 3 studies provide highly reliable conclusions about the most effective types of programs or approaches. It is also important to remember that whether at Level 1 or Level 2, studies carried out in communities must be collaborative and participative in nature so that the community benefits from the actions implemented and from the study results.

EDUCATION RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION – ELLIS & FOUTS[2]

| LEVEL 1 | Basic or descriptive research |
| LEVEL 2 | Experimental research (small-scale) |
Meta-analysis
| LEVEL 3 | Large scale research (comparative studies) |
Several meta-analysis

For more information
Manuel pratique de méta-analyse des essais thérapeutiques
http://www.spc.univ-lyon1.fr/livreMA/frame.htm

[1] A. Ellis and J. Fouts (1993), *Research on Educational Innovations*, Princeton, NJ: Eye on Education.
[2] Ibid.

How can one ensure that actions are based on solid research?

While actions whose positive effects have been proven through rigorous testing do get put into place—programs like Check'n Connect [1] or Fluppy [2] for example—this is not always the case. Often, the main concern is to quickly provide services that young people need, or to evaluate actions based on client satisfaction or perception. Clearly, this type of evaluation does not provide information about the action's effectiveness in achieving the targeted outcomes.
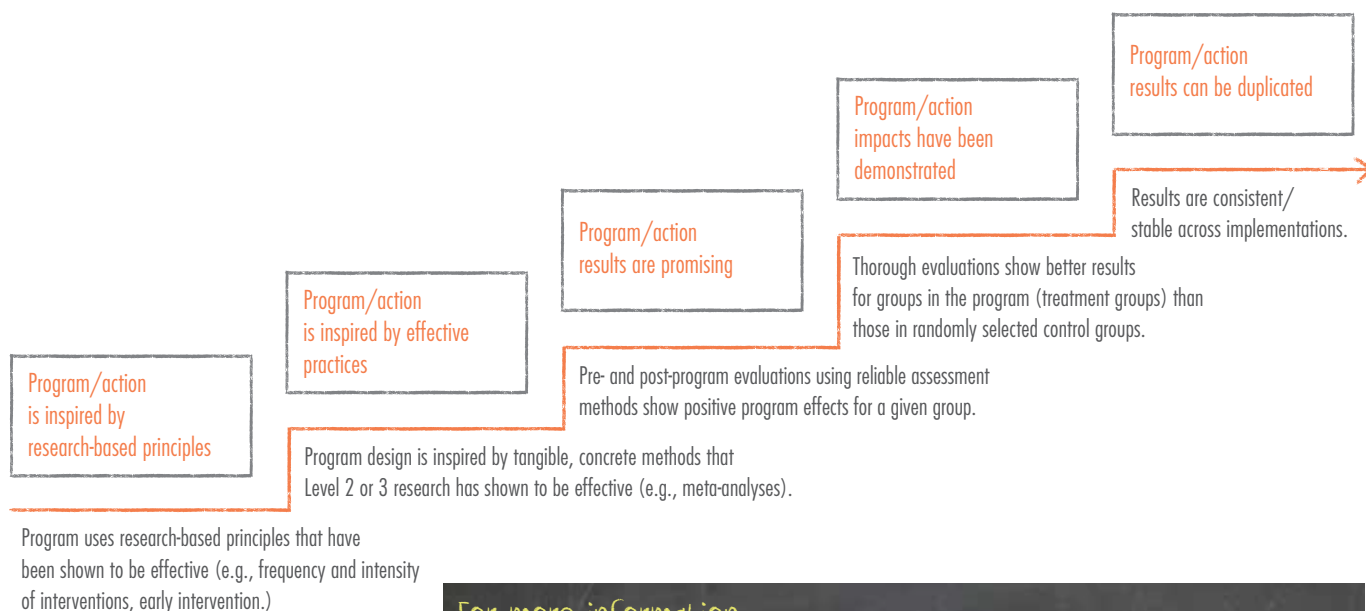
To help organizations better evaluate actions that they implement or fund, researchers have developed measurement scales and identified basic criteria for program efficacy.

Here is one such scale developed by the Promise Neighborhood Institute, [4] which categorizes the thoroughness of the research behind an action or intervention.

This scale illustrates steps that will increase the likelihood of an action's effectiveness. Obviously, considerable human resources, funding, and time are required to reach the last step. But merely reaching the first step by analyzing practices in the light of research-based principles (this reference document) is already progress, as is the second step of employing tangible, evidence-based methods (fact sheets and directory of effective actions). Obviously, when resources and experts are available, it is even better to evaluate the effects of actions over time, or to assess intervention outcomes by conducting research using control groups (the second-last step). But in each case, every step up the scale represents a significant improvement.

> "Evidence-based or convincing data generally refer to prevention practices or interventions that have undergone some form of scientific testing; this is opposed to approaches based on tradition, conventions, beliefs or unscientific data." [3]

QUALITY AND RESEARCH BASIS OF AN INTERVENTION, PROJECT OR PROGRAM

Program/action
results can be duplicated

Program/action
impacts have been demonstrated

Program/action
results are promising

Program/action
is inspired by effective practices

Program/action
is inspired by research-based principles

Results are consistent/ stable across implementations.

Thorough evaluations show better results for groups in the program (treatment groups) than those in randomly selected control groups.

Pre- and post-program evaluations using reliable assessment methods show positive program effects for a given group.

Program design is inspired by tangible, concrete methods that Level 2 or 3 research has shown to be effective (e.g., meta-analyses).

Program uses research-based principles that have been shown to be effective (e.g., frequency and intensity of interventions, early intervention.)

For more information
Giving a Boost to Success!
http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/recherche_evaluation/CoupDePouceALaReussite_a.pdf

[1] http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/
[2] http://www.santeestrie.qc.ca/sante_publique/promotion_prevention/fluppy.php
[3] M. La Roche (2008), "Vers une pratique fondée sur les données probantes," *Le Bloc-Notes, 11*(16). Downloaded at: http://www.leblocnotes.ca/node/2261
[4] www.promiseneighborhoodinstitute.org

From a practical standpoint, it is legitimate that stakeholders and decision-makers want to ensure that the programs they implement are beneficial and have significant effects on the success of youth. Which is why increasing numbers of organizations and umbrella groups are focusing on this issue and using more thorough evaluation processes.

There are three criteria generally accepted by researchers to evaluate an action's effectiveness:
- Rigorous experimental framework
- Demonstrated, measurable effects
- Reproducible effects

It is also important to point out that program evaluation is not about judging the work of the people implementing a measure; rather, it is about determining the effect on young people (e.g., whether they are more motivated or getting better grades).

To help ascertain an evaluation's relevancy and make enlightened choices, it is useful to identify its assessment criteria.

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[1]

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[2]

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

To make these criteria easier to understand and more tangible, fact sheet no. 19 has a decision-making tool to help front-line workers take a critical look at program evaluations.

[1] A tool is deemed "reliable" if it was developed using methods, instruments or other measurement tools that, by general consensus of the research community, are valid. In general, reliable tools will include the source of the study or research upon which their validity is based.
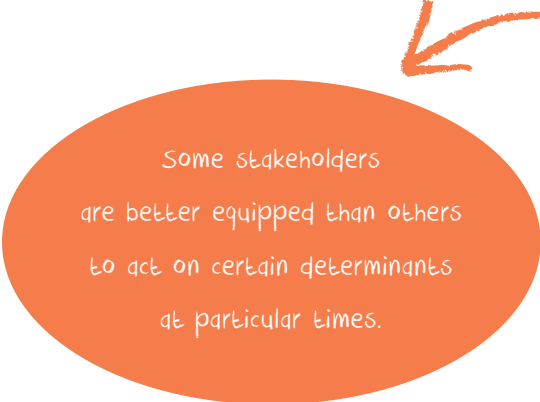[2] A benchmark is a rating scale using scientifically recognized measurements and interpretations. The source of the study or the research upon which the validity of the benchmark is based should be mentioned.

Do interventions address the numerous facets of youths' lives?

It is important that all stakeholders in the community collectively contribute, and that youth benefit from these resources. Community stakeholders can support, enrich, or complement actions implemented as part of various interventions; it is therefore important to form partnerships and work together so that all parties can contribute according to their expertise, scope of action, and resources.

Some stakeholders are better equipped than others to act on certain determinants at particular times.

In this respect, there is a known direct relationship between the dropout rate and persistence at school, behavioural problems, and academic results. But these problems often manifest themselves differently from one community to the next. Communities must build partnerships and foster collaboration if they are to harness available resources and develop solutions that meet their individual needs.

Moreover, interventions to promote school perseverance and educational success must act on a range of determinants and in a variety of environments. Many researchers agree that young people do not drop out or fail at school overnight; it is the result of a process during which numerous intertwining factors and elements in the community influence the youth's progress, either positively or negatively. In short, it is important to take action on a number of determinants and in different living environments simultaneously to increase the effectiveness of actions.

Partnership

Building connections between community services, institutional partners, and private businesses is strategically important. All parties benefit and, above all, are more effective when they cooperate and mutually support each other. Indeed, the RCA development model in Quebec is an excellent example of this.

In Manitoba, a number of cities have created intersectoral working committees to promote partnerships and respond to problems and public concerns. These committees include representatives of large organizations, government, the socio-economic sector, and local organizations, in particular the educational sector. Most school systems are also making their schools more open to the community and families in order to foster student success.

School-family-community partnerships are particularly effective when they are designed so as to benefit all involved parties.

For more information

Partenariat école, famille et communauté
https://www.oirs.ulaval.ca/files/content/sites/oirs/files/partenariat.pdf
Persévérance scolaire et engagement collectif: pour une vision commune d'un chantier québécois
http://www.visaj.ca/documents/SommetMP_1Juin12-2.pdf
Network of regional consulting authorities (RCA) in school perseverance
http://www.perseverancescolaire.com/en/

R²

This document provides a simple and succinct description of the principles behind practices or interventions that improve school perseverance and educational success. These principles are the foundation of tangible actions with proven success.

For readers who wish to learn more about certain subjects discussed in this document, the supporting references provide a means to further exploration.

The goal of this guide is to respond to concerns by all stakeholders who are dedicated to helping young people persevere, but especially to the concerns of people all over Quebec who are developing and implementing actions and interventions that act on one or more of the determinants of school perseverance and educational success.

The more thoroughly that actions integrate the principles set out in this reference document, the higher the probability that these actions will help young people succeed. This makes it easier for stakeholders throughout Quebec to make choices with respect to setting goals and priorities.

If this guide causes certain actions to be called into question or changed along the way in order to more closely conform to effective practices, remember that what may seem like a step backward at first will eventually translate into steps forward. This is part of the normal process of changing practices—a sort of "drawing back to better spring forward."

With this in mind, it's not just about doing MORE, its about doing BETTER!

Consult the 20 fact sheets

18 fact sheets on the determinants of school perseverance and educational success
- what the research says
- to take effective action

2 analytical tools
- 1 fact sheet for analyzing program evaluations with a critical eye
- 1 fact sheet for analyzing actions in light of principles of effectiveness

Consult the directory of effective actions (available in French only)
www.reunirreussir.org/outils-pratiques/repertoire.aspx