



BACKGROUND

High school completion

“Stay in School” is one of the most common messages young people hear today. “Complete high school. Do it now so you don’t have to come back and catch up later. Sure it might be easy to leave now, but you’ll regret it.”

Young people have heard the messages over and over again, yet 30% of our students do not complete high school within 3 years of entering grade 10. Progress is being made, but it is far from the provincial target of a 90% high school completion rate.

What are we missing? How can we achieve better results? Why, in spite of our best intentions, don’t more students complete high school? If we want to see progress, we need answers to these questions and target actions or strategies that will make a difference in the lives of many of our young people.

Why don’t some young people complete high school? Factors inside and outside of school affect high school completion:

- Life Events – family and personal circumstances get in the way of school
- Fading Out – students gradually disconnect with school and eventually drop out.
- Push Outs – students are not succeeding and may be encouraged to leave school
- Failure to Succeed – students who repeatedly fail and don't see success in school
- Family Risk Factors – including poverty, parental literacy, mobility, etc.
- Personal characteristics – low literacy rates, attendance, feeling isolated, etc.
- School practices – suspensions and expulsions, school climate, teaching practices

Dropping out of school is rarely a single event. It is usually the culmination of a disengagement process that occurs over several years and often begins in elementary school.

What is being done now? Of course, this is not a new issue and there are already many strategies that have been put in place to encourage students to complete their education. These include:

- A broad range of programming designed to create interest
- Specialized help and support for students who experience difficulty
- Career connections throughout elementary, middle and high school
- Smaller class sizes in early grades to help students obtain a solid foundation and experience early success.

What can we do? You know individuals who have or will not finish high school. What actions should be taken to address this priority area?