Early School Leavers: Understanding the Lived Reality of Student Disengagement from Secondary School

Final Report

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Brief Overview

- The Ontario Ministry of Education is committed to further understanding and addressing the issues associated with young people who are presently leaving the secondary school system prior to earning their diploma. These early school leavers represent a unique challenge to which the Ministry has responded, in part, by contracting with the Hospital for Sick Children, which is leading a consortium of investigators (including those at Laurentian University in Sudbury) to undertake a series of research studies regarding early school leavers in Ontario.

- This report details the findings of a qualitative study designed to understand the processes of disengagement from school, and of early school leaving, from the point of view of 193 young people in Ontario who have themselves left school or are at risk of doing do. It also provides data on the process from the perspectives of groups of parents/guardians of early leavers, and of Ontario educators. This data fills a gap in the research and policy literature on the process as told from these unique perspectives.

- The research project has involved three interconnected strategies:
    a) Comprehensive literature reviews
    b) Socio-demographic data analyses (reported under a separate cover)
    c) An in-depth qualitative study.

- Early school leaving is the result of a long process of disengagement and alienation that may be preceded by less severe types of withdrawal such as truancy and course failures. Understanding this process will provide the Ministry of Education with multiple junctures in which to intervene.

- Disengagement can best be defined in the following terms:
    - A process and/or pathway (often non-linear) toward adult status
    - Inter-relational rather than individual
    - Contingent on promises (kept or broken) between people
    - Multi-dimensional across micro, meso and macro levels
    - A complex, often emotional, decision to leave school

- Three separate pathways to disengagement were found suggesting that early leavers who could be "*starting from scratch" 'mostly protected*" or "*in-between"* in terms of the numbers of risk or protective factors they encounter.

- The voices of Aboriginal, Francophone, newcomer, second generation immigrant and refugee, third plus generation, visible minority, lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgendered and rural youth were heard. Shared risk factors across groups included low socio-economic status, the need to take on adult roles while in school, "place" and culture, risk-taking activities, issues with attendance and school failure, negative relations with school personnel; flawed school cultures; and issues with passive or irrelevant curriculum.

- Protective factors also existed at the school and community levels. These included alternative schools, caring and supportive teachers, and school climates which were caring, flexible, and proactive. Families and self determination also played a major protective role for these young people.

- Risk and protective factors were found to be paradoxical for many youth, with both appearing simultaneously. Many of these young people also experienced multiple risk factors along their pathways to disengagement.

- Four categories of recommended strategies for policy and practice are offered which could most usefully be adapted for the Student Success Plan to inform the work of the Student Success "rescue teams" and the Learning Opportunities Grants in working with disengaged youth and sorted into strategic foci labelled "Curriculum and Structure," "Pedagogy" and "School Culture."

INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that one of the most critical issues facing the educational system in North America and elsewhere is the problem of early school leavers[1]. In Canada, it is currently estimated that 12 percent of students do not finish secondary school (Bushnik, Barr-Telford & Bussiere, 2004). In Ontario, a recent cohort study suggests that the last four years show substantially decreased secondary school graduation rates, such that up to one-quarter of students may not graduate (King, 2004).

In 2001, 18.4% of Canadian men and women between the ages of 20-24 years did not have a high school degree, certificate or diploma. The rate of early school leaving in Canada varies considerably among provinces and territories, with Nunavut having the highest rate at 67.4%. Across the provinces, the highest percentage of early school leavers is in Manitoba (26.9%). In contrast, Ontario has the lowest rate with 15.9% of youth ages 20-24 years not completing high school in 2001 (Statistics Canada, March 2003). A large proportion of Canadian youth who leave school early do so at an early age and thus at low levels of education. Approximately one third of early school leavers drop out with Grade 9 education or less and almost two thirds drop out with Grade 10 or less. Four in ten early leavers have left school by the age of 16 (HRDC, 2000).

The literature in this area suggests that early school leaving is a long term, multi-dimensional process that is influenced by a wide variety of school and out-of-school experiences with broad social and cultural implications (Foster, Tilleczek, Hein & Lewko, 1993). These implications include both costs and consequences which are becoming increasingly serious for individuals and society (Rumberger, 2001). Students who leave school prematurely are more likely to be unemployed and to earn less over their working life. Trends toward a higher skilled labour force will make it even harder for such youth economically. Although many early leavers pursue a GED certification, they are not adequately prepared for attaining well-paying employment or for accessing higher education. In addition, leavers tend to experience higher levels of early pregnancy and substance abuse, and are likely to require social services of various types (Woods, 1995).

This report addresses the following four questions:

1) Why do young people leave secondary school before graduation?

2) Which factors help to ensure that they stay in school or return to complete their diploma?

3) Do these risk and protective factors vary in nature and/or relative importance across different populations of young people?

4) What are the implications of the research for policy and practice?

[1] No universally accepted definition of dropout/early school leaver exists. Leavers are typically defined as students who leave school (not including transfers) before they graduate from high school with a regular diploma. Some students leave school before entering ninth grade, but most withdraw during their high school years.

CONTEXT

Historically, it was the norm to leave school at some point before high school graduation. In the 1940s, less than half of individuals age 25–29 completed high school. Consequently, early school leaving was not considered problematic. As high school completion became commonplace, graduation became an expectation for most of the nation's youth. Although the use of the term drop-out first surfaced in the early 1900s, it was not typically used until much later in the 20th century (Dorn, 1996). In the 1960s, early leavers were often described negatively, i.e., as "deviants" in the context of juvenile delinquency and other adolescent issues (West, 1991).

Societal treatment of adolescents has historically and culturally shifted along with the economic demands of the labour market and its educational responses (Tilleczek, 2004; Tilleczek & Lewko, 2001). With this shift has come an interest in understanding the systemic rather than individualized reasons for early school leaving. As a result, the past forty years, has seen widespread interest and concern about students who leave school prior to receiving a diploma (Dorn, 1996; Schwartz, 1995; Wayman, 2001; West, 1991). Many researchers began exploring the issue of "dropout" in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly focusing on the characteristics of the individuals who left school early and the conditions that might predict their leaving. Current work attempts to link individual and systemic factors (Dei, 1997; Tilleczek, 2003; Volpe & Tilleczek, 1999) Thus, the term 'drop out' has evolved to early school leaver.

An "at high risk" youth is one who is unlikely to graduate on schedule with the skills and self-confidence necessary to have meaningful options in the areas of work, leisure, culture, civic affairs, and relationships Bailey & Stegelin, 2003, acf. Smink & Schargel, 2004). Risk fluctuates over time, based on circumstances and contexts, rather than being a fixed quality. Exposure to multiple risk factors increases one's likelihood of experiencing problematic outcomes and the impact of exposure to risk factors at a young age may be more detrimental than exposure later in life (Schonert-Reichl, 2000). Three types of early school leavers have been identified: dropouts, tune-outs, and push-outs (Smink & Schargel, 2004).

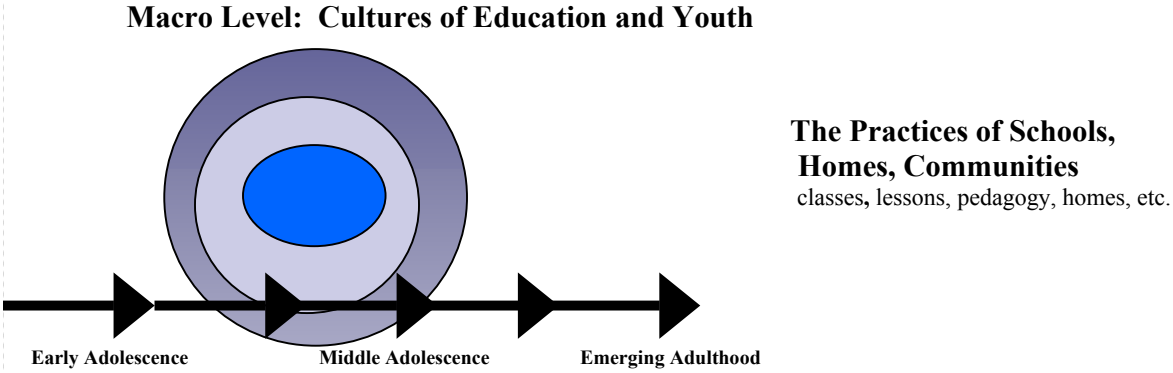
Despite the wealth of literature, both published and grey, that focuses on the issue of early school leaving, there is surprisingly little extant research that highlights the voice of students who are deemed to be at risk of early school leaving, or who have actually left school prior to graduating (Farrell, 1990). This research project has been designed to fill in this gap. It began with an international literature review, with a focus on Canadian research and, where available, Ontario literature, on (a) socio-demographic factors associated with early school leaving and (b) prevention and intervention strategies and initiatives for preventing early school leaving. From this review, the investigative team has synthesized the key risk and protective factors (See Appendix A) for four reasons; 1) to inform the investigative team of existing gaps in the literature, 2) to incorporate known factors into our survey tools and interview process, 3) to form the basis of the analytical strategy, and 4) to conform to our conceptual framework for the study

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A cultural approach emphasizing the relationship between young people and their social environments guides the research (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Tilleczek, 2004). This framework allows for the examination of the extant forms of the relationships between young people,

teachers, schools, communities and societies and guides our understanding of *how* these factors influence different groups of adolescents. This research perspective considers a diverse set of factors, patterns of interaction, and cultural diversity at three levels of description and categorization. The macrosystem level refers to societal and cultural influences such as social class and unemployment. The microsystem level includes neighbourhood, family, peer and school factors; and the individual level, comprised of cognitive and psychosocial influences. The inter-relationships between levels are of particular importance and occur in the mesosystem. For example, the relationships between school and home. Such a model has been recently applied to the study of youth culture (Tilleczek, 2004) to assist in mapping out the social organization of the every day lives of young people as they make their transitions toward adulthood (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
The social organization of school disengagement



Micro Level : Youth negotiating risk/protective factors

Adapted from Tilleczek (2004)

The various risk and protective factors for early school leaving as encountered by young people on their pathways to disengagement have been clearly identified and synthesized for each level (macro, meso and micro). These factors have guided the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data (See Appendix A) and suggest *how* these factors influence different groups of adolescents. In brief, there is a need to also consider the intersection of various types of diversity (e.g. race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, culture, language and generational status) in analyses of early school leaving processes.

OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct an international literature review, with a focus on Canadian and Ontario literature, on (a) socio-demographic factors associated with early school leaving and (b) prevention and intervention strategies and initiatives for preventing early school leaving.

2. To conduct a series of community consultations (focus groups and individual interviews) with youth, parents, school personnel, academics, and policy makers regarding the issues surrounding early school leaving.

3. To examine student disengagement from secondary school from the youth perspective via in-depth qualitative interviews.

4. To examine the issue of student disengagement from school from the perspective of key stakeholders (school teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, parents/guardians) via focus group interviews.

5. To gather socio-demographic information from interviewed youth, parents/guardians, and educators via Face Sheets as a means of (a) collecting data regarding study participants on the sample of young people, (b) a validity check on the interview itself, and (c) piloting of an instrument which could be useful in further research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study makes use of multiple research methods to explore the multitude of factors related to student disengagement from school. Given our framework, and the need to understand the complexities related to early school leavers, methods were chosen to best uncover and describe the lived experiences of disengagement from school. For instance, our methodological strategy using critical ethnography builds in the ability to move from the local contexts of the lives of differing groups of young people to the socially organized contexts of schools and communities. Included in this strategy are reviews of the literature, in-depth interviews, and demographic Face Sheets.

RESEARCH RIGOUR

Decisions about criteria for appraising qualitative research must take into account the distinctive goals of such research and should be embedded in a broad understanding of qualitative research design and data analysis (Mays & Pope, 2000; Twohig & Putnam, 2002). It has been suggested further that 'making sense' of the analysis put forth by the researchers is aided by considering the methods and techniques used as resources for understanding the analysis (Eakin & Mykhalovskiy, 2003). Validity is the extent to which the data measure what they are intended to measure. Reliability is the extent to which the data and analytical processes are consistent. In this study we use the concept of rigour (validity and reliability) in two ways.

1) Research practice as rigour suggests that we aim for reliability in our data based on consistency and care in the application and visibility of research practices (Fossey et al, 2002). We have therefore built an open account of our processes. Such rigour is assessed in terms of attentiveness to research practice vis-à-vis elements of carefulness, respect, honesty, reflection, conscientiousness, engagement, awareness, and sensitivity to context. Our use of a varied, sizable, and inter-disciplinary research team; open team discussions; in-depth interviews; and community consultations are examples of ways in which we established sound research practice and trustworthiness of the findings.

In this study, emergent findings were verified to ensure reliability and validity using the following criteria: *inter-rater reliability* through the use of multiple data coders at all levels of analysis; *audit trails* of field notes and tracking of decision-making in relation to analysis, *thick description* through adequate description of the context and the sample; and, *persistent observation* through reasonable time spent with participants.

2) Analytic rigour relates to the ability for analysis and interpretation of the data to provide practical and theoretical insights which possess a sufficient degree of generality to other comparable contexts. Our analytical strategy for coding and interpretation of the transcripts ensured that such generalizations can be made.

METHODOLOGY: LITERATURE REVIEWS

The selection of published and "grey" materials used for the review on socio-demographic factors associated with early school leaving began with computerized searches of specified search terms. Searches were conducted using *Scholars Portal* at the University of Toronto, the Statistics Canada website, ERIC (The Education Resources Information Center), and through the "Google" search engine, as well as specific websites focused on education and/or early school leavers (for example, "Canadian Education on the Web", and the U.S. websites for The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network and the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). Canadian meta-databases at the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS), as well as Metropolis Canada were searched. The PISA (Program for International Scholastic Achievement) website was also examined in order to yield international information on early school leavers. Results of the searches yielded a total of 116 useful items. A complete description of the methodology can be found in *Socio-demographic Factors Associated with Early School Leaving: A Literature Review* (2004). An in-depth summary of the socio-demographic factors associated with early school leaving can be found in the *Main Messages from the Literature Reviews* (Appendix B). Included in the main messages are detailed reviews of the following sub-groups of youth: visible minority, Aboriginal, newcomer/English-as-a-second-language, Francophone, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered.

A similar search strategy was used for the review on early school leaving prevention and intervention programs. Articles were ultimately selected using the following criteria: (a) publication by a professional journal or publication house, through an identified university affiliation, school district or government department; (b) a program description and an evaluation of a specific early school leaver intervention/prevention program; (c) outcome data for the program evaluated; (d) general research findings regarding specific strategies for preventing or reducing early school leaving, or on elements found to impact early school leaving (such as truancy or engagement). A complete description of the methodology can be found in *Early School Leaving Prevention and Intervention Programs: A Literature Review* (2004). An in-depth summary of early school leaving prevention and intervention programs can be found in the *Main Messages (*Appendix B).

METHODOLOGY: IN-DEPTH QUALITATIVE STUDY

Community Consultations

The design of research studies rarely includes the perspectives of the individuals being studied. There is evidence to suggest that the inclusion of research participants and other stakeholders from the earliest design phase opens up areas for exploration that are otherwise often overlooked. Such areas include the importance of addressing contextual issues, including geographic and cultural differences. In addition, the research is more relevant and the uptake and integration of findings is maximized (Boydell, Greenberg & Volpe, 2004). The early engagement by members of the communities to be studied adds to the feedback and dissemination process. Our study asked "how to ask what questions" to each stakeholder group requiring the use of age and developmentally appropriate language and lines of questioning (Tilleczek & Stratton, 2001).

To address these issues, community consultations were held with academics, educators, settlement workers, social service providers, and community members, in order to: i) provide

insight into specific and/or unique risk and protective factors operative in sampled populations; ii) seek information regarding contextual issues relevant for targeted populations; iii) help ensure research instruments are culturally and linguistically competent for use with specific youth populations; and iv) facilitate participant recruitment across various communities.

All consultations offered solid advice on creating a more developmentally appropriate set of instruments for youth. For example, a youth consultation with Aboriginal young people provided direction and suggestion for the content and ordering of the Face Sheet and interview protocol. These youth indicated the importance of asking about the residential school system as a historical influence on schooling, as well as the value of asking youth about their experiences and fears relating to the powers the Children's Aid Society. These young people approved of our plan to have youth participants complete the socio-demographic Face Sheet after the interview and of having the interviewer review the questions with them. Finally, these youth specified a preference for the ordering of questions and prompts in the interview instruments, indicating the necessity of adapting this ordering when interviewing urban aboriginal youth versus rural aboriginal youth.

Further youth consultations provided concurrence that the questions regarding each level of influence on early school leaving were useful. They responded positively to our probes on issues beyond personal blame of young people for leaving school. They were comfortable with beginning to speak about their everyday lives and working up from there to other levels of influence in home, school and community. They also appreciated the use of the term "early school leaver" as opposed to "drop-out".

Consultations with educators suggested that we needed further prompts on the policy level of schooling to highlight policy issues that relate to the structure of schooling. It was also suggested that we differentiate the child's experience at school from parental experience at school and ask about each in the parent/guardian focus groups.

Consultations also provided guidance to the ways in which interviewer training should take place and the ways in which the interview prompts should be used. Further honing of the research instruments and direction in recruitment followed from the consultations. In addition to these community consultations, a sub-committee of the Advisory Committee was formed in order to review the language of the research instruments for literacy and age appropriate use. The Advisory Committee provided the research team with invaluable advice regarding the recruitment of "at high risk" youth and early leavers through the school boards and numerous community agencies.

Youth Interviews and Parent/Educator Focus Groups

Sampling and Recruitment

It is essential to note that the sample of youth interviewed was "purposive" and not random. The sampling strategy was one of maximum variation in which youth were recruited according to the categories noted below. Only those who agreed to participation were contacted and interviewed. The total sample size for youth consisted of 193 in-depth qualitative interviews. A detailed rationale for the sampling frame can be found in Appendix D. An additional 13 focus groups of parents/guardians (22) and educators (51) were conducted and analyzed (see Appendix E). Participant sub-population groups were derived from the identified categories of youth, across all 6 sites based on the number of youth to be recruited under each category. The key population categories were:

- Aboriginal (a *key visible minority population*)
- Francophone (*key linguistic minority population*)
- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Trans-sexual (LGBT) (*key sexual minority population)*
- Visible versus non-visible populations (*'racial' identifications*)
- Newcomer versus more established populations (*civic status*)
  - 1st generation immigrants and refugees
  - 2nd generation ethno-cultural Canadians
  - 3rd+ generation Canadians

An optimal cell size of 8-12 twelve youth for each population category has been determined. McCraken (1988) and Patton (1990) suggest a minimum sample of eight in-depth interviews for each subcategory to reach saturation of main themes. Out of these 8-12 young people, the following sampling subcategories were formed[2]:

- 8 Early School Leavers (minimum cell size required)
  - 5 males (to parallel 14.7% prevalence rate for males)
  - 3 females (to parallel 9.0% prevalence rate for males)
    - 4 recruited formally (through school boards)
    - 4 recruited informally (through community agencies)
- 2 Still in School
  - 1 male and 1 female (gender balance)
- 2 Graduate Returnees
  - 1 male and 1 female (gender balance)

The sample was fully reflective of the urban–rural continuum found across the province of Ontario and included:

- Metropolitan area (Toronto)
- Major city (Ottawa)
- Smaller cities (Hamilton; Kitchener-Waterloo; Thunder Bay; Sudbury)
- Rural areas (outside Sudbury and Thunder Bay; Owen Sound)

The sample was directly responsive to local socio-demographic patterns and included purposive cross-cutting recruitment across other categories. For example:

- LGBT in the North (Sudbury/Thunder Bay/Ottawa)
- Francophone in the South (Toronto/Hamilton)

In addition, special considerations were given to ensure that the Aboriginal population was emphasized in northern rural areas, and that both newcomer and second generation youth were explored in detail in key metropolitan areas. Francophone youth were also intentionally over-sampled across the province. The six interview sites were Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener, Owen Sound, Sudbury and Thunder Bay, and included their surrounding area. Research participants were recruited within school boards and community agencies at each of these sites.

The Ministry of Education facilitated and organized the identification of potential participants and provided a letter to school boards explaining the project. The investigators made first contact with the various school boards to identify personnel to help with recruitment. Field Coordinators subsequently made personal contact with the selected boards to elicit specific names and contacts. This entailed gaining permission from the appropriate school boards in our various geographical study sites. We also made use of our extensive research networks

[2] Although we have divided gender in our sampling frame by male and female, we also have sought out and included participants who identify as transgendered.

and benefited from advice from the Research Advisory Committee and collaboration with Employment Centres.

Operational definitions

The team established operational definitions for inclusion in the study (See Appendix F for detailed description) as follows:

Youth

1) An *early school leaver* is a youth between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who has left an *Ontario* high school prior to receiving his/her Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) (dropped out or permanently expelled) and has not returned to any form of high school education to receive his/her high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development).

2) A *returned and graduated* youth is one between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who left an *Ontario* high school prior to receiving their OSSD, and has since returned to any form of *Ontario* high school education (alternative school, night school, adult education, internet education etc..) and received his/her OSSD or GED, or who will be graduating this school year.

3) A *still-in school*, "at high risk" student is one between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who has *never* dropped out of high school, has not yet received his/her OSSD, and is currently attending an *Ontario* high school and working towards his/her OSSD. Students were defined as "at high risk" in consultation of with Ministry of Education "at-risk" guidelines.

Parent/Guardian

The parent or guardian of an early high school leaver who has left an *Ontario* high school prior to receiving his/her OSSD and has not returned to any form of high school education to receive his/her OSSD or GED.

Educator

A high school teacher, guidance counsellor, vice-principal or principal *currently* working in the *Ontario* school system.

Creating the research instruments

Face Sheets were created via a group consultative process for use following each interview, or prior to the commencement of each focus group (Appendices F, J, L). They provided valuable socio-demographic information that was used in conjunction with the analysis of the transcript data. Face Sheets were used for four reasons: (a) identification and socio-demographic description of study participants (b) data collection regarding known risk and protective factors, and linking to socio-demographic analysis (c) validity check on the interview itself and a chance to "talk back" to the youth after the interview, and (d) the piloting of a research tool.

Interview schedules have also been developed through a group consultative process (Appendices G-I, K, M). In-depth interviewing, described by Charmaz (1991) as a directional conversation that elicits inner views of respondents' lives as they portray their social worlds, and experiences was used. The interview Schedules also follow the logic of critical ethnography in that they seek to uncover multiple levels of the social organization of school disengagement from the point of view of young people (Smith, 1990; 2002). Our interview process has been further informed by the work of Dei (1997), Smyth and Hattam (2002; 2001) and Van Galen

(2004) who have used this methodology effectively in understanding the process of disengagement from school. Finally, all interview instruments were cross-checked with the finalized literature reviews in order to ensure all known risk and protective factors were probed appropriately. These instruments were then sent to French language translation for cultural translation following Francophone community consultations.

The Interview process

The ability to ensure that the interview instruments are used in the field in the manner in which they were created is critical to research rigour. In-depth interviewer training sessions were developed and delivered by the Lead Investigator and Research Coordinator in each site. A comprehensive package containing an agenda, the process for training, and a listing of materials was generated for both individual youth interviews (Appendix G) and focus group interviews (Appendix H). In each case, the interviewer began by securing informed consent and then worked from a protocol to guide the in-depth conversation. Following this, a Face Sheet was filled in by the participants with the help of the interviewers. In short, each interview was conducted in the following manner:

1. Thanks for participating (a gift when culturally appropriate, i.e. Aboriginal youth)
2. Addressing Cultural sensitivity
3. Addressing Narrative sensitivity
4. Obtaining Informed Consent
5. Conducting the Interview - purposeful conversation
6. Completing the Face Sheets
7. Providing Honorarium and receipt - information letter and list of community services
8. Thanks for sharing the story

The successes of the interview process included the highly collaborative nature of the work and that debriefing was provided to the interviewers as needed. The interviews themselves resulted in detailed conversations and rich transcriptions which were found to "break through" the inter-relatedness of the issue. Detailed interviewer field notes and the Face Sheets allowed for extra care in analysis. A particularly successful aspect of the interview is the number of "thank you" statements made by the youth to the interviewers. They affirmed that they were happy to have been heard, despite the fact that their stories were difficult to tell.

Data analyses

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis involved utilization of a seven-step method for analysis of qualitative data (Diekelmann, 1992). It is worth noting that members of the investigative team have previous experience successfully conducting such team analysis, including those in different geographical settings (e.g. Boydell et al., 2000b; 2002; 2003; Morell-Bellai et al., 2000). The analysis of the transcripts was a process of progressive focusing, whereby understanding of the research problem is refined, detailed descriptions were developed and explanations were considered (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Silverman, 1993) for each of the English and French language interview transcriptions.

The Ethnograph software was used to facilitate in the analysis of textual data (Seidel & Clark, 1984; Seidel et al., 1988). In order to develop the analytical codes, each transcribed interview was read and reread by members of the research team to obtain an overall understanding. Focus Group transcripts were coded and analyzed in a similar fashion. Each team member then

examined transcripts for possible themes, and a coding scheme was collectively developed. Sixteen iterations of the code book resulted (see APPENDIX O and P, CODE BOOKS #1 and #16). The first code book was derived directly from the Risk and Protective Factors document (Appendix A) that emerged from the literature review. Each successive draft of the code book reflected additions and further detail as found in the transcripts. Any disagreements encountered were resolved by returning to the original text and through group discussion.

A parallel but separate process was used for the coding of French language youth transcripts and for the coding and analysis of French language Focus Group transcripts. Code Book #1 was used as a starting point (Appendix S). However, the final code book appears somewhat different and thus highlights the distinct linguistic and cultural issues arising from the interview transcripts of francophone youth (Appendix T).

STUDY RESULTS

I) LITERATURE REVIEWS

Two distinct reviews of literature have been bound under separate covers. For detailed reviews see *Socio-demographic Factors Associated with Early School Leaving: A Literature Review* (2004) and *Early School Leaving Prevention and Intervention Programs: A Literature Review* (2004). An in-depth summary of the reviews can be found in the *Main Messages from the Literature Reviews* (Appendix B). What follows is a brief overview of the literature as it relates directly to the most critical risk and protective factors.

Risk and protective factors associated with early school leaving

Non-school related risk factors associated with early school leaving include macro level variables such as: low socio-economic status/social class; minority group status; male gender; and certain community characteristics. Meso level variables include: household stress; family process/dynamics; limited social support for remaining in school; home-school culture conflict; assumption of adult roles (for example, high levels of employment or pregnancy/childrearing). Micro level variables include: problematic student involvement with education (both the academic and social aspects of school); physical, mental and/or cognitive disabilities; youth with high degrees of autonomy; experimenting with risk (e.g. drug and/or alcohol use, disregard for parental rules and/or civil laws); and finally, discrimination and identity.

According to PISA, roughly 25% of students in all participating OECD countries are unhappy with their school experience (Willms, 2003). The most commonly cited reasons offered by early school leavers for disengagement were related to school risk factors, rather than external influences. Leavers are more likely to perceive their school environment as unrewarding, have negative interactions with their teachers and experience social and academic problems (Kortering & Braziel, 1999 acf. Van der, Woerd & Cox, 2003). School related factors associated with early school leaving include: ineffective discipline system; lack of adequate counselling/referral; negative school climate; lack of relevant curriculum; passive instructional strategies; disregard of student learning styles; retentions or suspensions; streaming; and lack of assessment and support for students with disabilities.

There are three main protective factors connected to early school leaving: high levels of school engagement (social and academic), high levels of parental involvement (in all areas of a youth's life, not only academic), and moderate levels of employment (between 10-15 hours of work per week).

Early school leaving prevention and intervention programs

The empirical evidence on the effectiveness of prevention/intervention programs on early school leaving is scarce. Of those evaluations which do exist, very few are able to demonstrate program effectiveness, and virtually none link outcomes directly to a reduction in early school

leaving. A specific best practice to address early school leaving does not currently exist, despite the fact that a number of programs appear to hold promise.

In order to be effective, programs must be comprehensive and directed towards all facets of a student's life. As youth leave school prematurely for a multitude of reasons, services and supports must be flexible and customized to meet individual student needs (Rumberger, 2001). Schools, as well as specific programs, are most successful with a broad focus that includes academic, social, and supportive activities. Effective schools and programs are responsive to a wide range of student needs, made possible through the integration of community services.

Effective strategies to reduce early school leaving can be divided into four categories (Schargel & Smink, 2001):

- *Early prevention programs* include: parental skills training and family involvement; early childhood education; and reading and writing programs.

- *Basic core strategies* include: mentoring/tutoring; service learning (linking significant community service experiences with academic learning); alternative schooling; and out-of-school enhancement (after school and summer scholastic, recreation and social programs.

- *Making the most out of instruction* includes: professional development; openness to diverse identities, learning styles and multiple intelligences; and the use of instructional technologies.

- *Making the most of the wider community* includes: systemic renewal; community collaboration; career education and workforce readiness; and conflict resolution and violence prevention.

General recommendations for working with and responding more effectively to youth include (Health Canada, 1999): recognizing the strengths, abilities, and energy of youth; providing youth with opportunities for decision-making; educating involved adults about the value of youth and the most effective ways of working with them; respecting the rights of youth to be treated fairly and with respect; recognizing that schools are an important location for interacting with youth; providing them with information, services and opportunities for participation; and recognizing the value of peer-based programs.

The research indicates that youth require supports responsive to their needs; ones that are as multi-dimensional as their problems that are open to the diverse range of their interests, hopes and plans that are aimed at increasing decision-making capacities. Adults who work with youth must be able to deal with the complexities of young people's lives, to be flexible and non-judgmental. Schools, agencies and programs must provide youth with opportunities to make important choices, to support them in the consequences of their decisions, and in reflecting on lessons learned and successes achieved.

High performing schools have a combination of characteristics in common including: a clear and shared vision and purpose; high standards and expectations; effective school leadership; high levels of collaboration and communication; curriculum, instruction and assessment aligned with defined standards; frequent monitoring of teaching and learning; focused professional development; supportive learning environment; high level of community and parent involvement (OPSI, acf. Shannon & Bylsma, 2003). However, there are three main reasons

why current educational reforms may not succeed: they are often episodic, they address symptoms rather than causes, and they are not systemic (Schargel & Smink, 2001).

II) YOUTH INTERVIEWS

Sample Description

In total, 193 in-depth interviews were conducted with each site acting as a unique location for access to diverse groups of young people. As suggested in the methodology section, the sampling rationale followed a need for maximum variation of youth sub-groups based on the review of literature. In this way, the range of voices of young people from each of 3 groups (early leaver, returner, and at high risk) could be sampled across the province and across linguistic, cultural and regional lines.

In total, 27 Francophone, 31 Aboriginal, 68 3rd+ generation (mainly non-visible), 10 LGBT, 41 visible minority newcomers, and 16 non-visible minority newcomers were interviewed. Thirty-two of these youth were from rural communities. The Table in Appendix U provides a detailed breakdown, by site, of the various sub-groups of youth interviews. Detailed univariate analyses of the 193 Youth Face Sheets revealed that the majority of the study sample consisted of early school leavers (68%). Table 1 shows the breakdown for the three categories of youth who were interviewed.

Table 1: Youth Status

Youth Status	Frequency	Percent
Early school leaver	131	67.9
Returned and graduated	27	14.0
"At-risk" in school	35	18.1
Total	193	100.0

Nearly 59% of the sample identified as male (n=112), 38% as female (n=74) and the remaining 1% (n=2) as "other". This distribution matches the 3:2 gender breakdown in the existing literature. The distribution of identified sexualities shows the majority (91%, n=169) stated heterosexuality, and the remaining youth identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or unsure (n=24).

Table 2 shows that the majority of the Face Sheets were conducted in English. Further, 78% of the sample was attending an English language school while 22% were in French schools in the province.

Table 2: Face Sheet Language

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	English	166	86.0
	French	27	14.0
	Total	193	100.0

Of the 188 young people who provided their current age, the majority were 18 or 19 years old. Table 3 illustrates the range of ages from 13 to 25 years of the sample and provides percentages in each category. Given that the majority of the sample is older than 18, the age range illustrates the finding that 54% were not living with a primary caregiver at the time of the interview.

Table 3: Age of Participants

AGE	Frequency	Percent
14 or under	2	1
15	3	1.6
16	24	12.4
17	28	14.5
18	33	17.1
19	32	16.6
20	29	15.0
21	20	10.4
22	6	3.1
23	2	1.0
24	7	3.6
25	2	1.0
Total	188	97.4

Given its place in the literature as one of the most critical macro level risk factors, information regarding social class based on family income was collected. Table 4 shows the distribution based on the 118 young people (61%) who answered this question on the Face Sheet. The distribution shows the relatively low levels of family income, with close to 50% of the sample living with under $30,000 per year and nearly 60% living below the $40,000 cut off point. This reflects the self-report measure of social class which asked the young people whether they felt themselves to be poor, middle class, or rich in comparison to other young people. Nearly 95% of the youth felt that they felt either middle class (69%) or poor (24%). The social class backgrounds of the sample are also further reflected in the finding that 59% of the sample had a job while in high school.

Table 4: Family Income

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	< 10K	18	9.3
	10K -< 20K	24	12.4
	20K -< 30K	14	7.3
	30K -< 40K	13	6.7
	40K -< 50K	10	5.2
	50K -< 60K	13	6.7
	60K -< 70K	5	2.6
	70K -< 80K	3	1.6
	80K -< 90K	4	2.1
	90K -< 100K	2	1.0
	100K +	12	6.2
	Total	118	61.1

The majority of youth interviewed were born in Canada (85%, n=158) and the remaining 15% (n=29) born elsewhere. Approximately one-third (33%) of the sample self-identified as a visible minority.

Schooling

The majority of youth had been attending (or were attending) public schools (64%) with further breakdowns illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Type of School Attended

	Frequency	Percent
Public	120	62.2
Catholic	42	21.8
Private	4	2.1
First Nations	4	2.1
Other	17	8.8
Total	187	96.9

A good deal of the sample had been identified as special needs students (37%; n=71) with a wide range of difficulties listed by youth. The most frequently mentioned were ADD/ADHD (n=16), behavioural problems (n=9), learning disabilities (n=7) and gifted (n=5). Of students who had been identified, most reported having been identified as having special needs in elementary school (85%) with only 15% being identified in grade 9 or after.

The majority (60%) of the young people had taken the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, and 67% of them had passed it. Of the 20 students who had repeated a grade, the majority (75%) had repeated only 1 grade.

Many young people (64%) reported having had an interruption in their schooling in the past. Moreover, 88% reported having skipped classes while in secondary school, and 67% reported having been suspended up to 5 times. Of those students who had been expelled (n=60), 93% reported up to 4 expulsions.

Pathways to Disengagement and Early Leaving

Before leaving school early, students entered into a process of disengagement from school. We were aware from the literature that this process should be seen as multi-dimensional, long term, and crossing over macro, meso and micro risk factors. The in-depth interviews with youth confirmed this tendency and further suggested that these pathways to disengagement are quite complex. For instance, different starting points, faltering points, and end points emerged from the data.

The three most common starting points were characterized as: *starting from scratch*; *mostly protected*; and *the in-between.*

1) *Starting from scratch:* The young people who were starting from scratch had multiple risk factors at all levels: family, community, and school. These were young people for whom schooling posed a further risk in an already difficult pathway. The following shortened list provides an example of the trajectory for one such young person:

    - Ran away from home at age 11 due to abuse from adopted father; living on the streets but still going to school on/off
    - Removed from home by CAS, age 15, and placed in foster care
    - Ran away to live with biological sister
    - Bought own home at age 16; supported himself and older girlfriend (in university) while working full-time and going to school
    - Was in the reserves/joined the military; served overseas; returned with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome; receiving excellent psychiatric care
    - Went into transitional housing, received financial support to complete G.E.D

- Future plans: university and then set up his own business

2) *Mostly protected:* Conversely, young people who were mostly protected experienced numerous protective factors in their families, communities, schools and within themselves. For instance, they could be coming from caring homes with educational advantages and have been enjoying school before leaving. They often had plans to negotiate their way back in, or were in process of doing so. The following shortened list provides an example of the trajectory for one such young person:

    - Well protected supportive family
    - In relationship with boyfriend and working full-time
    - Finishing diploma to go to college
    - Missing one credit
    - Frustrated because friends all left
    - Strong family/friends but wants independence
    - Good academic standing
    - Good school but they failed to keep track of her credit needs
    - Does not want to be in school with younger students
    - Adult roles/working/car/relationship
    - New school for last credit
    - College plans

3) *The in-between.* The young people who were in-between experienced both risk and protective factors at micro, meso and macro levels and had numerous challenges, but also distinct possibilities for success as evidenced in the protective factors surrounding them. In this case, a poor start at home could be met with a caring educational environment and outreach. The following shortened list provides an example of the trajectory for one such young person:

    - Low SES, many moves
    - Kind parents
    - Low grades, risky friends
    - Likes school
    - Early adult roles at home
    - Strong identity
    - Pregnancy
    - No outreach at school-day care
    - Good teachers and guidance to look for alternatives
    - Plans to go back to school, find a job

Eighty-one percent (134 of 166) of our Anglophone transcripts were examined for the young person's pathway of disengagement. We found that:

- *42% (57) were starting from scratch*
- *28% (37) were mostly protected*
- *30% (40) were the in-between*

These differentiated starting and faltering points add depth to the definition of disengagement from school. Disengagement can best be defined in the following terms:

- A process and/or pathway (often non-linear) toward adult status

- Inter-relational rather than individual
- Contingent on promises (kept or broken) between people
- Multi-dimensional across micro, meso and macro levels

and described as entailing:

- a complex, often emotional, decision to leave school on the part of the student and/or disconnection by the school system

Disengagement was seen to be a long term, inter-relational multi-level process with different entry, slippage and exit points.
Paradox and multiplicity of factors characterized the stories.

Young people's accounts of becoming disengaged with school were non-linear, partial, and fragmented. They described their experiences in a 'back and forth' manner - the past, present and even the future were inextricably intertwined in the retelling of their experiences. There were no simple constructions of the phenomenon of 'dropping out'; common throughout however, was the thread of contradiction, struggle, complexity, multiple tensions and subversive forces.

The finding of numerous instances of inter-relational text in the transcripts indicated that risk and protective factors often functioned simultaneously, or were multiple. For instance, many youth suggested that they like some teachers very much, but that other teachers led them to disengage from school. Engagement in school was seen as a promise made between the school system, community, student, and family. Therefore, slippages occurred at many points in the process. For young people, the most prominent of these risk and protective factors are highlighted in the following section.

Main Risk and Protective Factors for All Youth

The data provided a rich description of the experiences and lived realities of these young people, and the ways in which the constellation of risk and protective factors provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of the process. The widest possible lens was used through which to explore the experiences of these young people and as a result, the findings provide a unique window into the lives of these young men and women.

Smyth and Hattam (2002; 2001) found that, although individual stories of youth disengagement were characterized by despair, collective accounts tended to generate stories of hope and possibility. The majority of our transcripts clearly depict youth who, although struggling with a multitude of risk factors, are at the same time determined to make better lives for themselves. This was evidenced by the fact that virtually all of the young people had plans to return to school in the future. This often included a resolve to complete their high school education.

> *"First get off the streets, second get a job, third finish your education so you can get a career. So it is like steps at a time. It is like some people have those things already and they are lucky that they have those things already handed to them and they don't have to start at the bottom and work their way up. They don't understand what that is like. Starting at the bottom is – I am slowly getting there. I'm not there, but I am slowly getting there"*

With very few exceptions, young people intended to return to school at some point if they had not yet already done so. They had clear and specific goals regarding what their schooling would provide in terms of future jobs and careers.

> *"… A better future for myself. Like, I can go to college and show that no matter, even when it gets hard, you can take a break, as long as you go back and finish what you started. You should always finish what you start. … No matter how long it takes you. Cause it took me a long time"*

Perusal of the Analytic Code Books #1 and #16 illustrates that multiple risk and protective factors emerged from the youth interview transcripts. (See Appendices Q & R for detailed descriptions of the main themes and sub-themes). A quick scan of these analytical documents shows that the detail gleaned from these young people exceeded that which had already been reported in the literature, especially in relation to many protective factors. In reading all transcripts, the following risks factors emerged.

Key Risk Factors for Youth

	Macro	**Meso**	**Micro**
Non-School Related	• Low social class • Minority Status • Gender • "Place" • Youth culture • Immigration/resettlement	• Family • School-home link • Adult status	• Disabilities • Risk-taking • Social isolation • Identity issues • Moves/interruptions
School Related	• Ineffective discipline • Lack of referral, counselling or outreach • Negative school culture • Negative administrator relations • School structural flaws • Lack of assessment for disabilities • School culture conflicts	• Negative teacher-student relations • Curriculum • Passive Instruction • Disregard for learning style • Lack of support, outreach	• Low level of engagement • Suspensions/retentions

Key Protective Factors for Youth

	Macro	**Meso**	**Micro**
Non-School Related	• "Place" • Supportive others in community (links to child welfare etc)	• Family • School-home link • Moderate employment	• Educational advantage • Friends/partners • Healthy lives • Insight, reflection, motivation
School Related	• Positive school climate • School and class size • Tutors and support • Alternative education	• Teaching style/care • Counsellors - outreach • Curriculum	• Friends/peers • Classmates

The school related risk factors often described by youth respondents included school policies upheld by teachers and principals that are counterproductive to keeping students in school or allowing them to return. In short, a lack of flexibility and/or passivity on the part of school personnel or policies was cited.

> *"Maybe if they actually tried to help me. They never did, they just kicked me out or gave me detentions or…expelled me. Nobody actually lifted a finger"*

"I think it must have been grade six I learned long division. And I thought it was the greatest thing in the world. It was like, wow, this is so cool, it's like this machine on paper…I just thought it was such a cool thing. But then they were like ok, so now that you know long division, here's the homework, and it was just like 40 questions of all the same thing, with slightly different numbers. And it just, the next day I hated long division."

Many youth spoke of indirect as well as direct messages from principals, vice-principals, teachers and guidance counselors indicating to them that they are NOT wanted in the school system. For example:

"…I went to my guidance counsellor…she told me you know, the best thing for you since I have so much trouble with school…is to probably drop out of school now, cause now is the time for you to do it. And when she told me this I was shocked because she is the guidance counsellor. They are the people who are supposed to encourage you to stay in school, not to drop out.

Many youth discussed negative relationships with teachers, curriculum that was too difficult, a lack of support with schoolwork, a lack of recognition of differing learning styles and a climate that is simply not enjoyable and thus not conducive to learning.

"I was never disrespectful to teachers or anything, but a lot of teachers were disrespectful towards students…"

"Because some people need the slower pace, give them the slower pace. Some people need faster, have faster pace. But don't do the same thing for everybody. So in my case, I fell behind by one day, and they were going that fast. Like, I had no way of catching up."

The following section outlines the risk and protective factors as experienced by the sub-groups of youth which were purposely sampled. It includes considerations of gender and transgender issues, and reflects the often unique experiences of Aboriginal, rural, Francophone, newcomer/2nd generation, visible minority, and third plus generation youth.

Youth Sub-Group Findings

a) Gender

Key risk factors for young men include: the financial draw of employment (preferring to earn money than go to school); being kicked out of parental home and needing to work to support themselves and sometimes a partner and child(ren); needing to work to support or contribute to parental income; drugs and alcohol misuse; and incarceration.

The key risk factors for young men include: wanting to/needing to earn money; drugs and alcohol misuse; and incarceration.

"I had to drop out cause I couldn't work, pay my bills and go to school…, so I ended up dropping out because of work"

"[my dad] needed that help. He'd been picking the boxes since he was young, right? And then he told me 'I need help' and then I basically just left school…just to help out my dad"

"…I've gone to jail numerous times just because I got drunk and acted like an idiot. Or, you know, selling drugs to make money…just to be able to live on the street and not starve to death"

Newcomer/second generation young men were sometimes required by family, or felt responsible for taking on the role of caregiver for their parents and siblings.

> *"I am older brother I am like your dad, your mom…because I am older son, I am her older son, I should, I should work…I should find food"*

Key risk factors for young women include: pregnancy, childbirth, caring for family members, being kicked out of parent's home or leaving due to abuse and needing to support themselves and, often, their child(ren).

The risk factors for young women include: pregnancy, caring for family members, and needing to work to support self and often a child (or children).

> *"…by the time I was to start grade 9 I was pregnant, with my first child. I was 14… the way I was looking at it at the time was I am going to have a baby and I am going to take her out and dress her up and show her off, because that's what I'd seen the older girls – 16 or 17 – doing with their kids. And I thought, you know, it's great, we can just show them off and that's all it is. So… I didn't realize the responsibility that came with it"*

> *"…there was a lot of problems going on with my sister, she was always putting a lot of stress on [my father]…from that he started getting sick so that was pretty much the reason I had to leave [school]. I left to take care of him."*

Their views of schooling were coloured by the time that they missed due to these responsibilities and the extra burden of care to juggle while attending school. However, they perceived these roles as both positive and negative. Most of these young women are determined to give their child(ren) a better life than they had, and recognize that education is the path to better job opportunities and thus a higher income for their families.

> *"…I look back at my own childhood and the patterns and how they repeated themselves, and when I was young my mom couldn't take care of me, I was in Children's Aid on and off… and here's this other child that's going to be born into this world and I can't do that… I just couldn't, so I said I'm going to change my life… I knew that I wanted to have my high school diploma because I was having a child I needed to support, that I was determined to raise and I was determined to provide for and give a life to, that I didn't have…"*

Protective factors for young men include coop programs that allow them to work and earn money while earning school credits. For young women they include school programs that have daycare and counselling services available.

Protective factors included coop programs, in-school daycare and counselling services.

b) Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Youth

For LGBT youth, there was intertwining of risk and protective factors simultaneously. For example, teachers strongly supported youth but the principal and vice-principal was against them, or a teacher was wonderfully supportive but youth would not take the support offered. In general, (with 2 exceptions) this group did not talk about their sexual orientation during the interview, and it did not figure into their accounts of early school leaving. One young person was bashed severely for being gay and left a small town because it was not gay friendly. However, lots of other events (theft, drugs, family issues, depression) were occurring in his life.

The other young person was also bashed due to sexual orientation and/or his visible minority status.

Key risk factors noted (but not related to sexual orientation necessarily) included alcohol, drugs, criminal activity, family stress, depression, and multiple moves. The narratives of these youth specifically linked the experience of depression to disengagement from school.

> *"When you do drugs, you don't really care much about anything because it's an escape from all of your worries"*
>
> *"I just didn't feel like going into school, 'cause I felt all depressed and stuff"*

The main risk factors included alcohol/drug abuse, family stress and depression, and school climate. However, these factors were not unique to LGBT youth.

In addition, despite the fact that they identified as doing fairly well in school academically, several young people conveyed that they did not value school, did not like teachers, and found school boring. This resulted in skipping school frequently which led to the downward spiral of falling behind in classes.

> *"…once you fall behind, it's so hard to catch back up…if you miss a week of school, that's so much. And I would miss two weeks at a time, you know? So, the marks started going down. Then I had no motivation to bring it back up."*

An extremely negative school climate was experienced by many LGBT youth. This negative culture included a great deal of violence – bullying, fights, and students who possessed dangerous weapons.

> *"I felt bullied. It was like a death threat. Like a death note."*
>
> *"There was a lot of violence. Everything was by fighting."*

Protective factors were rarely identified by LGBT youth and included academic performance that was average to above average; supportive teachers, family members, as well as community programs.

The main protective factors were academic performance that was average to above average; supportive teachers, family members, as well as community programs.

> *"…they [teachers] would guide you but they also make you more like you were really important and even like, you could even talk to them about problems at home"*

c) Aboriginal Youth

The main risk factors were the interplay between social class, adult role taking, attendance and distance to relocate or travel.

Aboriginal youth living in rural and remote northern areas of the province (Sudbury and Thunder Bay areas) provided insights into the ways in which their families and communities are integral contexts for their schooling experiences. In many cases, the communities were seen as "nice places" but provided "nothing to do" for young people. Extended family systems and the nature of the community played a paradoxical role in the process of identity and disengagement. For example, young people were asked to speak about how they felt to be Native,

"It all depends on where you are. When you are on reserve back home it's fine because everybody is getting along but as soon as you leave the reserve you get funny looks…or certain comments toward Native people and I don't think its right"

"Out of my family nobody had graduate from high school yet. So, I wanted to be the first to graduate, and I WILL be the first…I think my mind is more set on what I want to do than I did before I left. I have been taking all the courses that I need and I want to get into college"

Related risk factors for Aboriginal youth were relatively low levels of socioeconomic status, and the need to take on abundant adult roles while attempting to complete secondary school. For instance,

"I always had to take care of all my little brothers when I was little"

"I was living with my mom, when I had my daughter about two years ago, and I had moved to town to go to school in town, because it was easier…But, then I decided I wanted to move back to the reserve so I stayed with my mom. So, now I am working on my high school diploma"

These early adult roles, combined with issues of attendance and school culture create the context for disengagement and leaving school. The majority of these young people were missing many classes or coming to school late due to disinterest or familial responsibilities and then had a difficult time getting caught up. The consequences for this behaviour were further detention and/or suspension, disciplinary action that were perceived as unfair or ineffective. However, young people also recognized their part in drug and alcohol use which fed into the disengagement process. For instance,

"When I was fifteen like a month before I turned sixteen, the principal told me that if I don't start coming to school they were going to kick me out when I was sixteen, so I had the choice to go straight… but I didn't. I just decided not to"

"I wasn't forced to leave, and its not like I woke up one day and decided not to go back to school. I was just too tired to getup. I don't think that I dropped out as much as I missed too much school and never got any credits"

"I would say at first, when I started school it was fun but when I started grade 9 everything just started going to, well, all the bad stuff like drugs and partying…"

A further trend for rural and remote Aboriginal students was the distance to travel to school and/or the need to leave their rural homes and communities to attend schools in an urban area. Youth, educators and parents mentioned this situation as a unique challenge which exacerbates the regular challenges of schooling and engagement. For example,

The main reason? Well I had to quit school because we were moving back to [the community] and I couldn't travel back and forth everyday"

The most prevalent protective factors were forms of alternative schooling, caring teachers and self determination and insight. For example, a homework club was described in which teachers and education counsellors would stay after school and work with students and feed them supper. Alternative schooling was seen as a positive experience, especially for those struggling with multiple adult roles.

The main protective factors were forms of alternative schooling, caring teachers, being a good student and self determination and insight.

"I like being there, it's a lot more different than a regular high school, like it allows me freedom…so many thing are different, scheduling, I don't have to be forced into a class room to sit and listen to a teacher like droning on about a subject and I can work at my own pace, I can sit wherever I want to, leave and take a break and I don't have to ask permission… I feel like an adult here…there is no so much of a high school mentality"

The Aboriginal youth living in urban areas of the province generally did not demonstrate a strong Aboriginal identity, despite the fact that several were recruited from Native Community Centres. This may, in fact, be due to the manner in which the questions were asked which frequently resulted in a monosyllabic response. For example, in response to the question of how do you feel about being (Cree, Ojibwa, etc), responses were generally "Okay", "I don't feel any different about it.", "fine, "real proud" and "I like it." Most respondents were not even sure whether or not anyone in their family had attended a residential school. In spite of this, one young person spoke of the critical role culture played in terms of the ability to walk away from the negative influences (criminal activity) in his life.

"My culture…helped me out a lot, you know. It showed me who I am and what's my roots and what I'm eligible for…and what I can do to be, to keep happy. And that's how it's been"

Unlike rural Aboriginal youth, urban Aboriginal interviewees often indicated that they were good students:

"*I'm getting an A, you know;*" "*I was actually a pretty good student;*" *I did good in school;*"
"*I had high marks;*" "*I was smart"*

In general, Aboriginal youth living in urban areas of the province experienced the process of school disengagement in a similar manner to those in rural communities in terms of the social class and familial struggles that figured in the narratives of this sub population. For urban Aboriginal youth, experimenting with risk also emerged as a prominent factor leading to school disengagement.

"I was living with friends, uh, did a lot of drugs and stuff. Drank a lot and just skipped school…just led to dropping out"

As in rural communities, one of the most pervasive protective factors for urban Aboriginal youth was caring and supportive teachers.

"The teachers are pretty good there. They try to help you as best they can"

"Some teachers had an impact on my life [positive] that I'll never forget"

d) Youth in Rural Areas

The main risk factors were the interplay between "place", school personnel, and school culture such as bullying and passive discipline.

Young people living in rural areas of the province demonstrated the importance of "place" in the schooling process. Descriptions of the community were often paradoxical in that rural areas offer both safety and boredom for young people. Many young people spoke about the high incidence of drug use, alcohol abuse, and lack of activities.

Place was related to schooling such that once the pathway to disengagement is entered into, it is difficult to seek alternative solutions given the lack of choice. Therefore, schools hold a more captive place in the lives of these young people. When the protective factors and opportunities are numerous, this functions very well. However, when the risk factors become cumulative in rural schools, youth and their parents experience a kind of helplessness.

> *"It's not fair, it's not fair at all. Like we don't have a voice. Me and my mom both went to talk to the principal, about the teacher marking me absent on purpose. And all [he] says for the next half hour is that I have to stick by my teachers, and it says on this paper that you were absent so I have to kick you out"*
>
> *"I was having trouble with the teachers and the principal at school. And it just bothered me so much that I didn't feel like going any more"*
>
> *"Like why do you have to deprive someone of their education just because they do something silly?... Like, when you kick someone out of school, it's like a vacation for the kid. They never learn, right? I dunno, it makes me angry"*

The experiences of rural youth suggest that teachers and administrators play a crucial and paradoxical role in their schooling processes. Many youth described a deep ethic of care from school personnel. However, when issues were not solved as they occurred for young people, the repercussions were felt over the long term and were seen to begin the process of disengagement. For instance, young people described troubled school cultures due to severe and ongoing bullying and violence. When these issues were not clearly and swiftly addressed, students began the process of skipping school, detentions, suspensions and early leaving. Often, these students were enjoying school prior to disengagement. The following experiences illustrate this phenomenon in these rural schools and the relation between bullying and other macro level variables.

> *"I have witnessed tons of bullying that I don't think should be around"*
>
> *" ...kids call each other 'dirts' now and...they don't really have sympathy for anybody. If you're not up to their level, you don't wear the right clothes, then you are not worth their time"*
>
> *"I use to do all sorts of things so I would not have to go to school because of this girl. And my mom told [principal] and he just said he'd call the cops. But it just makes the bully more mad when they call the cops"*

The school culture issues were least well addressed by calling in the police. Young people felt that administrators and teachers needed better and swifter solutions to improve school culture. For example, specific recommendations included more "proactive" outreach by guidance counsellors and teachers, and a wider range of interesting courses which are hooked into the "real world" of work. Exemplary statements were made as follows:

> *"well, just make school more interesting...make school more fun, more for everybody"*
>
> "*...more and more people these days, like myself included, we wanna become something. We don't just want to become lawyers and astronauts, and firefighters and all of that. We wanna make a change for the world"*
>
> *"The only thing that bugged me was the teachers...They never went one-on-one with me."*

Most rural youth also recommended a change in the stricter adherence to practice on bullying. For instance,

> *"I think that is stricter rules were laid down. Like I know that there's zero tolerance for bullying and all that but I don't think the principals and vice principals, and teachers, and staff go through with it. …They don't go through with it and make sure that there is zero tolerance"*

> *"When a kid is getting taunted so bad in class that they run out of class, crying their eyes out, they should do something about that. They're letting it happen right in their class rooms"*

Unique protective factors emerged around supportive families and self determination. These young people seemed very able to reflect on their processes of disengagement and were well supported in their school efforts by parents and siblings.

Unique protective factors for rural youth included supportive families, introspection and self determination.

As youth culture is unique in rural areas, school cultures tend to become more critical in providing healthy spaces for young people. Many of the young people had friends who had also left school and were, with their friends, over-using drugs and alcohol as an escape from boredom. These activities were matched by skipping class and missing school. Moreover, the actions and care of school personnel are experienced deeply as no alternatives exist. In this respect, the localized curriculum in rural areas could focus on, and work to enhance, the realities of rural youth culture.

e) Francophone Youth

In-depth interviews were conducted with Ontario youth whose mother tongue is French and/or who self-identify as francophone. Like their counterparts in other cultural and linguistic groups, Francophone youth identified the following risk factors as particularly relevant for early school leaving: disengagement around a curriculum that is not connected to youths' life plans; passive instructional strategies; disregard for student learning styles; not being able to learn at own pace; household stress and family conflict impacting on student performance and ability to complete schooling; negative student-teacher relationships; adult misunderstanding of youth culture; ineffective school discipline; suspensions not effective in changing behaviours or encouraging school work; as well as a negative school environment (e.g., in-school police surveillance in larger urban centres). Earning money while in school was also an important priority for several youth.

The main risk factors included household/family stress/conflict; uninteresting or irrelevant curricula, passive instructional strategies, and negative relationships with teachers.

Lack of relevance of school curriculum and lack of orientation to youths' life plans were cited often by respondents as key reasons for losing interest and for disengaging from school. These youth were adamant in saying that what is being taught in schools does not reflect the life and career skills they need now and for the future.

> *"Aussi les cours qu'ils offrent ne sont pas très intéressants pis beaucoup plus de théorie beaucoup plus apprentissage pour l'université. C'est pas quelque chose que je vois qui serait pour le monde. C'est pas quelque chose que tu peux vraiment étudier dans un monde comme*

t'avais pas d'idée pis tu vas comme au magasin pis tu veux acheter quelque chose. Pis comme ça t'aide pas comme pour les taxes et les choses comme ça. It's not for every day living" [3]

"*Ils auraient pu faire des activités nous amèneraient dans des collèges; ils nous amèneraient à des places pour voir qu'est-ce qu'est la vie pour voir les autres métiers. Ca nous aiderait. La seule affaire qu'on apprend à l'école c'est l'école, pis l'école, pis l'école. Tu sais, ce n'est pas tout le monde qui peut être des professeurs. »* [4]

Francophone youth described the need for different teaching strategies because current methods were not adapted to their personal pace of learning. Some youth felt they needed different types of assignments better adapted to their abilities. Others simply were not allowed enough time to finish school projects that they knew they could complete given more time and patience. In other words, school disinterest and disengagement often occurred when students did not have opportunities to demonstrate their skills, abilities and competencies to teachers.

More individualized teaching was raised by Francophone youth as a factor that would help them succeed and stay in school:

"There are 40 people in the class and there's maybe seven of us that have to stay after school the poor teacher has to stay their for two hours every day after school there should be somebody where you could ok this person help me for this minute have more help more attention for there's not enough."

In general, Francophone youth did not raise "francophonie" issues as having an impact on their decision to leave school. While a few students transferred to Anglophone schools after not doing well in the Francophone sector, they did not blame the "French system". Though a few Francophone respondents stated that they felt that French was being imposed on them, this was not a prominent factor.

In terms of general risk issues, many Francophone youth described what seems to be a shared experience with their non-Francophone counterparts. It is important to note, however, that there were noticeable linguistic differences between regions in the way that youth responded to interview questions. Greater Toronto Area Francophones, for example, conversed solely in French during their interviews, whereas in Sudbury several respondents had difficulty communicating in French and often switched to English. In Ottawa, on the other hand, communication was generally in French but popular expressions were stated in English. This observation may be of particular interest in the context of the Ministry of Education's "Aménagement Linguistique" policy that aims to optimize the transmission of language and culture among young people.

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[3] *Translation: "The courses being offered aren't very interesting and are aimed more at theory and university learning. It's not something that I see useful for the real world. It's not something as practical as buying something in the store or doing your taxes and things like that"*

[4] *Translation: They could bring us into the colleges; they could bring us places to see what other careers are all about. It would help. The only thing we learn in school is school, school, school. You know, not everybody can become a teacher."*

Improved inter-provincial coordination in terms of consistency of grade standards and curriculum also was described as important for students who transferred between Quebec and Ontario. Some students, for example, were promoted or demoted a grade when they moved from one province to another, making it more difficult for them to adapt to their new situation because of an age difference with their classmates.

> *"Bien moi ils m'ont mis en CPC2 parce que j'étais trop forte pour rester en quatrième année. So, j'ai refait ma cinquième. So, en fin de compte, j'ai fait ma cinquième année trois fois. … [Q]uand que je vis icit en Ontario pis je redescend là-bas ils me baissent d'une année. Si je m'en va de la bas de sixième année pis je reviens icit il me monte d'une année, tu comprends. C'est bizarre là. Ca pas rapport."* [5]

Protective factors cited by Francophone youth included: alternative forms of education such as co-op and 'virtual school' that allow for youth's interests to come into play; supportive teachers and principals that understand and are patient with youth; particular individuals that spent individual time with them and helped them 'hang in there;' presence of supportive friends; family involvement and encouragement; as well as communities that work in complementary fashion with the school environment.

Protective factors included alternative forms of education and complementary community-school interaction.

f) First and Second Generation Immigrant Youth

Newcomer/1st generation youth (see Appendix F) in the Greater Toronto Area and Kitchener-Waterloo cited the need to learn a new language, linguistic difficulties, and language barriers - including between parents and school - as important challenges. Acculturation difficulties and other resettlement stresses were also mentioned by several respondents. The migration experience itself was particularly challenging for immigrant youth who rejoined a parent years after the latter had immigrated to Canada. Raised by grandparents 'back home,' these youth also had to navigate an often difficult family reunification with a mother or father they could scarcely remember. Several youth spoke of loneliness, social isolation, a lack of friends, and a difficult 'fit' with new classmates.

Main risk factors for newcomer youth included language difficulties, inappropriate linguistic assessment; lack of language instruction; non-recognition of prior educational achievements; and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system.

Newcomer youth also spoke of the negative impact of interruptions and changes in schooling due to migration. Respondents spoke of the differential expectations in educational level between schools in their country of origin and in Canada, as well as other mismatches between school systems in different parts of the world. These often translated into rigid age-grade placement practices regardless of prior educational achievements. Inappropriate linguistic

[5] *Translation: "They put me into CPC2 because I was too strong for 4th grade. So, I redid 5th grade. So, at the end of it all, I did 5th grade three times. … When I live here in Ontario then go back there [Quebec], they bring me down a grade. If I come from there with 6th grade and come back here they bring me up a grade. It's bizarre. I don't understand"*

assessment and the lack of English language instruction constituted key risk factors. Lack of familiarly with the Canadian school system as well as differences between previous and current school climates were also noted.

Student age at time of migration was found to be particularly critical, with youth in the latter years of high school most at risk for early school leaving. The non-recognition of prior educational achievement and performance at this advanced stage in school training was experienced as highly discouraging. Unfair practices identified by newcomer respondents include automatic placement in an English-as-a-Second-Language stream without prior checking of transcripts or evaluation of actual linguistic skills. The latter takes on additional poignancy in the case of migrants whose mother tongue is in fact English.

> *"The main problem was my language"*
>
> *"When I came here they dropped me back … to like a slower learning process"*
>
> *"I was further ahead. My teacher used to put it on the blackboard and asked people how to do that. And I tell her okay, this is how it is, and then the whole class started laughing at me because the way I speak English"*

It should be noted that relatively lower socio-economic status in and of itself did not necessarily represent a risk factor for newcomer youth populations. The downward social mobility and non-recognition of professional credentials experienced by many newcomers to Canada are unfortunate aspects of the migration experience, and do not, in and of themselves, necessarily translate into educational disadvantage. However, the concomitant need to have both parents working more than one job and/or seeking additional training or re-qualification, can translate into relatively less parental supervision as well as increased youth responsibility for childcare of younger family members, household responsibilities, and family financial contributions. Similarly, the need to live in neighbourhoods where housing is less expensive can translate into long commutes and difficulties balancing school/work/home responsibilities. It is often the latter that subsequently present as risk factors for school attendance and affect actual academic performance.

> *"You do better when you have more support from home … my parents try but they're new to this country also and it's hard for them and they have problems of their own. So I guess I never really received the support I needed from home"*

Main risk factors for both newcomer and 2nd generation immigrant youth included cultural dissonance; differential acculturation; family financial stresses; and unwelcoming or difficult school climates.

For both newcomer (born overseas) and second generation immigrant (born in Canada of immigrant parentage) youth, cultural dissonance with the broader society, value discrepancies between home and school environments, and conflicts between the cultural identify of youth and school culture, represent unique risk factors for early school leaving. Tensions at home due to differential acculturation within the family (particularly across the generations) were specifically noted by respondents. Financial stresses - especially the need to work to support immediate or extended family members, - and the assumption of childrearing responsibilities for siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews, also made the continuation of schooling difficult for many. Youth were often left needing to juggle school, work, and family responsibilities. Both immigrant populations spoke about negative school climates that that alienated newcomers and other

ethnoculturally-distinct youth. This often took the form of classism, discrimination, racism, negative stereotypes, school cliques, presence of gangs, and ethnic balkanization.

Specific cultural values may well inform the relative emphasis placed on school, employment, and family for both 1st and 2nd generation immigrant youth. For some immigrant youth, a desire to support the family of origin, assume responsibilities within the family business, make money, and/or to get married and start a family of their own, simply take priority over completion of a high school diploma. For others, high parental educational and career expectations combined with over-involvement in schooling, left some immigrant youth dealing with tremendous family pressure to perform.

> *"I looked at the family… I just thought like they need me to support them, and I, I never went back to school. I got to make money…but if I go to school it's going to be a hard time on them… My sisters are studying in college and university. Only me, like you couldn't finish it, as oldest one"*

Both newcomer and 2nd generation Immigrant youth spoke frequently about the importance of familial involvement in their schooling. In addition to parents and older siblings, this support often came from members of their extended family such as cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and relatives through marriage. The importance placed on educational opportunities and parental desire to ensure a better future for their children often strengthened youth's determination to succeed despite experienced difficulties. Supportive school personnel who were familiar with the challenges commonly experienced by newcomers was cited as particularly important, as was a welcoming school environment.

Key protective factors included extended familial involvement in school and the general life of youth; parents' desire to ensure better future for their children through education; religious faith and/or community social support; and a positive, inclusive school ethos.

g) Visible Minority Youth

Canada's Employment Equity Act and 2001 Census define visible minorities as persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour (Appendix F). As an identifiable social position, 'visible minority status' readily intersects with social class, culture, language, religion, generational status, and other important identity markers. This means that there is considerable variation along other lines among various sub-populations that may share only a commonality of experience directly related to their 'visibility' with respect to the dominant 'non-visible' White group. This disadvantaged social position may have both direct and indirect impacts on early school leaving.

The main risk factors for visible minority youth were: exposure to stereotypes and prejudice in school; streaming or being "forced out; " difficult interactions with administrators; higher rates of detentions/ suspensions/retentions; unfair/ineffective discipline; non-relevant curriculum; low academic involvement; low familial educational levels; limited support for remaining in school; and early assumption of adult roles.

Visible minority youth interviewed in the Greater Toronto Area and Kitchener-Waterloo identified difficulties with a particular teacher or school principal and negative school climate as two key factors that affected their learning and/or subsequent early school leaving. Many

early school leavers felt 'forced out' by a specific individual; often it was a single individual in position of power and authority who appeared to have made the greatest negative impact on respondents' school experience. Reporting rates regarding particular difficulties with a school administrator or teacher were noticeably higher for this group than for other youth populations.

> *"There was one principal …what he did was basically expel most of the Hispanic and Black students in the school. Not all of them, but basically the majority of them. He expelled them, told them to leave the school"*

> *"I never thought I'm gonna skip, quit school and stuff, but the way he was to me, he was never like that to other people you know"*

Many respondents also spoke of a school climate in which stereotypes, prejudice, racism and differential treatment were common and left unchallenged. Repeated exposure to negative messages was cited as particularly demoralizing. Youth also felt that disciplinary measures were often unfairly implemented and noted that the curriculum does not reflect their lived realities.

> *"…we had like 45 cameras in the school … we had a little police station there too … probably because there was a lot of black people there. I don't know"*

When found together these two key risk factors serve to alienate these youth and seriously compromise their academic achievements and future aspirations.

> *"A lot of kids were having problems with this specific individual, like it was at the point where there was uh, a Black kid who was wearing a chain. Like rappers have their heavy chains, and she had told him that uh, he had to take it off, because anyone who wore those kinds of chains was in a gang … and she suspended him for two weeks… He mostly got those two weeks because he argued to the fact that…his friends, who indeed where uh, White,…were wearing them and she hadn't bothered them at all."*

> *"the Vice Principal … had her funny ways, and unless you were white skinned, she didn't try to help you at all. Whether you were Indian, Chinese … any other races other than white"*

Main protective factors included strong familial involvement in the lives of youth; supportive school personnel; inclusive school environments that are free of racism, and a school curriculum that is more reflective of the lived realities its diverse student body

Important protective factors for visible minority youth include strong family involvement and support both in school and in the general life of youth. Such familial support often extends beyond parents to siblings, cousins, uncles/aunts, and grandparents. Educational support initiatives undertaken by ethno-racial community organizations also play an important role. Supportive principals, vice-principals, teachers, counsellors, and school staff are equally important. Other key protective factors include a positive school ethos that focuses on inclusiveness; anti-discrimination awareness and implementation strategies; as well as a curriculum relevant to lived experiences and reflective of diversity.

h) Third Plus Generation Youth

Whether living in the GTA, Sudbury, Ottawa or Kitchener-Waterloo, Canadian-born youth whose ancestors had been in Canada for three or more generations experienced risk factors which were multiple and complex While not all of these young people were "starting from scratch", for those who were, the stresses encountered from poverty or within the family frequently led to the premature assumption of adult roles, including pregnancy, parenting, parental caregiving, homelessness, and the need to work & earn money.

> *"Me and my mom and dad were always at each other's throats. I would go to school upset, angry and I'd cut the teacher off. I'd cut class, be suspended"*

> *"A home would be a place that has people there to care for you, or do whatever, you know. Think about you and stuff. My place would be the place where you would just come home, nobody talks to you, 'oh, he's even home', for like days…you just go home and nobody's there, so…"*

Key risk factors for "Starting from Scratch" include family stress; attempting to balance living on their own with school; experimenting with risk (alcohol/drugs, fighting, criminal activities); mental health

Experimenting with risk - including alcohol abuse, using and selling drugs, criminal activity, and fighting - featured prominently in stories of disengagement from school. Such risky behaviour often followed directly from a negative family situation, to living on the streets, or to needing to sell drugs to survive.

> *"I got into a lot of fights…a lot of kids I didn't get along with, so I fought a lot and eventually it just pushed me out of school"*

> *"[I was] selling drugs to make money. Just to be able to live on the street and not starve to death"*

Many young people were also dealing with mental health issues, learning difficulties, and social isolation. In terms of mental health issues, depression was discussed most frequently as interfering with the ability to remain engaged in school.

> *"It's very, very easy to become depressed, to stop liking yourself, liking who you are…it spreads to other areas of your life… need to address these issues at the beginning before they balloon. And it's so difficult to do because so many of the symptoms or whatnot are invisible"*

Young people's narratives were replete with examples of a lack of engagement with school, such as suspensions, expulsions, skipped classes, failed courses, and dislike of school. Risk factors surrounding home life, in combination with varying degrees of learning disability, resulted in the eventual disengagement from school. Poor academic performance and/or learning disabilities coupled with other related stresses, often resulted in chronic skipping or cutting of classes. Eventually, after falling so far behind, students would either be asked to leave or leave on their own. Some youth reported inflexibility on the part of schools in terms of rules. Often, minor rule breakings resulted in expulsion from classes or school itself. This was perceived by youth as aggression on the part of teachers.

> *"I never really felt it was gonna bring me anywhere. I never really felt I was going anywhere. Or, I don't know, I didn't think I was gonna finish anything, you know? I kept falling farther and farther behind and farther behind, and then, I was just gonna stay here for nothin', right?"*

> "*Like, you are under your car, you don't have your safety glasses on (because you can't see something), and you just get kicked (out of) class"*

Once having disengaged from school, youth from unsupportive homes were asked to leave. From this point on, another group of risk factors appear. Poverty was the main reason reported for not returning to school. Mostly, poorer youth assumed an adult role without time, resources or childcare to attend or return to school. Young people elucidated the near impossibility of living on their own and trying to go to school at the same time.

> *"I felt I had to take the responsibility [for caring for younger siblings] because I knew they were getting neglected and, uh, my stepfather was very, like, a drunk and he, almost stabbed me with a knife because he's so bad…"*

> "*I enjoyed school. I wanted to go to school. I'm stuck in a hole where it's hard to go to school and survive 'cause out there, 'cause I need to learn to have a job, still do homework…":*

For "in-between" or "mostly protected" youth, academic problems left unresolved led to disengagement with school and eventual disengagement from their family. Most reported supportive others such as friends and teachers, but also a failure on their part to provide academic assistance that was effective in terms of their learning and academic performance. Assistance either came too late, not at all, required paper work, or did not target the youths' particular needs.

The main risk factors were academic problems that were unresolved, need for further outreach and assistance from teachers, transitions between schools (French to English or between provinces), and individual risk-taking activity such as drug use and illegal activity.

Those who had left school were finding it difficult to return.

"Well I had art class that I was passing, that was the only class I was passing 'cause I had art over the last four years and, but I had taken parenting and I figured that would be easy, but we had to pass articles in and I didn't know that their grammar was all like that, and I guess I had too much slang whenever I write and every time I'd check it over on the computer and it seemed fine but I would still fail"

"I don't know, it was like I said, nobody pushed you to do anything, I got so far behind that I felt like I couldn't catch up even if I tired"

"I tried to get help. They said I didn't need any"

A unique risk factor found for young people in Sudbury was that the transition from French to English school caused significant academic problems left unresolved by the school. Another factor unique to the Sudbury group was the inability to attend school because of having to serve jail time. Six of the youth interviewed had been in some form of detention centre for a period of time. Most often, they reported this incarceration as the main reason why they left school. For most, there was also a poor school-to-facility connection. If youth skipped classes this was considered "breaching" and they would have to leave school again. The majority of this group reported drug use (marijuana). Only a few youth reported mild learning disability, suggesting that in many cases, this may have gone unnoticed.

All youth had at least one protective factor in their lives. Many young people liked school generally, did well in school, and spoke of having understanding and supportive teachers, principals, and support staff. Besides being seen as helpful, there was also a perception that teachers had limitations to the support they could offer. The youth did not blame them for their failure to provide adequate support. Young people from more privileged social class

backgrounds were also involved in extra-curricular activities and were encouraged to do well in school by parents/supportive parent(s).

> *"It's not that they were not doing their job. It's that they can only do so much. You know? And my teachers were my best friends,..."*
>
> *"I enjoyed school. I did well in school. I liked getting my credits"*
>
> *"I was passing...I was still pulling good marks...my marks were good enough"*

Key protective factors included youth from privileged social class backgrounds who were involved in extra-curricular activities and had parental encouragement, youth who liked school generally, did well in school, and spoke of having understanding and supportive teachers, principals, and support staff.

III) Parent/Guardian Focus Groups

Five focus group sessions were conducted with parents of young people who had dropped out or were at risk for dropping out in the communities of Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Owen Sound, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Toronto. One focus group was conducted with Aboriginal parents, while another included visible minority parents.

The risk factor identified was the experience of bullying on students and lack of protection offered by educators. The lack of supervision and insufficient staff to oversee student activities.

The risk factor identified most frequently in focus group discussions with parents was the experience of student bullying on the part of students and the lack of protection offered by educators. In the focus group with visible minority parents, participants indicated that black kids in particular were subject to differential and unfair treatment that amounted to hate crimes. Alack of supervision and insufficient staff to properly oversee student activities was identified. Furthermore, in cases where bullying was reported, there was a reluctance on the part of teachers and principals to get involved or to take responsibility for school violence.

> *Violence, bullying in the hallways, violence, threatening, bullying. Outside the school, no teacher in sight. No principal in sight.... I was told, well we have a certain amount of staff, we do what we can, we can't monitor the hallways, I can't be in two places at once... Your daughter's basically on her own*

Mental health and substance abuse problems also emerged as important risk factors. Native communities were particularly vulnerable to a variety of mental health issues including isolation, depression, anxiety, grief, loss, discrimination, harassment, alcoholism, suicide, anger, and family dysfunction. Participants in rural communities noted the lack of mental health services for students, particularly for 16-18 year olds. In addition, undiagnosed learning difficulties were seen as problematic. Learning problems often emerged in elementary school but went unrecognized by teachers.

I see a lot of social issues more than educational. It's maybe problems with alcohol or drugs or just with the social life. It's not always the education part that helps these kids fail. I think it's most often the social issues that take their thought away from education

Parents identified negative teacher attitudes as contributors to students' absenteeism and uncaring attitudes toward school. Teachers were seen as inflexible in their approach toward young people and unwilling to work with students who did not demonstrate a *one hundred percent commitment to academics*. Once a student was identified as a trouble-maker or an underachiever, he or she was *marked* and subsequently targeted by teachers for humiliation or punishment. Parents indicated that there is an overall lack of respect for kids in the school system, with educators unwilling to hear young people's point of view. There was the feeling that teachers/schools simply want to get rid of underachieving or problem students, resulting in students being *pushed out.*

They didn't want my daughter there, I know that…. To me…it was clear that they were segmenting and casting out those who were easy to get rid of….

But it seemed like they'd seen a downward spiral, and they wanted to keep the downward spiral going, instead of picking it up

Cultural ignorance and racism were also key themes in parent focus groups. Issues included the relational and cultural isolation of native students traveling from remote northern communities to attend high school; the lack of a positive reflection of native and immigrant people in education; racist attitudes and assumptions on the part of students and teachers; the lack of Aboriginal role models in all facets of social life; and teachers' lack knowledge/understanding of native communities and traditions. Aboriginal parents indicated that students from the north do not see the relevance of education due to limited career opportunities in their home communities and a lack of vision for their future. It was also suggested that youth from northern communities are more mature and take on adult responsibilities earlier than other youth, which ultimately interrupt their education.

So that just went on, the racism and the prejudism (sic), that goes on, not just from the people, but from the materials, the books and things, that kinda makes you feel like, 'yeah, you're here but you're not' type of thing

And it's about racism, that's what I believe. It's about discrimination that the students are facing. No matter what tools you have and how much support you have, some students just don't have the resiliency to deal with that day after day

A recurrent theme in the focus group data was the issue of punitive school policies. Parents identified that the practice of marking students absent for being late and suspending them for truancy was putting kids at greater risk for falling behind in their classes and dropping out of school. Suspending students for minor infractions such as forgetting to bring a pencil to class or wearing a shirt untucked was judged to be trivial and unnecessary. Once suspended, it is very difficult for students to catch up on their schoolwork, leading youth to lose their desire and drive. The lack of credit accumulation becomes a more serious risk factor as students enter grade 11. At this point, older students feel out of place and are reluctant to attend class with younger students.

"…If they do get in trouble, they get suspended and if they get suspended it is almost impossible for them to get caught up. They are having to learn so much material if they lose a week or whatever you can't get caught up so you lose your drive and desire"

"But the last time he was kicked out, he just decided, that's enough, and there was no way he was going back and no matter who I phoned or whatever. He wasn't going back. He was seventeen, he wasn't going in with all the thirteen and fourteen year olds"

Parents indicated that there was a profound lack of communication between educators and parents, with parents often the last to be informed when there is a problem. Parents were not always informed of their child's truancy or expulsion and when they were told, it was often too late in the semester to turn things around.

"And then, when, this was the last time he was kicked out, which was back in November. The school never contacts me to tell me he's kicked out. He was never, I was never contacted. No letter, no nothin', no contact. Now thank goodness my son is honest and open and tells me these kinds of things. Otherwise I never would have known"

To a lesser extent, school structure and curriculum were identified as key risk factors. Issues identified by parents included the lack of after-school extracurricular activities; inadequate counselling services; an overly challenging curriculum; large class sizes; overextended teachers; the lack of homework support; policies that promote kids to the next grade when they are not prepared; and transition factors as students move from the elementary system to high school.

The main protective factors that emerged in focus group discussions with parents were related to parental support and advocacy. Parents who unconditionally supported their children and promoted the value of education were a positive influence in the lives of young people at high risk for leaving school. Parents who were able to advocate for services and support from schools on behalf of their children served as an important safety net for students who would otherwise fall through the cracks. Unfortunately, families from lower socio-economic sectors were less likely to be effective advocates for their children.

"I am always trying to say now, do good in school. I am trying to push the school thing, you have to get your grade 12. I don't care what you do after grade 12, maybe doing a trade for you is the best thing. That was our big thing with our son. You have to. There is no if's, and's, or but's, you have to get your grade 12."

In addition to parents, the support of teachers and guidance counsellors were considered important in motivating young people to achieve academic success. Teachers with good mentoring skills and flexible attitudes were singled out as having a positive influence in the lives of young people.

" one of the teachers, he has made such a difference in our son's attitude because he is more like a friend. You know and is making him want to go to school and looking forward to going back next year. You know and play sports and do his work. He had a teacher last year if he did good in math he could use his CD player and I mean not a lot of teachers would do that, but if it meant he got his work done he didn't care. His marks were excellent in those classes so it makes a big difference"

Other important protective factors identified in the focus groups included having a strong sense of one's culture and heritage; individual characteristics such as the motivation to succeed; flexible school programming including self-directed courses and alternative co-operative programs; teen pregnancy programs; and extracurricular activities. In contrast to educators who more readily identified leaving school as a necessary and sometimes protective factor, only

one parent suggested that leaving school was a necessary step in helping young people mature and realize the importance of education.

Recommendations from Parents

The recommendations made by parent focus group participants centred mainly on the importance of providing flexible and alternative programs that are able to meet the unique needs of individual students. This was particularly important for those students who are not academically inclined and want or need more practical instruction. The expansion of non-academic trade-based programs was recommended, as was the provision of courses that teach practical life skills, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, car mechanics, and banking. For more remote communities, it was suggested that cooperative programs be delivered in students' home communities so that they do not have to leave home. Native parents suggested that the curriculum be adapted to account for native people's holistic learning style as opposed to analytical methods.

Participants also requested practical resource programs for students who do decide to leave school or are at risk of leaving, including job resource centres, resume building skills, and counselling. There is also a need to educate youth about the opportunities and career options available to them through education. In addition to counselling services, it was suggested that students receive material support such as home computers for those who can't afford one, or alternatively providing access to school computers by keeping school libraries open until 6:00 p.m. To help students transition from elementary school to high school, an information package delivered to all new high schools students could outline various school and community resources. Also, orientation seminars for native students coming from remote communities would help minimize culture shock. An important alternative to punitive suspension policies included sending students to the library to work, where they can be supervised by community volunteers.

> *I don't think it is helping them by suspending. I have talked to the school about it and that is what they have to do. What are they going to do about it, they have to discipline them but I don't' know, whether they go to the library and there is even a volunteer parent that stays with them and they do work in the library or another classroom or whatever. To send the kid home and suspend them, you've making their day. You are not really helping them. Or make them go to the soup kitchen and help out. Make them do something but by sending them home where they do nothing and then they are missing all that work, it doesn't seem, like to me, that is pointless*

In all the focus groups, parents recommended more frequent and on-going communication between parents and educators throughout the school year as well as increased cooperation regarding remediation and program planning. As well, schools were encouraged to increase their outreach to community members and organizations. Better communication of resources available to early school leavers and their parents was also suggested. Finally, parents suggested that support groups for families whose children leave school or are having difficulties would be helpful, not only to share stories and relieve stress, but also to generate new ideas.

> *"...more information to parents about other alternatives for kids that are thinking you know, they don't want to go to school or they don't want to continue school. Whether it be in a package when you start high school, or you know what I mean? Just some kind of information that parents are aware of. I mean if I don't know, how many other parents don't know?"*

"A support service that would cater to those kids that are on the brink of quitting school or have quit school, that they would be identified and that there would be some sort of a service available to them to try to get them back or explore other alternatives. Like a guidance counsellor almost. Some type of counsellor that the parents and the kids can go together and discuss what your options are if you decided that you are not going to attend school."

In response many of the school-based risk factors, parents recommended increased training for students and teachers. With respect to native issues, participants suggested diversity training for non-native students in elementary schools and teachers in teacher's college. Additional training to help teachers recognize learning problems and mental health issues was also mentioned, as was mandatory early childhood education to help teachers deal with special needs students. In several cases, parents suggested hiring educators from different visible minority groups so that immigrant and native students are able to see themselves reflected in their teachers.

The importance of extracurricular activities was repeatedly mentioned by parent focus group participants. Discussion centred on the importance of daily physical education and extracurricular programs such as sports, music and art in helping kids feel part of their school community and motivating them to attend school. Parents recognized the need to explore creative ways of delivering extracurricular activities, including using parent volunteers, and reducing teacher class size and preparation time

Ultimately, parents suggested that educators must do more to understand the needs of students. They need to listen more closely to what students have to say and take their opinions seriously. All students must be valued equally, not only those who are academically successful or high achievers. One mother stated:

"I just wanted my daughter embraced in a way a student in school should be embraced. And respected and treated properly and kept safe."

Every student has unique skills and talents that are often unrecognized and under appreciated. To order to provide a safe environment for students, parents recommended that schools take responsibility for bullying in schools. They also suggested uniforms could help reduce bullying.

IV) Educator Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were conducted with educators across the province. Participants acknowledges the 'endless' reasons for dropping out – they really DO NOT blame the individual at all. Rather, they recognize the complexity of the reasons and the fact that many individuals and structures are involved. This intersection of risk factors is transparent in the stories given by focus group members.

The main risk factors included the lack of cultural competency and racism. School curriculum not culturally appropriate for native or immigrant students. A feeling of alienation and stigmatization. Teachers not properly trained as cultural competency workshops are inadequate.

The main school-related risk factors that emerged in focus group discussions with educators were related to lack of cultural competency and racism. The school curriculum is not culturally appropriate for native or immigrant students; feelings of alienation and stigma ensue as a result. In

addition, teachers are not properly trained as cultural competency workshops are inadequate and do not stress the fact that learning styles may be different for different cultural groups.

> *"Native students don't talk to their non-native teachers…"*

> *"I think the problem for non-native teachers is that they'll bring in somebody to do a cross cultural workshop and you learn about the 'wheel' and the grandfathers and all that stuff, but you don't learn about native learning style, you don't learn about 'wait' time in conversation, you don't learn about reluctance to put your hand up, and that's what they need to learn."*

Curriculum, school structure and punitive policies were also key themes in the focus groups. Large schools, big classes and the rotary system render young people at risk a greater chance of falling through the cracks, with quiet kids more likely to get lost since extremely needy, attention-seeking students will pull the teacher away from the other students. Bullying and lack of teacher support were mentioned infrequently in the educator focus groups.

> *"Students were not showing up for class …just the nature of the fragmented secondary system. The student goes to four different classes with four different teachers…they're coping with four entirely different personalities; the day is too much for them."*

Non-school related risk factors included mental health/addiction problems which figured largely in the educator focus groups. Drug abuse, and marijuana in particular, was cited as being a critical problem. The decriminalization of marijuana means that kids are more likely to come to school high; also, there is less stigma attached to smoking up. Mental health issues often go untreated with young people facing wait lists of up to two years for mental health services. Family issues such as lack of support, low SES, family dysfunction, and assumption of adult roles lead to chronic absenteeism and have nothing to do with school life.

> *"Drugs and alcohol abuse are a huge problem. If there's drugs and alcohol in the home, that significantly decreases people's ability to not only do the work, but get any support and encouragement towards school. "*

> *"The theme that keeps coming up with my students, the ones who have left, is hopelessness and helplessness, which is indicative of depression."*

> *"There's the expectation, you know, you're sixteen now, go live on your own or you're sixteen now, you've got to help contribute towards the family's income."*

The main protective factors identified in the focus groups with educators were flexible and alternative programming and caring and supportive teachers. These alternative settings are characterized by flexibility; small classrooms, off-site classrooms, correspondence credit work, availability of assistance, and option to work at own pace. Teachers who function as protective factors are characterized by their ability to listen to students, to ask questions, make connections, and engage in conversation. Educators identified that at least one caring adult person to support the student makes all the difference, often bridging the gap between the student and school administration. It is important to note here that this need to have a caring "other" emerged repeatedly in youth interviews. It was also noted by educators that some young people at risk are very bright and have a good deal of confidence and self-esteem.

"Offer a wide variety of settings. I call them off-site campuses where we actually try to have those students working in a situation where they're most comfortable possible. We have a daycare here on site and they have the support of the worker right next door."

"We can really support these kids by getting to know them really well and get to know what's happening in their lives….Everything just spills out of them 'cause they need to talk to someone and they haven't been able to talk to anybody."

"It would be taking them aside and saying 'I noticed your work is beginning to suffer. Is there something going on that you need to tell me?' …And, when they stoip coming, calling them up and saying 'Why? Why aren't you here? You know you can tell me what's going on?'"

Recommendations from Educators

The recommendations made by educator focus group participants focused mainly on the need to enhance cultural competency, involve communities in the schools, examine co-op programming, and scrutinize staffing. Native people should be involved in policy making at the Ministry level in order to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive of Native people. For example, courses on Native culture should be compulsory rather than optional. There should be a priority given to hiring Native teachers and teachers from diverse cultures. Teacher training at the college level was mentioned repeatedly as a critical way for teachers to develop classroom strategies for problem students, gain knowledge and understanding of the alternative programming available, teach teachers how to talk to students, and enhance understanding of Native and other cultures – the emphasis on Native learning style is what is currently missing.

It was suggested that there should be a course at every Faculty of Education across the province that deals with teaching at risk students. Educators discussed the need to include communities in a more profound way in the school system. The Regent Park program in Toronto was posited as a model for community involvement as it combines tutorial support for youth with community youth workers, who are in communication with the schools. These community workers act as a mediator between schools and parents. Another example offered was the Rexdale Community Micro Skills Program that provides IT summer camps, offered in partnership with local community schools. It was noted that volunteers from the community can engage young people at risk, and serve as mentors. Volunteers can also provide communities with the resources to deal with mental health issues and addictions. There is a need to expand the horizons of young people, particularly those from poorer neighbourhoods. The chain of repeated drop outs can be broken in some communities by showing inner city kids the potential that exists. One innovative program partners with York University to help grade 11 students earn a university credit, then asks those students to become community leaders and pull another student along with them.

The need to critically examine co-op programming was identified in the educator focus groups. Clearer pathways to cooperative programs are needed as clear pathways exist for university or college-bound students. Well-defined apprenticeship programs in European countries can serve as models for Canadians. An official government body that directs apprenticeship programs was suggested. Stronger links need to be established with potential employers, and government incentives would assist companies in participating in coop programs. This could overcome current difficulties surrounding finding placements for students interested in a coop. The need to make co-op placements more relevant was noted, as placing a student in a Footlocker store selling running shoes was not deemed productive – students can get such part-time jobs on their own. Placements are scarce so inappropriate placements happen because teachers are

desperate. Parents and youth need to be educated about the coop programs that are available and the merits of enrolling in such programs. It was also noted that technical schools have a bad reputation. This need to be turned around as parents and youth are reluctant to go to those schools.

Educator focus group members also offered many recommendations regarding staffing issues. They discussed the need to hire more teachers, counselling staff, drug counsellors, social workers, and special education individuals. Staff is required so that schools can help high risk kids re-engage whether immediately or in the future. For example, five attendance counsellors in one community for 116 schools is insufficient and ineffective when one-on-one, personalized service is needed. The system requires a dedicated person in each school to deal strictly with high risk students. This person would identify kids, intervene, and act as mentors and advocates. In a school with 1300 students, a specialized staff person would have a case load of 130 students. It was also suggested that retired teachers could be recruited to help with after school programs. A major reinvestment in schools is critical. High drop out rates were as the result of under funding and under-resourcing of schools, particularly of guidance counsellors, music, physical ed, libraries, librarians and support staff.

Finally, educators indicated that zero tolerance policies must be eliminated. Youth repeatedly suspended or expelled have issues and need to be counselled rather than kicked out of school. Suspended students cannot be sent home; rather they require support, counselling, and a place where they can complete their homework.

SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has been designed to assist the Ontario Ministry of Education to further understand and address the issues surrounding school disengagement by youth who are presently leaving the secondary school system prior to earning their diploma.

The process of early school leaving often begins years prior to the actual act of school withdrawal itself, and is related to countless events, experiences, and choices that occur throughout the life of an adolescent. Accurate identification of school and non-school related risk factors is essential to a more in-depth understanding of these early school leaving processes. Important to note is that there is a dynamic interplay among these variables. As a result, school disengagement by youth is determined by complex relationships among multiple causes.

This study has focussed on the "voices" of youth experiencing difficulty with the system as well as those of parents and educators. The picture they have painted for us is one of youth, parents, and educators struggling to have youth succeed in a situation which is complex and demanding for all three groups. Their delineation of the risk and protective factors currently operating in Ontario extends research knowledge about such factors and shows a remarkable level of inter-respondent agreement. The analyses show that many of our youth struggle against imposing difficulties at the individual, family, school, and societal levels. At the same time, they reveal a wealth of strengths at every level upon which we can build effective interventions. Despite the multitude of risk factors faced by these young people, with very few exceptions, they constructed a future for themselves that included being in school.

Analytic synthesis of key risk/protective variables and recommendations delineated by youth, parents and educators provides clear guidance for the development of policies and programs to retain our youth in school through to high school graduation at age eighteen.

Recommendations for the Education System

Successful strategies for reducing early school leaving must reduce risk factors and increase protective factors operating at macro, meso and micro levels. It is important to target and address multiple risk factors and to recognize that they are interconnected in the lives of these young people. The important role played by key protective factors also suggests that there are strengths than can be enhanced and built upon.

In using the research data to provide general advice and direction to our education and service systems, the feedback and recommendations of the various categories of youths and adults have been combined. The resulting advice can be summarized as falling under one of the following key principles: be more understanding, be more flexible, and be more proactive in reaching out to youth, families, and communities.

1. Be more understanding!

The stories told by many youth reflected such difficult and complex situations that interviewers, coders, and analysts sometimes required debriefing. Parents and educator focus groups also acknowledged that the needs of youth are varied and great. The need to be knowledgeable about the diverse life circumstances of students, and to treat such differences with respect, was emphasized from many perspectives. Some suggestions include:

- Listen to what to students have to say
- Understand the complex "youth culture" your students live in
- Recognize the impact of various forms of racism, discrimination, and bullying
- Operate under principles of respect and fairness
- Accept different lifestyles and life plans
- Take acquisition of cultural competence seriously (i.e. provide adequate teacher training)

To provide a foundation for a supportive learning environment, schools need to be places where all students feel welcome, respected, encouraged, as well as psychologically and physically safe.

> *"I think if they{teachers] just listened. If they heard what I was saying and paid attention to it."*

> *"I think that more supports in school. Like I know that guidance counsellors are always available, I get that; but, having, you know, other services there because everyone has unique and individual needs and I think that if kids felt like they could talk to somebody …."*

2. Be more flexible!

Most large systems and organizations develop policies and protocols that enable them to be effective in achieving their mandates and goals. The education system reflects this at the levels of the Ministry, school boards, and individual schools. It is essential to continuously examine our implementation of 'rules' to ascertain that we are not putting up unintended barriers to youth success. Suggestions in this area include:

- Take into account the adult roles of youth (work, parenting)
- Develop local curriculum (fitting local job pathways, providing relevance and appropriateness for different cultural groups, meeting individual needs)
- Innovative, interactive and personalized instructional strategies
- Develop disciplinary alternatives to suspension/expulsion
- Build links with the community (agencies, organizations, groups, businesses)
- Consider the fit between school structure and adolescent development (need for sleep, brain development)
- Include a broad offering of extra-curricular activities
- Expand alternative approaches to school structure
- Create improved inter-provincial coordination and international assessment of curricula and educational standards

Most of the above suggestions will need to be adapted across schools depending on location (rural-urban), language (English-French), and student composition (Aboriginal, immigrant-refugee, SES status, community employment opportunities etc.).

> *"You know, I don't think kids have to go to school everyday. Maybe every other day. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I find five days is too much for kids. It becomes very tiring, getting up at like, seven. Like, I get up at 5 o'clock in the morning just to get ready. Now, that's early."*

3. Be more proactive!

All youth, parents, and educators acknowledged the many positive aspects of our schools. Youth specifically pointed out that relationships with teachers and school administrators were often crucial protective or risk factors. There were many insights and recommendations regarding ways in which schools/teachers could be even more effective. These included:

- Be proactive when youth start to disengage from school
- Provide sufficient and appropriate resources for assessment, counselling, and needed interventions
- Develop better communication with parents and seek ways to increase parent involvement in schools (especially immigrant parents)
- Improve teacher skills at monitoring student understanding/progress
- Create inter-sectoral partnerships to support poor and troubled youth (i.e. those with mental health problems, substance abuse issues, involvement with the law, family difficulties, or in the care of child aid agencies) to stay in school
- Encourage a culture in which youth feel they 'belong' within schools
- Find ways to use school facilities for homework help and mentoring

> *"... if I was the principal of a school right now, I would set up a program where, if people were exhibiting warning signs of things that could possibly lead to [dropout] like, you know, I was never in a position to tell anyone at my new school that I was having problems at home and that like, there was a chance that I could leave home, right? It's like, there needs to be a forum where people can be like, okay, you're my teacher; I've got to be able to say, you know what? Things aren't working well for me at home."*

Perhaps most important of all is the need to recognize, support, and build upon youths' own hopes and aspirations. Despite the multitude of risk factors faced by these young people, with very few exceptions, they constructed a future for themselves that included being in school.

> *"I'm going to college. If they don't let me in I'm going to pound on the doors until they let me in. I'm going to wear my high school diploma around my neck for the entire week. I'm going to make copies of my diploma and paste them all over my desk in my house."*

Recommendations to Parents

The analysis of youth experiences recounted through the interview process, underscores the critical importance of positive family dynamics to school engagement and academic success. Experiences within the home environment clearly had direct impact on all aspects of youth's lives, including their schooling. Strong support of different family members was often cited by youth as an important key protective factor; its absence a critical risk factor. Specific recommendations to parents include:

- Know what is going on in your child's life
- Show interest
- Be involved and stay involved
- Have realistic expectations
- Provide direction and guidance
- Communicate with the school and stay connected

Most of all, be aware of the ways in which positive or negative family dynamics can fundamentally impact your child's school experience and overall well being.

Recommendations to Other Youth

Youth also made recommendations to other youth which are significant. The single most common recommendation was to **stay in school,** even though, as one interviewee noted, "it's such a cliché." Fellow youth were encouraged by their peers to "just get your diploma – it has an impact on every aspect of your future." Specific recommendations include:

- Think of the future, take it seriously, focus on your goals, and do it for yourself
- Ask for help, use all available support
- Find someone who will listen and give you advice
- Be yourself regardless of what others say
- Avoid alcohol/drugs;
- Tell teachers how you learn the best
- Don't be intimidated by teachers; watch the teachers who are problem
- Explore other schooling options
- Change schools if needed
- Persevere despite challenges.

> *It's smart to stay in school. If not, you're screwed. You can't get a job. The most thing you're going to get is working at Burger King or something, working for, like, what, $5.45 an hour or something, not even minimum wage…you're going to be putting cardboard into the burgers for Christ's sake. But, it's the best thing to do, is to stay in school and get your education 'cause without that, your life ain't going nowhere."*

POLICY and PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study suggest that policy and practice initiatives will be most successful if they have a broad focus. This is consistent with previous research literature regarding effective strategies to reduce early school leaving (see for example, Schargel & Smink, 2001; Rumberger, 2001; Health Canada, 1999; OPSI, acf. Shannon & Bylsma, 2003).

This focus should include academic, social, and supportive activities which are responsive to a wide range of student needs and made possible through the effective integration of community services. All approaches to reducing early school leaving and improving school success must take into account that the youth who are most likely to disengage from school come from diverse circumstances, face daunting developmental challenges, and often have needed to assume adult roles which require attention to effective work/life balance strategies.

Policy and practice implications of the study recommendations summarized in the previous section, and considered further in the context of previous research, can therefore be conceptualized under four broad categories as follows:

Early prevention strategies targeting:

- improved inter-relations between the home and school
- greater recognition and consideration of the diversity of youth experiences, needs, and backgrounds
- awareness of the importance of elementary education in the process of early leaving
- enhanced reading and writing programs
- enhanced teacher training regarding multiple pathways to school disengagement and adolescent development

Core secondary school structure strategies including:

- caring mentoring/tutoring
- linking relevant and significant community service experiences with academic learning
- continued alternative schooling
- continued out-of-school enhancement (after school and summer scholastic, recreation and social programs)
- active attention to all aspects of school culture
- effective school leadership
- high levels of collaboration and communication
- curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned with defined standards
- frequent monitoring of teaching and learning
- creation of a supportive learning environment
- equitable, effective, and consistent disciplinary rules and procedures
- greater reflection of, and sensitivity to, diversity in curricula and school environments
- fostering of a safe, inclusive, positive, school climate
- ensuring and encouraging sufficient re-entry points

- ensuring linkages between Student Success personnel, teachers, administrators and parents

Core secondary school class room strategies including:

- ongoing and focused professional development addressing the unique challenges of the daily lives of youth and the inherent complexities of the process of early school leaving
- openness to, and inclusion of, diverse linguistic, cultural and ethno-racial identities
- enhanced career education and workforce readiness
- continued consultation and discussion with youth
- instructional strategies to accommodate different learning styles
- curricular delivery and pedagogy in line with various adolescent developmental needs

Wider school-community strategies including:

- creating a strategy for developmentally appropriate school system renewal as informed by the realities of youth (culture, identities, life experiences, need for meaningful input)
- addressing the specific slippage points occurring in the process of disengagement (eg. transition into grade 9)
- greater community collaboration, particularly forged links between child welfare children's mental health, youth justice and education as well as more informal collaboration with community volunteers
- increased communication, interaction, and consultation with youth's families and/or respective communities

General recommendations for working with and responding more effectively to youth include:

- recognizing and involving the strengths, abilities, and energy of youth
- providing youth with opportunities for decision-making and meeting their future goals
- educating involved adults about the value of youth and the most effective way of working with them
- respecting the rights of youth to be treated fairly and with respect

These recommendations could be used to inform current Student Success plans in Ontario school boards where many innovative programs are currently being evaluated. More specifically, they may be used to inform the work of the Student Success 'rescue teams' and the Learning Opportunities Grants via attention to active outreach to disengaged youth. The various recommendations provided could also be sorted into strategic foci labelled Curriculum and Structure', 'Pedagogy', and 'School Culture'.

In any framework, there is unprecedented opportunity to develop and evaluate a range of intervention programs aimed at retaining students in secondary schools and ensuring that each and every youth successfully graduates, prepared for further study, additional training, or direct workforce entry. This is necessary in order to ensure that **all** youth are able to achieve their full personal and academic potential.

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Appendix A: Risk and Protective Factors

RISK FACTORS: NON-SCHOOL RELATED

Macro Level Variables

- Low socio-economic status (SES)/social class (poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, low levels of education, single-parent households, and minority and/or blue-collar families; etc.)
- Minority group status (for example, visible minority youth, First Nations/Aboriginal youth; Newcomer/English-as-a-second language youth; Francophone youth; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered youth)
- Gender (males are at a higher risk than females, however the consequences for female leavers are often more severe regarding unemployment and poverty)
- Community characteristics (urban vs. rural youth; poor, socially unstable, unsafe neighbourhoods; areas with high crime rates and/or gang activity, high unemployment rates, high percentages of early leavers, Remote/rural communities where youth must travel long distances to go to school, or must leave home to attend school; Negative beliefs/attitudes/expectations about youth in culture -school, home, community)

Meso Level Variables

- Household stress (parental rejection; family conflict; marital discord; inadequate parental supervision; inconsistent parental discipline; parental substance abuse; parental mental illness (particularly of mother); financial, legal or health issues; unconventional structure of family; large size of family (four or more siblings); single parent households; high numbers of residential and/or school moves; child neglect abuse)
- Family Process/dynamics (low levels of parent-child bonding, attachment, communication; lack of parental involvement with school issues; marital discord between parents/guardians)
- Limited social support for remaining in school (by teachers and other school personnel (principals, guidance counsellors etc..); parents; siblings; friends; parents with low educational levels and real or perceived low educational expectations for their child)
- Conflict between home-school culture (conflict between cultural identity of youth and school culture)
- Assumption of adult roles (translation for family members; providing care for family members; part-time work (more than 15 hours per week); pregnancy; childrearing responsibilities)

Micro Level Variables

- Low levels of student involvement with education (low levels of academic and/or social engagement at school; low hopes and/or expectations for academic success/achievement; poor academic achievement, particularly in core subjects such as English and math; low levels of literacy)

- Youth with disabilities/mental illness (learning, cognitive, behavioural, and/or physical disabilities as well as mental illness)
- Experimenting with risk/social integration versus alienation (disregard for curfews; early sexual activity; runaways; homelessness; early cigarette, alcohol, marijuana and/or other substance use; high levels of substance use; involvement with the criminal justice system; association with peers that engage in risk activities)
- Discrimination and identity conflict (low levels of self-esteem/self-confidence/self-efficacy; or high levels of cultural pride, identity and self-esteem, which are in conflict with school culture)

RISK FACTORS: SCHOOL RELATED

- Ineffective discipline system (discipline system that is perceived to be unfair and/or arbitrary)
- Lack of adequate counselling/referral (lack of support and/or referral from schools to appropriate agencies for youth (and/or families of youths) experiencing personal and/or academic difficulties; lack of representation by visible minorities in positions such as guidance counsellor)
- Negative school climate (structural barriers within the school that alienate minority students; ideological conditions within the school climate such as: racism, classism, discrimination, language barriers, Eurocentrism, homophobia, heterosexism. Negative student-teacher relationships; school policies that prevent youth from expressing themselves as responsible adults; teachers who fail to recognize the critical role they play in students' academic motivation and outcomes)
- Relevance of curriculum (monotonous school environment with no apparent connection to adolescents' experiences in the wider community or the adult world; curriculum that fails to acknowledge and include the contributions/experiences/history etc. of minority groups; poor quality and superficial curriculum)
- Passive instructional strategies (traditional teaching methods that "teach from the book"; not allowing youth to select any of their own materials; not formulating links between the learning in the classroom, existing community issues and the "real" world)
- Disregard of student learning styles (a disparity between teaching style and students' learning style; teachers who do not recognize the diverse learning needs, strengths, weaknesses and interests of their students; teachers who do not use varied teaching methods to teach diverse student groups)
- Retentions/suspensions (Youth who have been held back in elementary school and/or repeatedly in high school; frequent high school suspensions)
- Streaming (youth in General (academic) or Basic streams)
- Lack of assessment and support for students with disabilities (lack of academic and/or counselling supports for students with disabilities)
- Other (High numbers of transitions between schools; rigid age-grade placement practices; lack of language instruction; more data is needed on the potential risks of large versus small school size and class size)

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Communities/schools with anti-poverty/anti-discrimination awareness and strategies
- Educational advantage/high educational aspirations and expectations
- Mixing students of SES backgrounds- type/structure of school
- Positive school ethos/climate
- School size (match between individual needs and size of school)
- School-home fit
- School-developmental needs fit
- Teaching styles – supportive and inclusive
- Relevant curriculum – popular culture; reflection of diversity
- School engagement
- Parental involvement (in school and in general life of youth)
- Moderate youth employment (10-15 hours per week)

Appendix B: Main Messages from Literature Reviews[6]

Socio-Demographic Factors Associated with Early School Leaving

I. Introduction

Significant numbers of adolescents from all countries, including Canada, withdraw from the formal education system before attaining a high school diploma, and consequently are lacking in essential skills for the job market and full participation in society. In Canada, although the proportion of early school leavers has noticeably declined since the 1930s, early school leaver rates remain high relative to other developed countries.

Early school leaving is a long term, multi-dimensional process influenced by a wide variety of school and out-of-school experiences with broad social and cultural implications, rather than a single decision made at a specific moment in time. To reduce rates of early school leaving, the focus must be on the intersection between family, community and school variables, rather than simply on individual student traits. In addition, the relationships between variables of risk and how these interactions relate to early withdrawal must be considered.

II. Definition of 'At High Risk' and Types of Early High School Leavers

No universally accepted definition of *early school leaver* or 'dropout' exists. Early school leavers are typically defined as students who leave school (not including transfers) before they graduate with a regular diploma. Some students leave school before entering ninth grade, but most withdraw during their high school years.

An at high risk student is a youth unlikely to graduate on schedule with the skills and the self-esteem necessary to have meaningful options in the areas of work, leisure, culture, civic affairs, and relationships. Historically, the term 'at high risk' has been used interchangeably with poverty and was conceptualized as being located within the individual or family, as opposed to structures and systems. Current work attempts to link individual and systemic factors and to place the developmental needs of young people at the nexus of the investigation. Within a systemic rather than individual context, the term 'drop out' has evolved to early school leaver.

Risk status fluctuates over time, based on circumstances and contexts, and is not a fixed quality. For example, periods of transition can increase risk. Exposure to multiple risk factors increases one's likelihood of experiencing problematic outcomes and the impact of exposure to risk factors as an infant or young child may be more detrimental than exposure later in life.

Three types of early school leavers have been identified: *Dropouts* are youth who are actively leaving or who have already left school, and are the ones for whom most

[6] The main messages do not include citations or references as these can be found in the full literature reviews.

prevention, retention and recovery programs are directed. *Tune-outs* are students who remain in school but have disengaged from learning; unless they interrupt class or cause problems, they are tolerated or ignored. *Pushouts* are youth who leave school because they have been suspended or expelled; they do not fit easily into the system, and thus are encouraged or told to leave school.

III. The Costs of Early High School Leaving

The lifetime social and economic cost of early school leaving is considerable in relation to issues such as health, crime and societal cohesion. Education has a primary role in a youth's ability to acquire social capital, access career opportunities and fully avail themselves of life chances.

The indirect costs of early school leaving include an inability to access such opportunities, as well as social exclusion, including the losses related to withdrawing prematurely from a system designed to instil civic and social responsibility. Youth who withdraw from school prior to achieving their diplomas are likely to suffer financially and emotionally due to, for example, high unemployment rates, poverty, lack of social support and substance abuse.

The direct economic costs of early school leaving can include a reliance on social programs such as employment insurance and welfare, as well as the costs incurred through lost earnings or unrealized taxes associated with unemployment. Early leavers have significantly lower employment rates than do graduates, and this is particularly true of female leavers, whose employment rates are approximately 20 percentage points below those of male leavers.

IV. General Canadian Statistics

In 2001, 18.4% of Canadian men and women between the ages of 20-24 years did not have a high school degree, certificate or diploma. The rate of early school leaving in Canada varies considerably among provinces and territories, with Nunavut having the highest rate at 67.4%. Across the provinces, the highest percentage of early school leavers is in Manitoba (26.9%). In contrast, Ontario has the lowest rate with 15.9% of individuals ages 20-24 years not completing high school in 2001. A large proportion of Canadian youth who leave school early do so at an early age and thus at low levels of education. Approximately one third of early school leavers drop out with Grade 9 education or less and almost two thirds drop out with Grade 10 or less. Four in ten early leavers have left school by the age of 16.

V. Non-School-Related Factors

A) Macro Level Variables

Socio-Economic Status (SES)/Social Class

The best documented correlate of early school leaving is socioeconomic status and parental social class. Students from lower SES backgrounds are much more likely to leave high school without obtaining a diploma, than are those from higher SES backgrounds. In 2000, American youth living in households with incomes in the lowest 20% of all U.S. family incomes were 6 times as likely as their peers from families in the top 20% of the income distribution to leave high school without obtaining a diploma. In

Ontario, working class students predominate in lower, more applied streams while children of professional and privileged families tend to be placed in academic streams.

Minority Group Status

Minority group status (due to for example, race/ethnicity, country of origin, language and/or sexual orientation) is significantly associated with high rates of early school leaving. Cultural norms which perpetuate racism and discrimination and block anti-oppression initiatives in schools include: discourses of denial, colour/sexual orientation blindness, blaming the victim and tradition (universalism and political correctness).

The experiences of minority youth in Canada are likely to differ from their U.S. counterparts, due to a greater diversity in ethnic, racial and language composition. Canada's ethno-racial minority youth are largely represented among more recent newcomers to this country, many of whom are learning English for the first time. Many of these newcomers are members of both cultural and visible minority groups. Ontario is also home to large populations of native-born Francophones, and particularly in the northern parts of Ontario, aboriginal youth.

Visible Minority Youth

Students who are members of racial or ethnic minorities are more likely to leave school prior to obtaining a high school diploma than are non-minority students. One of the issues common to many minority early school leavers is that their parents are unaware of how to deal with the educational system and to advocate effectively on behalf of their children. This problem is more pronounced when language is a barrier. Schools have few processes in place to assist parents in better understanding the school system, in order to ensure effective involvement in their children's education.

First Nations/Aboriginal Youth

First Nations or Aboriginal peoples have a long history in Canada (and elsewhere in the world) of racially based discrimination from the white dominant group. From the 1600s through to the 1800s, Canadian schools held the interests of European settlers and the acculturation and assimilation of aboriginal youth as their primary focus. The residential school system, which existed from 1867 into the 1970s, forcibly removed aboriginal children from their homes, their families and their communities. Children were immersed in a white-dominated, English-speaking and Christian environment, away from their loved ones and cultural traditions. Despite recent governmental efforts to improve condition for First Nations peoples, the ramifications of residential schooling continues to the present day, drastically affecting generations of First Nations peoples, through its foundation of marginalization and exclusion.

In Canada, the United States and Australia, the early high school leaving rate is highest among indigenous/aboriginal youth (in Canada, First Nations, Inuit and Métis), as compared to both visible and non-racialized youth. Over 69% to 71% of First Nations youth in Canada never complete grade 12, and graduation rates are as low as 28.9% to 32.1% annually. Aboriginal youth around the world are burdened with virtually all the risk factors listed in the *School Leavers Survey* (1991) including: poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, cultural devaluation, culture and language barriers, low

educational levels, low achievement expectations from society, large overcrowded families, family violence or conflict, frequent family moves, low parent-child contact, single female parent, family alcohol/drug abuse, birth defects and physical disabilities, physical or mental health issues, learning disabilities, low self-esteem, aggressiveness, school failure, drug use and abuse, teenage pregnancy, suicidal ideation.

Newcomer/English-as-a-Second Language Youth

Researchers have found that youth from non-English speaking families are at a higher risk of early school leaving than other youth. A recent Calgary study found an early school leaver rate of 74% among English-as-a-second language youth– a rate two-and-a-half times higher than students from English language backgrounds. In Canada's two largest cities, Toronto and Vancouver, almost 33% of the low-income population is comprised of immigrants, and in many cases, the children of these immigrants are doing poorly in school. This fact is particularly true of refugees. Seventy-five percent of Canadian immigrants settle in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, often in ethnic neighbourhoods – areas where more than 30% of the residents are from one ethno-cultural minority. Such urban ethnic neighbourhoods more than tripled from 77 in 1991 to 254 in 2001. Sixty-one percent of recent Canadian immigrants speak neither English nor French at home, with Chinese being the first language of more than 33% of new immigrants. Between 20-50% of the school population in Canada's large urban centres are non-English speakers. In the city of Toronto, 31% of elementary and secondary school students were born outside of Canada, in 175 different countries. More than 50% of these students come from China, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Iran and Afghanistan. These newcomer youth are simultaneously grappling with various resettlement stresses (including cultural adaptation) and linguistic barriers that challenge sufficient mastery of school curriculum content and requirements.

Francophone Youth

Francophone youth educated in English-language schools are continuously aware of their minority status. These students often struggle with feelings of inadequacy when compared to English-speaking peers, have low academic self-concepts and do not feel themselves capable of succeeding at a post-secondary level. Conversely, Francophones in the French-language schools can ignore their minority status in the province, as they are in the majority in their classrooms. Until the 1980s, Francophones were more likely than Anglophones to withdraw from school prior to graduation. The implementation of legislation in 1968, guaranteeing the right of French-language instruction and of Francophone self-governance is seen to be directly responsible for the rising levels of academic achievement in the Franco-Ontarian community. However, despite rising high school graduation rates for Francophone students, there is still a 10% difference in completion rates between Francophone and non-Francophone students in Ontario.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth

In Ontario, the culture of schooling can perpetuate a heterosexist climate that creates severe risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) youth. The social organization of school culture has been found to be reinforced by students, teachers, administrators, curriculum and communities. LGBT youth thus meet with tremendous discrimination within the school environment, are at high risk for a number of health

problems, including suicide ideation and attempts, harassment, substance abuse, homelessness, declining school performance – all issues which have been linked positively with a higher risk for non-school completion. LGBT youth who live in rural or remote areas are at an especially high risk of discrimination and subsequently, early school leaving, as these areas are less likely than large urban centres to be supportive of diversity and tolerant of difference.

Gender

Young men are more likely to leave high school without obtaining a diploma than are young women. In Canada, throughout the 1990s, young men have had higher early leaver rates than women and the gap has widened in recent years. In 1990, 19.4% of young men aged 20-24 years had left school early, compared to 14.7% of women (a difference of 4.7% between the two sexes). In 1999, 14.7% of men in the same age group had left school, compared to 9% of women (a difference of 5.7%).

Although young women are completing high school at higher rates than young men, studies indicate that those women who do leave school early are at a greater disadvantage than men who leave as they face an increased risk of unemployment, poverty and lack of social support. In addition, as it is the educational level of mothers (not fathers) which is likely to impact children's educational attainment levels, early school leaving for young women can have a more far-reaching generational impact than can leaving for young men.

Community Characteristics

Neighbourhood and community characteristics have a considerable effect on youth and subsequently on early school leaving. For example, although urban youth are at a higher risk of early leaving than rural or suburban youth, rural youth who do leave school tend to do so at a younger age. Youth living in poor, socially unstable, high crime, gang-ridden and unsafe neighbourhoods, as well as areas with a high percentage of adult early leavers, single-parent families, ethnic/minority and blue-collar families and high unemployment rates, are at greater risk of early school leaving than are than are other youth.

The issue of "distance learners" is of particular concern throughout Canada and in Ontario. Youth living in rural or remote communities in Northern Ontario, particularly those youth from First Nations communities, are at a greater risk of early school leaving. Such youth must cope with the challenges of being bussed long distances and/or for lengthy periods of time, to larger areas so they can attend school, or even more difficult, those youth who reside in areas so distant from services that they must leave home to attend school as well as live, in another, larger community – far from the support of family and friends.

B) Meso Level Variables

Household Stress

High overall levels of family stress are positively inked with early school leaving. High levels are signified by the presence of three or more stressors, including: financial, health, or legal problems; unconventional structure or large size of family; parental

rejection; family conflict and marital discord; inadequate parental supervision; inconsistent parental discipline; child neglect and/or abuse; parental substance abuse; high numbers of residential moves and/or school transitions (changing schools).

Family Process/Dynamics

Early school leavers tend to have lower levels of bonding and attachment to their parents, experience their parents as using strong measures of discipline, and rarely share personal experiences with their parents. Although parents of leavers may be more likely to utilize a permissive parenting style, they also tend to use extraneous punishments and respond to situations with negative emotions. Parents of early leavers are more likely than other parents to allow their children to make their own choices.

Limited Social Support for Remaining in School

Leavers are 3 times more likely than graduates to have parents who did not finish high school or whose job requires little education. Youth who have a sibling who did not graduate from high school are at much higher risk of early school leaving than those students with siblings who completed high school. Although lower levels of parental education do not necessarily indicate low educational expectations for children, this can sometimes be the case and when it is, it has proven to be positively correlated to early high school leaving. Young people who left school early are more likely to state that their parents did not encourage them in their plans and hopes, and parents of leavers are more likely than other parents to have low educational expectations for their children. A greater percentage of leavers (compared to continuers or graduates) claim that their friends do not consider high school graduation or a post-secondary degree to be particularly important. Leavers are also less likely than continuers or graduates to have close friends who go on to post-secondary education.

Conflict Between Home-School Culture

A disparity between home and school culture can have a strong negative impact on academic outcomes. Students of colour and low SES are met with numerous barriers in society, and therefore, in school, that increase their risk of early school leaving. Traditional North American school systems commonly reflect white, middle-class culture, and youth from diverse backgrounds may feel alienated, unwelcome, or out of place. Such schools, which endorse the values of the majority culture while disregarding those of the minority student, can exclude minority youth from the overriding school culture, and compel youth to choose between their education and their cultural identities.

Assumption of Adult Roles

Early school leavers have a greater tendency, when compared to school continuers and graduates, to prematurely assume adult roles. Leavers tend to be more occupied with adult tasks within their families of origin, taking on such responsibilities as translating, helping to obtain health care for other family members, and tending to the elderly or children. Families sometimes withdraw adolescents from school to fulfil needs at home and rigid school policies rarely accommodate the myriad of family situations and personal crises with which youth can be faced.

One of the most common adult roles the majority of today's youth are assuming is part-time work. Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta have the highest percentages of working students, and not coincidentally, are also the provinces with the lowest unemployment rates.

Students who work more than 15 to 20 hours per week, or students who do not work at all, particularly male students, are at a higher risk of early school leaving. However, students who are employed for a modest number of hours (less than 20 hours per week) are actually at a reduced risk of school leaving.

Research indicates that Canadian high school students, particularly young men, are responsive to local labour markets, and the jobs they assume while in school significantly lower their likelihood of completing high school. Students placed in the Basic level in the streaming hierarchy (the majority of whom are minority youth) have been found to it leave school once they realize that for them, high school is not a route to university or a professional job, and thus there remains no obvious reason to complete high school.

Rather than leaving high school early to participate in the labour force full-time, many young women leave school due to pregnancy or child-rearing responsibilities. Many who do not have dependent children when they leave school, have them soon after. Female leavers have an extremely high unemployment rate as compared with male leavers and completers of both sexes. For young women then, there is a powerful relationship between the responsibilities of motherhood, early school leaving and unemployment. And unfortunately, many of these young women are shouldering these responsibilities without a partner. The combination of lack of education, sole parenthood and non-participation in the workforce has severe long-term consequences, particularly of a financial nature, for these young women and their children.

C) Micro Level Variables

Student Involvement with Education

Academic engagement is the identification and involvement with the academic features of school, including: in-class relationships with teachers, curricula, school policies and procedures. *Social engagement* is the identification and behavioural involvement in the social aspects of the school, including: students' relationships with friends, extra-curricular activities, and relationships/contact with teachers outside the classroom. Social engagement is predicated upon the identification with the social aspects of school - a sense of *belonging,* in other words, a match between student and school environment. Students who do not identify with or feel a connection to the dominant culture of a school struggle to succeed academically. These students are often from visible minority groups, lower SES backgrounds, and/or from homes where English is not the first language. Such youth, often characterized by school officials as 'at high risk' or "reluctant" learners, may realize that there is little hope of success for them and thus, refuse to engage at all.

Early high school leavers tend to have lower levels of both academic and social school engagement and for many future leavers, the process of disengagement from school

can begin quite early: 35% of leavers were already disengaged by the age of 15. Truancy can be viewed as one of the first indicators of disengagement and one of the strongest indicators of early school leaving. The hopes and expectations that youth hold for their educations can also have a significant impact on their future educational success and outcomes.

Generally, leavers have lower grades than graduates, and this is especially true of male leavers, who not only tend to have poor grades, but are likely to have repeated a grade in elementary school. Leavers typically do have trouble with core subjects such as mathematics, science and English or French and this can discourage students, leading to lowered expectations in regards to graduation. However, not all early school leavers do poorly in school: almost 50% of early leavers achieved a B average or better prior to leaving. Some argue that certain students leave school prior to receiving a diploma are gifted and become disengaged due to boredom and alienation resulting from an uninteresting and unchallenging environment.

Youth with Disabilities/Mental Illness

Students with disabilities often cope with poor academic performance and low levels of self-esteem and as such, are not well engaged with school. The high leaver rate among students with disabilities is especially problematic when viewed in relation to race as there is overrepresentation of minority students in special needs classrooms. There is very little research on the impact of mental illnesses on youth relating directly to early school leaving, despite the fact that approximately 18% of youth aged 15 to 24 report having experienced feelings and symptoms consistent with mental illness or substance abuse. We do know however, that approximately 50% of leavers identified in a national sample had severe emotional and mental health problems.

Social Conformity versus Autonomy

Early school leavers tend to be less socially conforming and exhibit a greater need for autonomy. Unfortunately, however, compared to elementary school classrooms, early high school classrooms usually place more emphasis on teacher control and discipline, and provide less opportunity for student decision-making, choice or self-management. Thus, the natural inclination for autonomy found in all youth of this developmental stage, combined with a view of the classroom as being controlling and limiting of their choices, can impact on behaviours and levels of motivation, and consequently contribute to early school leaving. Early school leavers are likely to have a greater level of independence, be less connected to their parents, have parents who have less control over them, and be less interested in living close to their parents. Leavers are also more likely to publicly challenge a perceived injustice.

Experimenting with Risk

There is a strong relationship between experimenting with risky activities, structural factors such as SES, parental education and family composition, and early school leaving. Early school leavers have a greater tendency to experiment with socially risky activities than do continuers or graduates. Risky activities would include: disregarding parental/guardian curfews; staying out all night without permission; engaging in sexual relations at an early age; running away from home and/or being homeless; early and/or

frequent cigarette and/or substance abuse; involvement with the criminal justice system or an association with peers who engage in delinquent behaviour.

Some argue that minority youth, through their attitudes, behaviours, and actions in school, may be attempting to challenge a status quo which excludes them, and thereby generate social and institutional change. In this light, disengagement, truancy and early school leaving, as well as oppositional behaviours considered to be deviant (specific styles of dress, language, and even violence), can be understood as practices of resistance when their intent is to highlight the perspective and experience of a minority group and to challenge dominant and oppressive norms.

Discrimination and Identity

Early school leavers have been found to have lower levels of self-esteem or self-confidence than continuers or graduates. However, in apparent contradiction to these findings, some argue that minority students do not leave school early due to a lack of self-esteem; instead, they are pushed out due to their strong sense of cultural pride and high levels of self-esteem, characteristics which traditional schools attempt to ignore or control. This suggests that minority students face an educational predicament; while they and their parents acknowledge the worth of a high school diploma in terms of employment and social mobility, they are also faced with curricula and behaviours of school staff in regards to their identity, which causes them to disengage from the system. Minority students are thus placed in a position of having to choose between their identity and academic success. Thus for many minority students, early school leaving can be understood as an act of empowerment necessary to maintain their self-esteem and cultural identity.

VI. School-Related Factors

School experiences are believed to have a significant effect on the health outcomes and behaviours of youth, over and above individual disparities in health outcomes and behaviours. And yet, according to PISA, roughly 25% of students in all participating OECD countries are unhappy with their school experience.

Early school leavers are more likely to perceive their school environment as unrewarding, have negative interactions with their teachers and experience social and academic problems. The reality for many youth is that schools are uncomfortable and unnatural places for them to be. For many students, schooling signifies institutional hypocrisy and aimlessness, rather than consistency and clarity of purpose; arbitrariness and inequity, rather than fairness; ridicule and humiliation, rather than personal support and respect; and worst of all, failure, rather than success. For others, the disaffection can seem less personally damaging – school is seen as a theatre of meaningless ritual, unrelated to students' serious concerns.

Ineffective Discipline System

Early school leavers commonly condemn school discipline as being "unfair and arbitrary". "No Tolerance" or "Zero Tolerance" policies[7] are implemented discriminatorily, impacting students of colour and poverty to a much greater degree than other students: the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University concluded that a disproportionate number of students suspended and/or expelled every year are students of colour.

Studies indicate that school policies and procedures can actually serve to remove students from school. Some of the terminology used to depict this includes: "easing out", "forced out", "pushed out" and "discharging". Such regulations are viewed as "policies that purge". Schools contribute to students' involuntary withdrawal by "systemically excluding and discharging 'troublemakers' and other problematic students…". Regulations pertaining to student behaviour and attendance often carry punishments such as suspensions or expulsions and can effectively "push out" students who are overtly expelled, or covertly, discouraged from remaining in school.

Lack of Adequate Counselling/Referral

One of the primary reasons for early school leaving can be attributed to a lack of support and referral from schools to appropriate agencies for youth who are experiencing difficulties in their personal and academic lives. Minority youth further indicate the importance of more representation by visible minorities in positions such as guidance counsellors. Such youth believe that only visible minority counsellors can fully understand the complexities of minority students' lives, therefore have true insight into their situation, and be in a genuine position to assist them.

Negative School Climate

School ethos, school climate, or the school learning environment has a powerful effect on students and their experiences with and in school. The foundation of a positive school ethos is the relationships between students and school personnel, and the level to which students feel they belong. Many students and almost all early school leavers feel disconnected from their schools and perceive them as unfamiliar and uninviting places, wherein teachers are unconcerned with their well-being and make no attempts to assist them in their learning.

Many students self-identify as loners and claim that they did not feel as though they 'fit in'. Often, these feelings of exclusion are associated with negative school experiences and early school leaving. Such feelings of exclusion are particularly common among minority students as a lack of connection with the educational system, and a perception

[7] No or Zero tolerance is a strict approach to rule enforcement which allows for no levels of tolerance or compromise for violators of the policies in question. Punishment under this approach in schools is quite severe and is likely to result in suspension or expulsion. Critics of these policies argue that school administrators tend to ignore less serious infractions from certain groups of students (i.e. white, middle-class) rather than apply harsh punishments, but are more likely to enforce zero tolerance policies when acts are committed by other groups of students (i.e. students of colour/low SES).

of and experience with structural barriers within schools alienate minority students from traditional educational environments. Schools, which serve as the main location of social reproduction, are microcosms of the larger society; to maintain social order they produce and preserve ideological conditions necessary to reproduce existing social-class and power relations. For minority students, this involves duplicating ideals of racism, classism, discrimination, language barriers and Eurocentrism. Consequently, the marginalization and alienation these students experience outside the schools is reflected within the school environment, wherein issues of equal access to opportunities and success are restricted and their subordinate status is legitimized.

Research into early school leaving and minority students reveals that Black students - leavers as well as continuers/graduates - disclose that unrestrained racism exists within schools, and that even when specific occurrences are raised with school authorities, there are rarely official reprisals. This was found to be particularly true when it was school personnel who were exhibiting racism or in the case of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered students, homophobia. Student perceptions of bias or racism by teachers serve to alienate minority youth and impede academic achievement.
One of the main contributing factors relating to early school leaving are negative teacher-student relationships, based on school rules and regulations that prevent youth from expressing themselves as responsible adults. School personnel play an essential role in a student's commitment to academics. Leavers have strongly voiced the opinion that the process of school withdrawal was not only effortless, but was aided by a negative school climate, teachers, guidance counsellors and family who facilitated the progression of disengagement and ultimately laid the foundation for early school leaving.

Most teachers fail to recognize the critical role they play in students' academic motivation and outcomes. Rather, they place the blame for early school leaving on the individual student, pointing to the student's personality or the nature of the students' family as causal feature of early school leaving. Most leavers are conceptualized by teachers as socially and academically lacking, with deficient values and attitudes toward education. This negative view was one of the most significant reasons given by youth as to why they left school prematurely. Negative school climate clearly plays an important role in determining school behaviour, both social and emotional, as well as academic performance. It is critical to note that school culture is important to *all* students.

Relevance of Curriculum

One of the key factors relating to early school leaving is a monotonous school environment with no apparent connection to adolescents' experiences in the wider community or to the adult world. Many youth perceive the educational system to be irrelevant and stagnant. Poor quality and superficial curriculum significantly affects youth at risk of early school leaving. For example, one of the most influential factors in the disengagement and ultimate premature school leaving of minority students is that of racial identity. Minority students who do not see their culture or history reflected in the curricula, are unlikely to view the teachings presented as relevant to their lives and consequently, are more likely to leave school early.

Passive Instructional Strategies

Another school-related factor connected to disengagement and early school leaving are teaching methods. Youth have clearly stated that they dislike 'being taught from the textbook and worksheets', 'not having work explained' to them, or 'not getting help' when they require it. Reading literacy is vital in terms of academic achievement and outcome. Ongoing opportunities for students to choose their own reading material is a significant aspect of reading achievement, as is a diverse selection of available reading materials. In order to engage students and improve literacy, curriculum must actively formulate links between existing community issues and the 'real' world.

Disregard of Student Learning Styles

Teachers who understand that students have diverse learning needs, strengths, weaknesses and interests positively impact on their students' learning and students' potential for success. Such teachers are able to respond to the varied learning styles of their students and to draw on these different styles while simultaneously attempting to enhance the abilities of every student. Unfortunately, this is often not the case, and more often than not, learning styles, whether based on gender, race/ethnicity or another factor, are overlooked. U.S. research indicates that due to a disparity between teaching style and students' learning style, 8% of youth leave school early.

Gender studies have found that boys and girls typically respond to divergent learning styles. Male students are not as likely as female students to appreciate verbal, linguistic approaches, and instead, respond better to visual, logistical and analytical approaches to learning. Traditional high schools, however, commonly utilize passive learning approaches, and this places all students who prefer more interactive learning styles at a great disadvantage.

Retentions/Suspensions

Grade retention is one of the most significant indicators of early school leaving. In particular, those students who have been held back in elementary school and/or who have been retained repeatedly are considered to be at a very high risk for early leaving. High school suspensions may also be related to early school withdrawal. The impact of Zero or No Tolerance school policies which result in suspensions or expulsions, has been studied by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. Results indicate that "over-zealous approaches to promoting safety" have resulted in 3.1 million children in America suspended in 1998 and another 87,000 expelled. The report finds that "more than 30% of sophomores who drop out have been suspended" and that a disproportionate number of students suspended and/or expelled are students of colour.

Streaming

The practice of streaming or tracking can be linked to a students' perception of low expectations for their academic success, and this can have a profound impact on student learning and educational outcomes. Studies have found that a large percentage of youth who left school early were in the general stream, the majority were in the basic stream, and only a fraction were in the academic stream. Aboriginal youth are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in the gifted category.

Many teachers believe strongly that due to lowered teacher expectations, minority students are placed more often in the lower streams.

Lack of Assessment and Support for Students with Disabilities

Academic or counselling programs aimed at students with learning and/or cognitive disabilities is related to enhanced academic self-concept, which has proven to have a significant impact on a students' academic functioning. As studies have concluded that youth who are struggling academically are at an increased risk of early school leaving, it makes sense that when timely and comprehensive assessments and supports for students with learning and/or cognitive disabilities are not available, those students who require them will be at an increased risk of low academic self-concept and subsequently, low grades and an elevated risk for early school leaving. Similarly, although the reviewed research did not speak directly to mental illness, it certainly stands to reason that when mental illness assessments and supports are not available to students, youth who require them are likely to struggle both academically and personally.

Other Factors

Although the literature reviewed did not detail the following school-related factors, they were mentioned briefly in some studies as being correlated to early school leaving: school organization and size; transitions between schools or grade levels; rigid age-grade placement practices. More research is clearly needed to assess the impact of school organization and class size, the transition between schools and grade levels, rigid age-grade placement practices, and lack of language instruction on early school leaving.

VII. Reasons Students Give for Early School Leaving

School-Related

Forty percent of male and female early school leavers cite school-related reasons for their early withdrawal from school. These factors include: disliking school; being bored or not interested; and poor relationships with teachers. Struggling with coursework, being "kicked out" of school and 'missing some credits so not worth continuing' were also mentioned. One of the most common school-related reasons mentioned by leavers are poor teacher relationships.

Many minority students cite racial issues and a Eurocentric curriculum as factors in their early school leaving, referring to curriculum that failed to recognize the contributions and experiences of visible minority Canadians. Such students viewed the school as unwilling or unable to engage them, and consequently, they were unable to make relevant connections between their lived experiences and what they were being taught; the outcome of which was early school leaving. Many students also noted the alienation they felt due to a lack of representation by minority school personnel. They made a link between student disengagement and the scarcity of visible minority role models in the schools.

Job-Related

Forty percent of male leavers, as compared to 15% of females, cite work-related factors (favouring work over school or having to work due to financial reasons) for their early

withdrawal. There is an important interaction between employment pull factors linked to job-market structures and/or family cultural values or needs, and early school leaving, particularly in the short term. This has significant long-term implications both for the 'at risk' student any children he or she may have presently or in the future.

Family-Related

Thirty percent of young women leave school early due to personal and family reasons. These reasons are mainly due to pregnancy, childrearing and marriage, but are also attributed to substance abuse issues, conflicts at home and medical conditions.

VIII. Protective Factors Associated with School Completion

Protective factors are individual or environmental characteristics that offset or reduce the impact of risk factors and promote resilience. Individual resilience is both an adaptive and developing process, emerging over time as an individual becomes exposed to risk factors. As with risk factors, protective factors are most likely cumulative. The presence of a single protective factor in a child or his/her environment may not be indicative of a child's likelihood to be resilient. Instead, it is the accumulation of protective factors that combine to protect individual wellbeing and enhance the overall likelihood of success.

Membership in a close family and/or having the support of another adult can counteract the adverse consequences of risk factors, including early school leaving. Students who identify greater levels of connection with their families tend to have higher levels of academic competence and educational aspirations, both of which have been positively linked to school completion. Parental interest and involvement with a child's education; high parental academic expectations and aspirations for a child's academic success; a students' perception of high parental expectations around school completion; and a home environment that is encouraging of learning, positively influences youths' educational outcomes. Parents' whose interest extends beyond academics, to the entire lives of their children, parents who are very involved in, and aware of their children's everyday activities, tend to positively influence school completion rates.

Although family SES is a predominant risk factor for early school leaving, family involvement can counteract this risk. The relationship between family involvement and positive academic outcomes has been established to exist across all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students of all ages. Furthermore, although neighbourhood socioeconomic conditions are negatively correlated with early school leaving, reliable sources of social capital and access to support and supervision by adults in the community, may serve to protect youth from contextual influences, even in the poorest of neighbourhoods.

Moderate levels of employment while still in high school are associated with positive academic outcomes. Students employed 10 hours a week during their last year of high school have higher rates of school completion than those who do not work at all (although more than 15 hours of work per week has been proven to be negatively correlated to school completion.

IX. Limitations of Extant Research and Implications for Further Research

The majority of the research shares a number of significant limitations, including:

- no universally accepted definition of an early school leaver
- studies use various and often unstated methods for determining leaver rates
- the non-school variables of early leaving have flaws in measurement, design and sampling, and information on almost all the published variables is based on unknown measurements and/or unreported reliability and validity
- many studies use single indicators as opposed to multivariate ones
- the majority of studies are retrospective rather than longitudinal, and so do not encompass students' processes of school withdrawal, but rather their present day understanding.
- few studies seek to understand the intersection between specific, but not necessarily independent variables of risk
- many of the risk factors identified (particularly those related to family) focus on structure rather than process/interaction
- estimates often disregard youth who withdraw prior to grade 9; immigrants who never attended school in their country of residence, yet did not graduate from school in their countries of origin; data from private schools; or follow up to ensure transfer students have reenrolled in a new district
- there is insufficient research on early school leaving as it relates to physical, cognitive/learning and/or mental disabilities, and none that was readily apparent which focused specifically on youth in foster care
- very little research exists on early school leaving resilience/protective factors
- there is little existing research that highlights the voice of students who are deemed at risk of early school leaving, or who have actually withdrawn
- there is a scarcity of research addressing early school leavers the criminal justice system, despite the fact that in Canada, approximately 5,000 adolescents are held in correctional/detention facilities every day
- the existing literature focuses primarily on drop-outs – with attention being given to 'push-out' factors (particularly with regard to minority groups); there is a need to focus future research on 'tune-outs' and 'push-outs' as well
- much of the research fails to sufficiently examine how variables such as class, gender, identity, race/ethnicity, power and history, and the intersection of these variables, impacts on the processes of early school leaving for minority youth
- many studies overlook school climate as a factor in early school leaving and continue to place the blame for disengagement on youth and their family backgrounds, rather than acknowledging schools' responsibility in ensuring the academic progress of all students
- a consistent, overarching theory of early school leaving does not exist and research in this area has hence evolved without a coherent framework, presenting a plethora of individual variables, with little apparent theoretical cohesion; the models that do exist are typically individualistic, rather systemic.

X. Conclusion

The process of early high school leaving often begins years prior to the act of school withdrawal, and has proven to be related to countless events, experiences, and choices that occur throughout the life of an adolescent, beginning as early as before a child enters elementary school and continuing throughout high school.

School and non-school related risk variables can be useful in understanding which factors contribute to early school leaving, however, it is imperative to remember that the interplay between these variables is exceedingly interactive and that early school leaving is the result of a complex relationship between multiple causes.

Early school leaving also involves youth outside of those identified by high risk factors such as race and class, and studies focusing only on these variables may overlook the complex interconnections which can lead to premature school withdrawal.

Changes at the level of the school and community can result in positive outcomes in school retention and success. Schools must develop innovative ways of assisting youth in developing and enhancing the skills they need to succeed both in school and in life. Students thrive when there is a proper fit between school climate and their developmental and academic needs. They respond to teaching styles that support their involvement and participation in learning and recognize popular culture and they thrive in environments that encourage and apply innovations in teaching and student interaction.

Early school leaving is a multi-dimensional and long-term process that can be different for different groups of students. Understanding the complexities related to early school leaving is essential in order to modify existing school programs and to create effective practices for increasing graduation rates and reducing early leaving rates. Educators and policymakers must understand the complexity of these root causes before they can design effective strategies and programs that will transform schools into environments where all youth have equal access to a diploma.

Early School Leaving Prevention and Intervention Programs

I. Introduction

Canada's early school leaver rates remain high relative to other developed countries.

It is estimated that in 1995, 15% of Canadians aged 24 years were early school leavers and in Ontario, recent figures indicate that secondary school graduation rates have decreased substantially over the last four years, such that as many as one-quarter of students may not graduate.

In order to reduce rates of early school leaving, the focus must be on the intersection between family, community and school variables, rather than simply on individual student traits. In addition, the relationships between variables of risk and how these interactions relate to early withdrawal must be considered.

Early school leaving is a long term, multi-dimensional process influenced by a wide variety of school and out-of-school experiences with broad social and cultural implications, rather than a single decision made at a specific moment in time.

The lifetime social and economic cost of early school leaving is considerable in relation to issues such as health, crime and societal cohesion. Youth who withdraw from school prior to achieving their diplomas are likely to suffer financially and emotionally due to high unemployment rates, single parenthood and substance abuse. The indirect costs of early school leaving on individuals can include: an inability to acquire social capital; social exclusion; access career opportunities; and fully benefit from life chances.

The direct economic costs of early school leaving on individuals can include: low socioeconomic status due to a reliance on social programs such as employment insurance and welfare (leavers have significantly lower employment rates than do graduates, particularly female leavers, whose employment rates are approximately 20 percentage points below those of male leavers); and the costs incurred through lost earnings associated with lower-wage jobs or unemployment.

The costs of early school leaving on society include questions about Canada's ability to compete as a nation in a highly competitive global economy. The direct economic costs of early school leaving on society can include: the costs associated with a reliance on social programs; and unrealized taxes associated with unemployment.

There is general consistency in the literature in terms of the characteristics of those who leave early, and the negative conditions which contribute to this process. These factors are discussed at length in the companion paper to this one, *Socio-demographic Factors Associated with Early School Leaving: A Literature Review*.

II. Lack of Empirical Data on Effective Programs

The empirical evidence on the effectiveness of prevention/intervention programs on early school leaving is scarce and weak and out of those evaluations which do exist,

very few are able to demonstrate program effectiveness, and virtually none of the evaluations link outcomes directly to a reduction in early school leaving.

A specific best practice or most effective treatment to address early school leaving does not currently exist, despite the fact that a number of programs appear to hold promise. That said, there are a number of strategies which, when successfully implemented, have resulted in positive outcomes for student academic success.

III. Categories of Preventions/Interventions

Research indicates that the process of early school leaving is influenced by both individual as well as systemic factors, and as such, programs may focus on one, or both of these elements.

Programmatic strategies attempt to address individual student values, attitudes and behaviours associated with early school leaving through additional resources and supports designed to keep youth engaged in school. *Systemic strategies* attempt to transform the systems and institutions that contribute to early school leaving by improving the environmental contexts of potential leavers through resources and supports that strengthen and reform families, schools and communities.

To be effective, programs must be comprehensive and directed towards all facets of a student's life, and as youth leave school prematurely for a multitude of reasons, services and supports must be flexible and customized to meet individual student needs.

The majority of programs can be categorized according to the following types: personal/affective; academic; family outreach; school structure; and work-related. The majority of effective programs include more than one type of strategy, indicating that the prevention or reduction of early school leaving can best be achieved through a variety of means.

IV. Early School Leaving Program Strategies

The elements necessary in a effective prevention or intervention program include: the existence of real opportunities for schoolwork success; a caring and supportive environment; clearly understood relevance of current instruction and learning to future accomplishments and possibilities; a means of effectively addressing students' personal and family problems; an attitude of inclusion, including an acceptance of diversity as well as a willingness to be accommodating and flexible within clearly defined program boundaries; close school-community partnerships.

Regarding classroom practice, the most effective preventions/interventions provided students with a challenging combination of academic and work experiences; challenging and interesting courses and applied integrated curriculum; high teacher expectations; and purposeful strategies aimed at promoting self-worth, confidence and competence.

Schools, as well as specific programs, are most successful with a broad focus that includes academic, social and supportive activities. Effective schools and programs are

responsive to a wide range of student needs, made possible through the effective integration of community services.

EARLY PREVENTIONS

a) Parental Skills Training/Family Involvement

Family involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school. In fact, the long-term impact of parental involvement in a child's early school experiences has been found to have positive benefits to youth in relation to academic success through to age 20.

Schools can support family involvement in a number of ways, including: training teachers and staff to recognize and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of family members; encourage active participation of family through extended hours and educational programs geared towards people of all ages, as well as through home visits; make creative use of technology to ensure all families can access school personnel as well as to connect students with resources in their community. Families advance their own involvement by being aware of school policies and connecting often with teachers; participating in school activities; providing a home atmosphere that demonstrates the importance of education; and volunteering at school.

Issues such as language, nationality, cultural norms and parental educational levels often create barriers that families are unable to overcome alone. For this reason, it is essential that both at the elementary and the high school level, systems are in place to assist families in better understanding the educational system, so they can be more effectively involved in their child(ren)'s education, and ultimately, have a greater impact on their academic outcomes.

b) Early Childhood Education

The importance of children's early academic experiences, in daycare, preschool and nursery school have the power to impact either positively or negatively on educational outcomes, depending on the experience of the child in that setting.

Whatever a child's background – whether from an educated or illiterate family, from a family of wealth or one of poverty, early childhood education can ensure that all children enter elementary school with the opportunities and experiences necessary for future academic success. Children who attend quality pre-school programs learn competence, coping skills and positive attitudes towards learning.

c) Reading and Writing Programs

Literacy is the basis for successful learning, and as such, programs designed to assist struggling students improve their reading and writing skills produce benefits that support other early school leaving prevention and intervention strategies.

It is imperative that positive relationships with teachers are developed and that youth receive explicit literacy instruction in all subjects. Targeted instruction, including strategies for fluency and advanced comprehension is necessary, as is respect for and sensitivity to individual student diversity and gender.

Sufficient opportunities must exist to strengthen and improve learning through curriculum that is relevant to students' lived experiences. Teachers who understand the importance and influence of cultural and technological shifts and innovative and flexible school environments aimed at meeting individual student needs are key to improving youth literacy.

BASIC CORE STRATEGIES

a) Mentoring/Tutoring

Mentoring is a one-to-one nurturing and encouraging relationship between a mentor and a mentee, which although does address academics, has a broader, more holistic approach. Mentors have the power and influence to transform the lives of their mentees and families.

Tutoring, also a one-on-one relationship, is specifically focused on academics and is therefore, an effective way of responding to literacy or numeracy concerns, and thus, many believe to the early school leaving rate associated with low-achieving students.

b) Service Learning

Service learning aims to link significant community service experiences with academic learning. It is a teaching/learning method which supports individual and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility. Service learning has four components: preparation, action, reflection and celebration.

c) Alternative Schooling

Alternative schools are designed to serve a specific population, such as youth with disabilities, or unique learning or behavioural issues, teenage parents, or potential school leavers. Special attention is paid to the individual academic and social needs of each student, as well as to how these needs are connected with the successful attainment of a high school diploma.

Alternative schooling creates an individualized environment for each student through small student populations and teacher-student ratios; clearly stated mission and discipline codes; caring staff; flexibility; frequent opportunities for professional development; high expectations for student achievement; academic programs tailored to individual student's needs and learning styles; and a total commitment to assisting every student succeed.

There are five types of alternative schooling: the alternative classroom; the school-within-a-school; the separate alternative school; the continuation school; the magnet school.

d) Out-of-School Enhancement

After school and summer programs are designed to keep students connected to academics, reduce information loss and motivate student interest in a variety of scholastic, recreation and social areas.

Youth attending quality after-school programs have improved peer relations, emotional adjustment, grades, school conduct, self-esteem, and conflict resolution abilities. The out-of-school programs offered by schools or community groups may be the only scholastic support, recreation or cultural enrichment youth at risk experience outside of school.

Making the Most out of Instruction

One of the main contributing factors relating to early school leaving are negative teacher-student relationships, based on school rules and regulations that prevent youth from expressing themselves as responsible adults.

School personnel play an essential role in a student's commitment to academics. Interventions that enhance teachers' abilities; develop teaching methods that support a broad range of student identities and learning styles; draw on innovative teaching resources; and address the individual needs of each student, are likely to produce significant benefits.

a) Professional Development

A more serious commitment to the ongoing professional development of every teacher and principal throughout the school system is needed. In fact, participation in ongoing development is so important to teacher effectiveness, that it has been suggested it be mandatory for all educators and that continuing certification be contingent on such participation

Skilled teachers are one of the most significant determinants of student achievement; and for teachers to work effectively with students, and in particular with students at risk of early school leaving, they must be provided with opportunities to develop new skills and techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.

Programs educating teachers should be lengthened from one to two years following an undergraduate degree and student teachers should be afforded longer blocks of time working in schools, as well as assistance in critically analysing their work so they can develop their own style of teaching and innovative practices, rather than simply replicating what they see.

Ideal professional development allows teachers to: work together to plan programs; discuss teaching methods; examine various methods of teaching hard-to-reach students; access the strengths and weaknesses of their districts; draw out parental views; develop tools to assess student learning; and improve their reporting to parents. For teachers to develop these skills, they require the time and resources to attend workshops, learn from experts, reflect on their own experiences and experiment with newly gained knowledge and proficiencies.

In order for professional development opportunities to be effective, they must be: grounded in the curriculum that youth are studying; connected to multiple elements of instruction; extended in time rather than a short-term event; include theory, demonstration, practice and feedback, rather than simply a lecture on teaching

strategies; and take place within an academic environment wherein the leadership supports ongoing collaboration about improved teaching and learning.

b) Openness to Diverse Identities, Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences

In order to effectively address the learning needs of a diverse population of students, teachers must develop their curriculum with individualized learning at the forefront of their minds. When teachers recognize diversity in their students, in terms of how and what they identify with and how they learn, and when this recognition is reflected in how teachers teach, students are free to discover new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners.

A recognition of diversity allows students to: become involved learners rather than isolated ones; discover new and innovative ways of solving problems; expand their skills in areas of weakness to achieve successful outcomes; demonstrate skills in their areas of strength to achieve success; engage more easily in school and with other students. Schools respond effectively to student and family diversity when there is a clear understanding of how the structural processes of delivering education impact differently on various groups of students and on individual students.

In order to ensure student engagement and retention in schools, as well as to achieve improved learning outcomes, it is essential that issues of power, equity and social difference are properly addressed. The development of an inclusive school environment results in a process of schooling that is not only more relevant for racial and minority youth, but enhances the overall scope of the entire curriculum for all students.

An inclusive school environment, however, can not happen through teacher training alone. Rather, countless changes must occur; from curriculum reform to changes in policies and procedures to the food selections in the cafeteria.

c) Instructional Technologies

Teachers that do not incorporate new technologies into their lesson plans are ignoring significant learning opportunities for their students and not providing them with the tools necessary to fully participate in today's workforce. When new technologies are accessible, they can remove barriers to learning and promote positive attitudes and success for students previously disengaged with school and learning.

Educational technologies can take many forms, including: television, videotapes, DVDs, CD-ROMs and the Internet. Technology can provide students with an opportunity to enhance systems thinking, collaboration skills, teamwork experiences, cross-cultural exchanges and critical thinking. It has the potential to expand teacher and student access to educational resources – a fact particularly critical to educating youth in remote communities across Canada.

Instructional technologies demonstrate to teachers, parents and students that educational practices can and do change, and that today's classrooms are places of relevance to today's youth. If schools designed their learning strategies around information technologies, both teachers and students would be more engaged with

education, more motivated to teach and to learn. The effective use of such technologies, however, requires teachers, with the assistance of community specialists, to be prepared to incorporate computers and related devices (CD-ROMs, Internet, etc.) into their lesson plans.

Instructional technologies allow students to significantly raise their levels knowledge, learn problem-solving techniques, develop the skills required to handle large amounts of information, analyse concepts from several different perspectives and develop he higher level analytic and critical thinking skills that are required in today's global marketplace. Furthermore, instructional technologies allow teachers to individualize the teaching process, thus providing greater opportunity to reach at risk youth.

Funding, as well as sufficient teacher training, is necessary if instructional technologies are to be used to their full potential in the schools

There is an enormous gap between those people and communities who have easy access to information technologies and those who do not; people of visible minorities, those with low-incomes, less education, and children of single parents (particularly in urban centres and remote areas) are among the groups least likely to have Internet access. Youth from low-income families simply do not have access to computers before or after school and do not have access to computers at home. Accordingly, improved access to computers as well as other technologies is increasingly important within the school settings.
Boys are more likely to be interested in computers and related technologies than are girls, thus it is important that teachers are aware of this difference and work to capture girls' attention, so this invaluable learning tool can be used effectively by students of both genders.

High-quality educational software is specifically geared towards Canadian students, based on Canadian experiences and cultures must be available to Ontario schoolchildren. Every school in Ontario must be adequately supplied with the hardware and software necessary to make information technology an actual learning tool for all Ontario students, and for this to happen, a cooperative venture between governments and business sectors must take place

Making the Most of the Wider Community

Schools are part of the communities which house them. Effective interventions acknowledge this and develop links with the wider community in order to help students succeed in school and in life.

a) Systemic Renewal

Secondary schools with high rates of early school leaving must be fundamentally reinvented in order to see significant improvement. A new system must be created; one that is challenging and rigorous, and that cultivates students who can think, create, analyse, reason, debate, synthesize, understand, communicate, learn and continue learning.

School policies, practices and organizational structures must be open to change if they are to be effective in addressing the diverse needs of a changing student population.

Organizational, rather than programmatic or individual elements are significant in relation to improvement, change and effectiveness.

Systemic renewal calls for a continual process of evaluation of school goals and objectives and the impact on student learning. It is founded on the belief that the educational system must transform itself in order to establish a flexible environment that allows educators, students, parents and community members to work together to provide the positive experiences students need to achieve success.

b) Community Collaboration

Schools can no longer function as isolated, self-contained institutions; they must become part of a network of organizations all concerned with the entirety of children's development.

Poverty and discrimination are social conditions that have significant consequences for students' educational experiences and outcomes. And while school reform can play an important role in addressing these issues, communities have an essential part to play as well.

It is important that schools recognize how the social/psychological issues facing youth are significantly complicated by poverty, family violence, racism and other marginalizing conditions. The "full service school model" offers comprehensive supports to students and families, and is founded on the principle that education must be part of the network of community supports necessary to strengthen the economic, social and physical well being of students and their families.

Research has found that youth prosper and succeed in caring environments that connect their needs and experiences with what they are learning. When community groups are involved with and support a school, a strong infrastructure connecting school to community can develop, thus generating an environment conducive to learning.

Community members can assist in organizing a homework club, be guest speakers in schools, act as role models and set up summer job program. Specialists in various areas (music, sports, mental health, etc) can come into schools and offer their services to teachers and students.

c) Career Education and Workforce Readiness

Youth require specific skills to prepare them for the demands of a technically advanced market place. School-to-work programs assist in the development of these skills through a quality guidance program, and such programs are of particular importance when one considers the fact that approximately 50% of Ontario's youth will not continue on to postsecondary education; rather they will enter the workforce – with or without their high school diploma or certificate.

Instead of an automatic emphasis on university or college, educators, parents, students and employers must instead be on each student's capabilities and desires. Students who earn their high school diploma/certificate and find employment must also be considered successful.

"School-work transition program pathways" offer students the chance to finish secondary school, meet the entry-level requirements of a specific industry, develop employability and industry-specific skills, and obtain experience in the workplace.

Effective school-work pathway programs have many common characteristics, including: a focused and articulated profile of students; a careful consideration of local labour market information and relevant data; the use of authentic resources; collaboration with a wide range of community partners; the use of appropriate courses and supports within the school; built-in flexibility; a comprehensive and graduated experiential learning component beginning in grade 7; a segmented and differentiated communication and marketing strategy; a thoughtful and comprehensive implementation strategy that includes an aggressive professional development component for teachers; and committed and skilled staff.

d) Conflict Resolution and Violence Prevention

Students who do not attend school for fear of violence, youth who are suspended or expelled for violent acts, and students whose classes are disrupted by violence in the schools cannot learn, and consequently, may leave school prior to earning a diploma. In order for teachers to teach effectively and for students to learn successfully, they must feel safe in their school.

Conflict, both at home and at school, plays a significant role in the lives of students at high risk of early school leaving. Accordingly, there is a great need for school-based violence prevention and conflict resolution programs, not only for students at high risk, but for all students.

Youth must be taught positive and constructive ways of managing conflict so violent confrontation or avoidance do not become their solution. They must learn how to deescalate, manage and resolve conflict before a situation becomes unmanageable or dangerous. Effective conflict resolution training should include: active listening; effective communication; brainstorming non-violent solutions, diversity awareness; empathy for others.

School personnel must be trained to recognize early warning signs of aggression and violence and interventions must be in place to stop such negative behaviours from escalating. Early prevention programs can teach children how to be aware of and overcome violence.

The benefits of conflict resolution and violence prevention include: high quality decision-making abilities; better coping skills; improved stress reduction capabilities; increased motivation; a heightened sense of caring and commitment; and a greater level of problem-solving skills.

V. Responding Effectively to Youth; High Performing Schools and the Reasons Educational Reforms Fail

General recommendations for working with and responding more effectively to youth, include:

1. Recognize strengths, abilities, talent and energy
2. Provide youth with opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them
3. Educate involved adults about the value of youth, the need to involve youth and the most effective way of working with them.
4. Respect the rights of youth to be treated fairly and with respect
5. Recognize that schools are an important location for interacting with youth and providing them with information and opportunities for participation
6. The provision of services and programs that address self-esteem; personal safety; sexuality; racism; substance abuse; suicide; employment and concerns about the future; a safe environment to be with peers; recreational activities; global issues.
7. Outreach and advertisement aimed at informing youth of available services is critical
8. Develop strategies for working with the media so a positive image of youth is projected and negative and false stereotypes are minimized
9. Recognize the value of peer-based programs

High performing schools are likely to have a combination of characteristics in common, including nine specific traits:

- Clear and Shared Vision and Purpose
- High Standards and Expectations
- Effective School Leadership
- High Levels of Collaboration and Communication
- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with the Standards
- Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning
- Focused Professional Development
- Supportive Learning Environment
- High Level of Community and Parent Involvement

There are three main reasons why current educational reforms are unlikely to succeed. Firstly, they are episodic, reforms address symptoms rather than causes, reforms are not systemic.

VI. Conclusion

There are no straight forward answers when it comes to early school leaving prevention/intervention programs. Existing evaluations serve as useful guides for further program development and testing, however, as the majority does not meet the current standards for scientifically reliable evaluations, a single “best practice” model does not exist.

As numerous strategies may come into play when designing a program a single “best practice” model is not necessarily appropriate. This is particularly true when we

consider the fact that early school leaving is the result of a long term, multi-dimensional process influenced by a wide variety of school and out-of-school experiences and the as-yet not fully understood, complex relationship between these multiple causes.

Early school leaving is associated with both academic and social issues and therefore, in order to be effective, programs must address both these areas and provide youth with the supports they require in all areas of their lives. Furthermore, as youth withdraw from school for a variety of reasons, services offered to them must be flexible and easily tailored to meet individual needs.

The research, both experimental and descriptive, indicates that youth require supports responsive to their needs; ones that are as multi-dimensional as their problems, that are open to the diverse range of their interests, hopes and plans – both present and future, and that are aimed at increasing decision-making capacities. Adults who work with youth must be able to deal with the complexities of young people's lives, to be flexible and nonjudgmental. Schools, agencies and programs must provide youth with opportunities to make real and important choices and to support them in the consequences of their decisions and in reflecting on lessons learned and successes achieved.

As risk factors are multilevel and systemic, preventions/interventions that approach risk from a "single-issue" perspective may be ineffective and have poor long-term outcomes. Rather than addressing risk factors as independent and isolated issues, researchers and educators now recognize the necessity of designing comprehensive programs that address multiple contexts (i.e. family, school and individual).
Many researchers believe that facilitating positive adjustment among children and youth, rather than focusing only on risk prevention and reduction, extends our attention to all children and youth, rather than only those identified as "at risk". The appeal of concepts around resilience/protective factors can also be attributed to an increased understanding that the key to prevention and intervention is not simply the identification of risk factors, but also of those factors which reduce risk and lead to success.

Ultimately, it is essential that parents and teachers, school administrators and boards, community members and policymakers recognize that the key to economic development and a civic society is education. Education has a primary role in a youth's ability to acquire social capital, access career opportunities and fully avail themselves of life chances.

Appendix C: Youth Sampling Frame

Note: Although we have divided youth by male and female gender, we will have a third category to recognize transgendered youth.

Northern Sites

Sudbury & Thunder Bay (48)	*12 Francophone*			*24 Aboriginal*			*12 3rd + Gen Nonvis Min*		
	rural	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*rural*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*rural*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*
	dropout	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*16*	*10M& 6F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*
	returner	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*4*	*2M & 2F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	in school	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*4*	*2M & 2F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*

Ottawa (24)	*12 Francophone*			*12 3rd + Gen Nonvis Min*		
	urban	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*urban*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*
	dropout	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*
	returner	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	in school	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*

Southern Sites

Toronto (96)	*12 Aboriginal*			*12 LGBT*			*12 Newcomer Vis Min*		
	urban	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*urban*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*urban*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*
	dropout	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*
	returner	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	in school	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	12 Newcomer Non Vis Min			*12 2nd Gen Vis Min*			*12 2nd Gen Non Vis Min*		
	urban	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*urban*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*urban*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*
	dropout	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*
	returner	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	in school	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	12 3rd + Gen Vis Min			*12 3rd + Gen Non Vis Min*					
	urban	*100%*	*Male-Fem*	*urban*	*100%*	*Male-Fem*			
	dropout	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*			
	returner	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*			
	in school	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*			

*Kitchener-Waterloo (24) & Hamilton (12) & Owen Sound * (12)* ** Owen Sound comprises the 25% rural*	*12 Francophone*			*12 Newcomer VisMin & 2nd Gen VisMin*		
	urban	*75%*	*Male-Female*	*urban*	*75%*	*Male-Female*
	rural	*25%*		*rural*	*25%*	
	dropout	*8*	*5M & 3F*	*dropout*	*8*	*5M & 3F*
	returner	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*returner*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	in school	*2*	*1M & 1F*	*in school*	*2*	*1M & 1F*
	12 3rd + Gen Nonvis Min			*12 Newcomer NVisMin & 2nd Gen NVisMin*		
	urban	*75%*	*Male-Female*	*urban*	*75%*	*Male-Female*
	rural	*25%*		*rural*	*25%*	
	dropout	*8*	*5B & 3G*	*dropout*	*8*	*5B & 3G*
	returner	*2*	*1B & 1G*	*returner*	*2*	*1B & 1G*
	in school	*2*	*1B & 1G*	*in school*	*2*	*1B & 1G*

Appendix D: Detailed Sampling Rationale

Sampling in qualitative research is different from sampling in quantitative inquiry (Cobb and Hagemaster, 1987). Studies often use samples based on convenience and or the special interests of the researcher. Agar (1980) calls these opportunistic or judgment samples, and indicates that it is not only people, but events and processes that are sampled.

Qualitative research sampling is conceptualized and portrayed in most texts and reports as a single, fixed, step occurring prior to data collection. This conceptualization is incomplete and often misleading. Qualitative sampling is better understood as an ongoing, iterative, theoretically driven process co-occurring with data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). Such iterative or theoretical sampling helps generate an adequate and thorough sample for descriptive studies of groups that do not have clear, fixed boundaries and provides a better basis for theory development.

Generating valid descriptions and theory from qualitative research requires iterative sampling methods. Sampling was therefore purposive rather than random. McCracken (1988) suggests a minimum sample of eight in-depth interviews for each subcategory. Consequently, a total sample size of 216 key youth informant interviews and approximately 80 parent/guardian and 80 educator key informant interviews in the form of focus groups was deemed to be more than sufficient to provide saturation of themes that emerge from the data (Patton, 1990). Saturation occurs when little or no new information is obtained which pertains to analytic codes or themes. Maximum variation sampling was used wherein the sample is selected to provide the broadest possible range of information possible. Participants were selected based on their interest in the study and their willingness to talk about their own experiences (i.e. information-rich cases). A detailed sampling rationale and frame (Appendix C and D) has been generated by the research team.

The focus for northern sites will be on aboriginal, francophone and rural populations, with the inclusion of a mid-size urban centre. The southern focus will be on urban populations (large centre vs. smaller centers), with a heavier weight placed on first and second generation and visible minority populations, with the inclusion of a rural centre. There are three overriding categories:

a) Three groups of youth (early school leavers, still in school, graduate returnees)
b) Visible/non-visible status
c) Newcomer/established (1st generation, 2nd generation, 3^{rd+} generation)

The inclusion of aboriginal, Francophones, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth (LGBT) as minority populations of particular interest were emphasized (ie. indigenous/non-indigenous; linguistic; sexual orientation). In other words, Aboriginal youth sought out in both the northern as well as southern sites, and Francophone and LGBT youth, although not recruited separately in all sites, will be recruited across all sites as cutting across the three overriding categories mentioned above (a, b, c). We will also be targeting particular communities that are sensitive to immigration trends. It is important to note that the suggested sample numbers are reflective of community demographics.

Appendix E: Focus Group Sampling Frame

Sudbury (6)	***Francophone***		***Aboriginal***	
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*	*Parents/Guardians*	*Educators*
	Rural 100%	Rural 100%	Rural 100%	Rural 100%
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
	6-8 people	6-8 people	6-8 people	6-8 people
	3rd + Gen NonVis Min			
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*		
	Rural 100%	Rural 100%		
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender		
	6-8 people	6-8 people		
Thunder Bay (2)	***Mixed (except Francophone)***			
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*		
	Rural 100%	Rural 100%		
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender		
	6-8 people	6-8 people		
Ottawa (2)	***3rd + Gen Nonvis Min***			
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*		
	Urban 100%	Urban 100%		
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender		
	6-8 people	6-8 people		

Toronto (6)	***Aboriginal***		***Vis Min (newcomer & 2nd Gen)***	
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*	*Parents/Guardians*	*Educators*
	Urban 100%	Urban 100%	Urban 100%	Urban 100%
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
	6-8 people	6-8 people	6-8 people	6-8 people
	3rd + Gen Non Vis Min			
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*		
	Urban 100%	Urban 100%		
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender		
	6-8 people	6-8 people		

Kitchener-Waterloo (3)	***3rd + Gen Non Vis Min***		
	Parents/Guardians	*Teachers/Counsellors*	*Principals*
	Urban 100%	Urban 100%	Urban 100%
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
	6-8 people	6-8 people	6-8 people

Hamilton (2)	***Francophone***	
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*
	Urban 100%	Urban 100%
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
	6-8 people	6-8 people
Owen Sound (2)	***3rd + Gen Nonvis Min***	
	Parents/Guardians	*Educators*
	Urban 100%	Urban 100%
	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
	6-8 people	6-8 people

NOTE: Identified categories refer to youth, not parents/guardians or educators. In other words, a parent or educator in the vis min group does not have to be of a vis min, but their child/student must be.

APPENDIX F: Operational Definitions

Youth

1) An *early school leaver* is a youth between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who has left an *Ontario* high school prior to receiving his/her Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) (dropped out or permanently expelled) and has not returned to any form of high school education to receive his/her high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development).

- Example #1: A youth who drops out or is pushed out (permanent expulsion) of one high school and does not enrol in another school system, *is* an early leaver. A youth who drops out or is pushed out (permanent expulsion) of one high school and transfers immediately[8] into another school (alternative or otherwise) is *not* an early leaver.
- Example #2: A youth who has been suspended (temporarily asked to leave school) and who does not return to the school s/he was enrolled in, or any other school system *is* an early leaver. A youth who has been suspended (temporarily asked to leave school) and returns either to the school from which s/he was suspended or another educational system, is *not* an early leaver.
- Example #3: A youth who drops out of high school and then is convicted of a crime and does not take classes in the secure facility *is* an early leaver; a youth who is in high school and is convicted of a crime and placed in a secure facility where s/he does not take high school classes, or begins to take these classes, but stops prior to receiving a diploma, *is* an early leaver. A high school student who is convicted of a crime and placed in a secure facility where s/he continues to take high school classes, is *not* an early leaver.

2) A *returned and graduated* youth is one between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who left an *Ontario* high school prior to receiving their OSSD, and has since returned to any form of *Ontario* high school education (alternative school, night school, adult education, internet education etc..) and has received his/her OSSD or GED. In some circumstances it may be acceptable to include a youth who returned to complete school outside of Ontario, but as the focus of this study is Ontario, s/he must have dropped out of an Ontario high school and s/he ideally should have gone back to earn his/her OSSD or GED in Ontario.

3) A *still-in school*, "at high risk" student is one between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who has *never* dropped out of high school, has not yet received his/her OSSD, and is currently attending an *Ontario* high school and working towards his/her OSSD.

- A youth is defined as "at high risk" of early school leaving if s/he meets one or more of the risk variables identified in the socio-demographic literature review

[8] We will not be defining "immediate", however, if the intention upon leaving one school system is to enter into another one as soon as possible, the youth is *not* considered an early leaver.

(Appendix A) and/or has been identified by an educator or other key informant as "at high risk".

- Youth who have transferred from one Ontario school to another are acceptable, as long as the intention was to transfer schools and the transfer was relatively immediate.

Operationalization of Visible Minority Status

'Visible minority status' has been operationalized in the study in accordance with its conceptualization in Canada's Employment Equity Act and 2001 Census. The former defines visible minorities as persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour (see www.statscan.ca).

This definition was selected for the study since it both reflects and informs actual social identification practices regarding those physical attributes deemed socially salient in Canadian society, practises which in turn affect the lived experiences of individuals so identified. It should be noted that respondents' personal identifications may sometimes vary from these social ascriptions.

Operationalization of Generational Status

Generational status has been operationalized in the study in accordance to the analytic terminology commonly used in Canada. It should be noted that the use of these terms tends to vary across different countries. For example, in the United States "lst Generation" is used to refer to the first generation of children *actually born* in the United States (rather than to the first generation of *arrivals* as is the case in Canada). This is especially useful to keep in mind when making international comparisons of research findings.

Newcomer/1rst Generation – Immigrant Children

- Born outside of Canada; both parents born outside of Canada

2nd Generation – Children of Immigrants

- Born in Canada; one or both parents born outside of Canada

3rd+ Generation – Children of Parents born in Canada

- Born in Canada; both parents born in Canada

Status assignment is based on a combination of the youth's place of birth and that of their parents. These analytic categories are designed to sensitive to the migration and resettlement process, and reflect different stages of linguistic and cultural adaptation as well as of social inclusion in various domains (including education and employment).

Note that different permutations are possible that are not reflected above. For example, a child born overseas (rather than in Canada) of an immigrant parent and a native-born parent would be considered 2nd Generation because much of the family's

experience would be very much influenced by both the immigrant parent's lived realities as moderated by those of the native-born parent.

Parent/Guardian

- The parent or guardian of an early high school leaver (a youth between the ages of 14-21 (age range is ideal, not rigid) who has left an *Ontario* high school prior to receiving his/her OSSD (dropped out or permanently expelled) and has not returned to any form of high school education to receive his/her high school diploma or GED).

Educator

A high school teacher, guidance counsellor, vice-principal or principal *currently* working in the *Ontario* school system.

Appendix G: Interviewer Training Package

Dr. Kate Tilleczek, Laurentian University
Dara Roth Edney, Hospital for Sick Children

AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

1. Getting Ready (15 minutes)

- Project context and team
- Project aims
- Hearing young people

2. Entering the Field (20 minutes)

- Operational definitions
- Sampling and rationale
- Recruitment and rationale
- Recruitment updates
- Open Discussion

Break

3. Conducting the Interviews (2 hours)

- Aims revisited
- Methodology vs method
- Critical ethnography
- Process and tips (how to use the prompts)
- Consent forms
- Honoraria- signatures
- Audio Recorders
- Mock Interviews– how to work with the Face Sheets and Interview Schedule questions/prompts with different populations
- Open Discussion

Break

4. Exiting the Field Respectfully (15 minutes)

- Thanks
- Leave information behind (one-page of services, project information and contacts)
- Checklist – consent, tape, receipt for honoraria, face sheet,
- Contact Field coordinator – email/phone
- Open Discussion

Open Discussion (Remaining time)

HAND-OUTS

1. Getting Ready

- Contact List of project investigators and personnel
- List of risk & protective variables
- One page Ministry Communiqué on the Project

2. Entering the Field

- Operational Definitions of Terms
- Youth sample frame & rational (overall and site specific)
- Recruitment information – Field coordinator status report of names
- Police clearance cards (to be used on school property with a government issued photo ID i.e. driver's license)

3. Conducting the Interviews

- Outline interview process (picking up recorders & FS, doing interview, handing in audio, FS, any field notes), interviewer compensation and invoicing
- *Interview Materials*
    1. Police clearance ID badges
    2. 5 Consent forms
    3. Face sheet for youth
    4. Interview Protocol for 3 youth groups
    5. Honorarium/childcare costs for participants (procedure: receipt book & cash)
- *Recording Equipment*
    6. Information re. the audio recording equipment

4. Exiting the Field Respectfully

- Listing of help services in the area
- Checklist
- Template for recording completed interviews

Appendix H: Focus Group Training Package

Focus Group Training Package

February 24, 2005
9:30-11:00 am (teleconference)

AGENDA

Dr. Kate Tilleczek, Laurentian University
Dara Roth Edney, Hospital for Sick Children

1. **Getting Ready (5 minutes)**
    - Project context
    - Methodology vs method
    - Hearing young people

2. **Entering the Field (5 minutes)**
    - Operational definitions
    - Sampling rationale and frame
    - Audio Recorders

3. **Interview Process & Exiting the Field Respectfully (15 minutes)**
    - Facilitator responsibilities & compensation
    - Process for interviews
    - Open Discussion

4. **Conducting the Interviews (1 hour)**
    - Working with the Field Notes form, consent forms, Face Sheets, Interview Schedule questions and prompts with parent/guardian and educator focus groups
    - Open discussion

HAND-OUTS

1. Getting Ready

- One Page Ministry Communiqué on the Project
- List of Risk and Protective Variables

2. Entering the Field

- Operational Definitions of Terms
- Focus Group Sample Rational
- Focus Group Sample Frame
- Olympus Digital Audio Recorder Information Sheet
- Sanyo Digital Audio Recorder Information Sheet

3. Interview Process & Exiting the Field Respectfully

- Facilitator Responsibilities and Compensation
- Process & Tips for Conducting Focus Groups
- Check List

4. Conducting the Interviews

- Field Notes form for focus groups
- Consent Forms (Audio and Parent/Guardian and School Board Personnel)
- Face Sheet for Parents/Guardians
- Face Sheet for Educators
- Interview Schedule for Parents/Guardians
- Prompts for Parents/Guardians
- Interview Schedule for Educators
- Prompts for School Board Personnel

Appendix I: Face Sheets for Youth

I – YOUR SCHOOL, WORK AND COMMUNITY

1. What is the name of the city, town or reserve where you live? _____

2. What is/are your postal code(s)? _____

3. How long have you lived here? _____

4. How many times have you ever moved in your life? _____

5. Have you ever had to leave your home community to attend school in another community?
___ yes ___ no

6. How would you rate the area(s) in which you live in terms of the following.
If you live in more than one, check twice:

	Very Good	*Good*	*Not so Good*	*Poor*
a) Safety	___	___	___	___
b) Access to public transportation	___	___	___	___
c) Parks	___	___	___	___
d) Recreational facilities	___	___	___	___
e) Sense of community	___	___	___	___

7. Do you believe that any of the following hold negative attitudes or expectations about young people:

a) Parent(s)/guardian(s): ___ yes ___ no
b) Teachers: ___ yes ___ no
c) Other adults: ___ yes ___ no
d) School culture: ___ yes ___ no
e) Community culture: ___ yes ___ no
f) Media: ___ yes ___no
g) Society: ___ yes ___ no

8. Do you believe that negative attitudes or expectations about young people impact their educational outcomes, i.e. how well young people do at school? ___ yes ___ no

9. How would you rate the importance of the following roles in keeping youth engaged at school:

	Very important	*Important*	*Not so Important*	*Not at all Important*
a) Principals	___	___	___	___
b) Teachers	___	___	___	___
c) Guidance counsellors	___	___	___	___

d) Parents ___ ___ ___ ___
e) Fellow students ___ ___ ___ ___
f) Friends of young people___ ___ ___ ___
g) Youth themselves ___ ___ ___ ___
h) Community agencies ___ ___ ___ ___
i) Ministry of Education ___ ___ ___ ___
j) Boards of Education ___ ___ ___ ___
k) Other ___ ___ ___ ___
(please specify: _____)

10. *For ___**early school leavers** or)___**graduates**:*
Which school did you **last** attend? _____

*For ___respondents **still in school**:*
Which school are you **currently** attending? _____

11. Is this an elementary school? ___ yes ___ no
or a high school? ___ yes ___no

12. Is this a ___ public school? ___Catholic school? ___ private school?
___ hospital-school ___ First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
___ federal prison ___other? (specify_____)

13. Is this a French language school? ___ yes ___no

14. In what city/town is this school located? _____

15. How many years had/have you been going to this school? _____
a. If less than one year, indicate the number of months: _____

16. How would you rate the school you last attended/are currently attending in terms of the following:

	Very Good	*Good*	*Not so Good*	*Poor*
a) School size	___	___	___	___
b) Classroom size (ratio)	___	___	___	___
c) School ethos/climate	___	___	___	___
d) Diversity of student body	___	___	___	___
e) Diversity of teachers/staff	___	___	___	___
f) Safety	___	___	___	___
g) School academic outcomes i.e. GPA/graduation rates	___	___	___	___
h) Student access to extra-curricular activities	___	___	___	___
i) Open areas for students to "hang out"	___	___	___	___
j) Family outreach i.e. school to home communication	___	___	___	___

k) Supports for students "at-risk" :

i. of academic failure___ ___ ___ ___
ii. of risk activities ___ ___ ___ ___
iii. of early school leaving___ ___ ___ ___

l) Supports for minority youth:
i. LGBT ___ ___ ___ ___
ii. Aboriginal ___ ___ ___ ___
iii. Newcomer ___ ___ ___ ___
iv. ESL ___ ___ ___ ___
v. Visible minority ___ ___ ___ ___
vi. Disabilities___ ___ ___ ___

17. Which school did you attend **before** coming to this school? _____

18. Is this an elementary school? ___ yes ___ no or a high school? ___ yes ___no

19. Is this a ___ public school? ___ Catholic school? ___ private school?
___ hospital-school ___ First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
___ federal prison ___other? (specify_____)

20. Is this a French language school? ___ yes ___no

21. In what city/town is this previous school located? _____

22. How many years did you go to this school? _____
a. If less than one year, indicate the number of months: _____

23. At the last school you attended/your current school, were/are you in the academic or applied program? ___ academic ____ applied

24. Were/are you in any of the following programs? ___ yes ___ no (*please indicate all that apply*)
a) ___ English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)
b) ___ French Immersion
c) ___ Vocational program
d) ___ Other; please specify: _____

25. Do you know if you had/have been identified as a special education student (e.g. learning disability, gifted, blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing, physical disability, developmental disability, speech/language impairment, behavior or mild intellectual disability, or autism)? __ yes __ no
___ I don't know
a. If you have, what is the nature of your exceptionality? _____
b. In what grade were you first identified (*if unknown, give approximate*) ____
c. Did you receive/Are you receiving any additional supports or programming at school related to your special needs or exceptionality? ____ yes ____ no ___I don't know

d. *If yes or 'I don't know'*, what type of supports did you/are you receiving/receive?

a) ___ help from a Special Education Teacher
b) ___ help from a Resource Teacher
c) ___ special exam/test accommodation
d) ___ interpretation (*including language, oral or sign interpreters*)
e) ___ other (please specify: _____)

26. How many years had/have you been in high school? _____

27. What was the last grade that you completed? _____

28. How many credits did you/have you earn(ed) in total? _____ ___ Don't know

29. Did you take/have you taken the grade 10 literacy test? ___Yes ___No ___Not yet applicable

a. *If yes,* did you pass the grade 10 literacy test*?* ___Yes ___No
b. *If yes,* did you write this test ___ once ___twice

30. Have you taken the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Yet

31. Have you successfully completed the Literacy requirement ___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Yet ___Not Applicable

a. *If yes*, in which year? _____
b. *If yes,* did you complete the Literacy requirement in ___ English ___ French

The following questions might feel a bit uncomfortable or personal to answer. This information is being collected from all of our study participants and will be combined for overall informational purposes only. Your honest answer would be greatly appreciated. Please keep in mind that all responses are fully anonymous (ie. no one will know who you are) as well as confidential (ie. no one will know what you say).

32. What is the total number of academic courses that you have taken? _____

a. What is the total number of academic courses that you have passed? _____
b. What is the total number of academic courses that you have failed? _____

33. What is the total number of applied courses that you have taken? _____

a. What is the total number of applied courses that you have passed? _____
b. What is the total number of applied courses that you have failed? _____

34. How many French immersion courses have you taken? _____ __ not applicable ___ not available

a. What is the total number of French immersion courses that you have passed? _____
b. What is the total number of French immersion courses that you have failed? _____

35. How many English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses have you taken? _____
___not applicable ___ not available

a. What is the total number of ESL courses that you have passed? _____

b. What is the total number of ESL courses that you have failed? _____

36. Have you failed any courses in high school? ___Yes ____No
    a. *If yes,* how many courses have you failed in total? _____
    b. *If yes,* did you repeat this/these class(es) ___ Yes ___ No
    c. *If yes,* did you then pass this/these class(es)? ___ Yes ___ No

37. Did you repeat any grade(s) in elementary school? ___ Yes ___No
    a. *If yes,* which grade(s) _____

38. Did you skip any grade(s)? ___Yes ___No
    a. *If yes,* which grade(s) _____

For those respondents who are a) early school leavers or b) still in school, please skip to question 40.

39. For those respondents who returned and successfully obtained their high school diploma/certificate, please indicate the type of diploma or certificate received:
    a) ___ OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Diploma)
    b) ___ Certificate of Education
    c) ___ SSGD (Secondary School Graduation Diploma)
    d) ___ SSHGD (Secondary School Honour Graduation Diploma)
    e) ___ Certificate of Training
    f) ___ Ontario Secondary School Certificate
    g) ___ Certificate of Accomplishment
    h) ___ International Baccalaureate
    i) ___ Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate

40. How did/do you usually get to school?
    a) ___ walk
    b) ___ school bus
    c) ___ public transportation
    d) ___ car ride
    e) ___ live/board on campus
    f) ___Other (*specify:* _____)

41. How long did/does this take you? _____ minutes

42. Not including the move from elementary school to high school, how many times did you change schools: While in elementary school? _____ During high school? _____

    a. If you changed schools, did this involve a change in program/kind of school?
        ___yes ___no *specify*: _____

    b. If you changed schools, what grade(s) were you in when this/these change(s) occurred?
        During elementary school _____
        During high school _____

c. If you changed schools, did this/these change(s) involve a change in type of school? (*please provide specifics for all moves on the following page*)

During elementary school …

(i) From

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

To

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

(ii) From

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

To

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

During high school ….

(i) From

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

To

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

(ii) From

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other?
(specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

To

a) __ public __Catholic __private
__First Nations and First Nations Uninspected
__hospital-school __federal prison __other? (specify_____)

b) __ English ___French

43. Have you ever changed school programmes? ___ yes ___ no ___ don't know

a. *If yes,* which grade(s) were you in? _____

b. What was the nature of the change in each case? *(in chronological sequence)*

From ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____	To ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____
From ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____	To ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____
From ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____	To ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____
From ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____	To ___ A regular program ___English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) ___ French Immersion ___ Special Education ___ A vocational program ___ Other; please specify: _____

44. Have there been any interruptions in your schooling? ___yes ___no

→ *If no, skip to question 45*

a. *If yes,* how long was/were this/these interruption(s) and was this /were these due to (check as many apply)…

___ problems at home ____ months
___ had to work ____ months
___ having to help at home ____ months
___ your own long term illness/disability ____ months
If yes, were you in the hospital for a long stay? ___yes ___no
If yes, were you able to continue your studies during this time? __yes___no
___ long term illness/disability of a family member ____ months
___ a pregnancy ____ months
If yes, were you in a maternity programme? ___yes ___no
If yes, were you able to continue your studies during this time? __yes___no
___ attending a behaviour treatment programme
If yes, were you able to continue your studies during this time? ___yes ___no
___ attending care and treatment programme
If yes, were you able to continue your studies during this time? ___yes ___no
____ living in a group home ___months
If yes, were you able to continue your studies during this time? ___yes ___no
___ going to jail or a detention center ____ months
If yes, were you able to continue your studies during this time? ___yes ___no
___ time spent in a refugee camp ____ months
___ other (*specify:* _____) ____ months

45. In high school, did/do you participate in any extra-curricular activities? __Yes __ No

→ *If no, skip to question 46*

a. *If yes*, which activity(ies)? _____
b. During which grade(s)? _____
c. Was/Is this activity(ies) ___ connected with your school ___ outside of school
d. Did/Do you ever miss class(es) because of this/these activity(ies)? ___ Yes ___ No

46. In high school, did/do you use a computer for school work? ___ yes ___no

→ *If no, skip to question 47*

a. *If yes*, how many hours per week? _____
b. Where was/is this computer located?
___ At home ___ At a local library
___ At school ___ Other (specify: _____)

47. In high school did/do you use the internet for instructional/education purposes? ___yes ___no → *If no, skip to question 48*

a. *If yes*, how many hours per week? _____

b. Where was/is this computer located?

___ At home ___ At a local library
___ At school ___ Other (specify: _____)

48. In high school, did/do you use a computer for personal entertainment: ___ yes ___ no
→ *If no, skip to question 49*

If yes, did/do you use the computer for:

a. Games? ___ yes ___ no If yes, how many hours per week? _____
b. Internet "surfing": ___ yes ___ no If yes, how many hours per week_____
c. Other (specify: _____) ___ yes ___ no If yes, how many hours per week? _____
d. Where was/is this computer located?

___ At home ___ At a local library
__ At school ___ Other (specify: _____)

49. While in high school did/do you watch television? ___yes ___no
a. *If yes*, how many hours per week? ____

50. While in high school, did/do you go to/watch movies? ___yes ___no
a. *If yes*, how many hours per week? _____

51. While in high school, did/do you play video games? ___yes ___no
a. *If yes*, how many hours per week? _____

52. In high school, did/do you ever skip class? ___Yes ___No
a. *If yes*, on average, how often per month? _____
b. *If yes*, do/did you usually skip class ___alone or ___with friends?

53. Were you ever suspended from school? ___ Yes ___ No → *If no, skip to question*
a. *If yes*, how many times? _____ In which grade(s) _____
c. What was the main reason for suspension? (*give reason for each suspension*) _____

54. Were you ever expelled from school? ___ Yes ___ No → *If no, skip to question 55*
a. *If yes*, how many times? _____ In which grade(s) _____
b. What was the main reason for expulsion? (*give reason for each expulsion*_____

55. Did/Do your parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage you to do well in school? ___Yes ___No

56. How important was/is a high school education to:

	Very important	*Somewhat important*	*Not very important*	*Not at all important*
You	___	___	___	___
Your parent(s)/guardian(s)	___	___	___	___

57. Did/Do your parent(s)/guardian(s) help you with your schoolwork/assignments? __ Yes __ No → *If no, skip to question 58*
Please indicate who helped/helps you

Mother(s)? __Yes ___ No Step-mother? ___ Yes ___ No
Female guardian __Yes ___ No Foster mother ___ Yes ___ No
Father(s)? __ Yes ___ No Step-father? ___ Yes ___ No
Male guardian __ Yes ____No Foster father ___ Yes ___ No

58. Did/Does someone else help you with your schoolwork/assignments? ____Yes ___No
→ *If no, skip to question 59*

If yes, was/is this
___ another family member?
___ a relative? Please specify: _____
___ a family friend?
___ a friend?
___ a classmate?
___ a tutor?
___ other please specify: _____

59. If you have brothers/sisters still attending school, what grade(s) are they in?
Brothers? _____
Sisters? _____
Not applicable ____

60. Did/Do your teachers encourage you to do well in school? ___Yes ___No

61. Did/Do your teachers give you extra help if you needed it? ___Yes ___No

62. Did/Does your school discuss **not** graduating from high school with students? ___Yes ___ No

63. Did/Do you feel that you had/have been well informed about what the consequences would be for you if you were to leave school before graduation? ___Yes ___No
a. *If yes*, what have been/are the major consequences? _____

64. Do you know anyone who has left school before graduation? ___Yes ____No
a. *If yes*, why do you think they left? _____

65. Would you say you were/are treated fairly at school by **the teachers, guidance counselors, principals or other staff?** ____ Yes ____No
Please explain: _____

66. Did you ever feel/Have you ever felt uncomfortable or out of place at school because of your …..

a) ethnicity or culture ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___don't know
b) race or skin colour ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
c) language or accent ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
d) religion ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
e) physical traits ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
f) physical abilities ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
g) learning abilities ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
h) family composition ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
i) sexual orientation ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know

j) family income level ___ yes ___ no ___ refused ___ don't know
k) Other, please specify: _____

67. How often did/do you feel uncomfortable or out of place at school because of your ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent, religion, physical traits, physical or learning abilities, family composition, sexual orientation, family income level, or any other reason?

___ all of the time? ___ most of the time?
___ some of the time? ___ rarely?
___ never? ___ refused ___ don't know

68. People sometimes get treated unfairly because of WHO THEY ARE. This may be because they look different, are born outside of Canada, speak with an accent, because of the colour of their skin or their sexual orientation. Did/Do you feel that you have/had been treated unfairly at school **by teachers, guidance counselors, principals or other staff** because of WHO YOU ARE?

___ yes (Please explain: _____)
___ no ___ refused ___ don't know

69. Did/Do you feel that you are/have been treated unfairly at school **by other students** because of WHO YOU ARE?

___ yes (Please explain: _____)
___ no ___ refused ___ don't know

70. Were/are there any teachers, guidance counselors, principals or other staff at your school with whom you identified? ___ yes ___ no
Please explain: _____

71. Did/Do you have a job while you were/are in school? ___Yes ___No → *If no, skip to question 72*

a. *If yes*, during which grade did you first begin working? _____
b. On average, how many hours per week did/do you work? _____
c. What kind of work did/do you do? _____

72. During the past year, what was your **main** activity (*please check one*)?

a) Going to school ____
b) Caring for family member(s) ____
c) Going to school and caring for family members ____
d) Going to school and working part-time ____
e) Working for pay or profit ____
f) Caring for family member(s) and working for pay or profit ____
g) Self-employed ____
h) Caring for family member(s) and working for pay or profit ____
i) Recovering from illness/disability ____
j) Looking for work ____
k) Other (specify _____) ____

73. For ***early leavers***:

a. Do you intend to return to school to obtain your high school diploma or equivalency?
___ yes ___no ___ refused ___don't know

b. Why or why not? _____

c. What are your future plans? _____

OR

For youth who are ***still in school*** or who have ***returned and graduated****:*

What are your future plans? _____

II - YOUR FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

74. Do you have any children? ___ yes ___ no ___ I (or my girlfriend) am/is pregnant

a. *If yes*, please indicate how many: _____

b. *If yes*, how old are they?: _____

75. Who raised you? (*Check as many as apply. If parents are of the same gender, check twice*)

__	mother	__female guardian	__foster mother	__step-mother
__	father	__male guardian	__foster father	__step-father
__	sister	__half-sister	__foster sister	__sister(blended family)
__	brother	__half-brother	__foster brother	__brother (blended family)
__	maternal grandmother		__maternal grandfather	
__	paternal grandmother		__paternal grandfather	
__	maternal aunt		__maternal uncle	__maternal cousins
__	paternal aunt		__paternal uncle	__paternal cousins
__	other; please specify _____			

76. Who are your close family members? *Please indicate the number of each type of family member*

__	mother	_female guardian	__foster mother	__step-mother
__	father	__male guardian	__foster father	__step-father
__	sister	__half-sister	__foster sister	__sister (blended family)
__	brother	__half-brother	__foster brother	__brother (blended family)
__	son	__daughter		
__	maternal grandmother		__maternal grandfather	
__	paternal grandmother		__paternal grandfather	
__	maternal aunt		__maternal uncle	__maternal cousins
__	paternal aunt		__paternal uncle	__paternal cousins
__	Other; please specify _____			

77. In which country was/were your mother(s)/female guardian/parental substitute born? _____ ___ do not know

78. In which country was/were your father(s)/male guardian/parental born? _____ ___ do not know

79. What was the highest level of education obtained by your …..

	Mother(s)?	*Father(s)?*	*Parental Substitute(s) (_____?)*
a) Earned Doctorate	___	___	___
b) Master's Degree	___	___	___
c) Degree in Medicine, Dentistry,			

d) Veterinary Medicine or Optometry ___ ___ ___
e) Bachelor's or Undergraduate Degree, or Teacher's College ___ ___ ___
f) Diploma/Certificate from community college, CEGEP or nursing school ___ ___ ___
g) Diploma/Certificate from trade, technical or vocational school or business college ___ ___ ___
h) Some community college, CEGEP or nursing school ___ ___ ___
i) Some trade, technical or vocational school, or business college ___ ___ ___
j) High school diploma ___ ___ ___
k) Some high school ___ ___ ___
l) Elementary school ___ ___ ___
m) No schooling ___ ___ ___
n) Other (specify _____) ___ ___ ___
o) Refused ___ ___ ___
p) Don't know ___ ___ ___

80. During the past year, what was the main activity of your ….

	Mother(s)?	*Father(s)?*	*Parental Substitute(s) (_____?)*
a) Caring for family	____	___	___
b) Working for pay or profit	____	___	___
c) Caring for family and working for pay or profit	____	___	___
d) Self-employed	____	___	___
e) Caring for family and self-employed	____	___	___
f) Going to school	____	___	___
g) Recovering from illness/disability	____	___	___
h) Looking for work	____	___	___
i) Retired	____	___	___
j) Other (*specify* _____)	____	___	___

81. What is the number of jobs currently held by your …..
Mother(s)? _____
Father(s)? _____
Other parental substitute(s) (please specify_____) _____

Interviewer instructions: Indicate job title, and then after the interview is completed, select appropriate job code from list on the following page.

82. What job(s) do(es) your parent(s)/guardian(s)/parental substitutes have?
Mother(s)? _____ Step-mother? _____
Foster mother? _____ Female guardian? _____
Female parental substitute? _____
Father(s)? _____Step father? _____
Foster father? _____Male guardian? _____
Male parental substitute? _____
Other (specify) _____

Job Codes

A Management occupations

A0 Senior management occupations
A1 Specialist managers
A2 Managers in retail trade/food/accommodation
A3 Other managers, n.e.c

B Business, finance and administrative occupations

B0 Professional occupations in business/finance
B1 Finance/insurance administrative occupations
B2 Secretaries
B3 Administrative and regulatory occupations
B4 Clerical supervisors
B5 Clerical occupations

C Natural and applied sciences and related occupations

C0 Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences
C1 Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences

D Health occupations

D0 Professional occupations in health
D1 Nurse supervisors and registered nurses
D2 Technical and related occupations in health
D3 Assisting occupations health services

E Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion

E0 Judges, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, ministers of religion, and policy and program officers
E1 Teachers and professors
E2 Paralegals, social services workers and occupations in education and religion, n.e.c.

F Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport

F0 Professional occupations in art and cultureF1 Technical occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport

G Sales and service occupations

G0 Sales and service supervisors
G1 Wholesale, technical, insurance, real estate sales specialists, and retail, wholesale and grain buyers
G2 Retail salespersons and sales clerks
G3 Cashiers
G4 Chefs and cooks
G5 Occupations in food and beverage service
G6 Occupations in protective services
G7 Occupations in travel and accommodation including attendants in recreation and sport
G8 Childcare and home support workers
G9 Sales and service occupations, n.e.c.

H Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations

H0 Contractors and supervisors in trades and transportation
H1 Construction trades
H2 Stationary engineers, power station operators and electrical trades and telecommunications occupations
H3 Machinists, metal forming, shaping and erecting occupations
H4 Mechanics
H5 Other trades, n.e.c.
H6 Heavy equipment and crane operators including drillers
H7 Transportation equipment operators and related workers, excluding labourers
H8 Trades helpers, construction and transportation labourers and related occupations

I Occupations unique to primary industry

I0 Occupations unique to agriculture excluding labourers
I1 Occupations unique to forestry operations, mining, oil and gas extraction and fishing, excluding labourers
I2 Primary production labourers

J Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities

J0 Supervisors in manufacturing
J1 Machine operators in manufacturing
J2 Assemblers in manufacturing
J3 Labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities

83. Which of the following best describes the hours worked by your …

	Mother(s)?	*Father(s)?*	*Parental Substitute(s) (_____?)*
a) Regular daytime schedule or shift	___	___	___
b) Regular evening shift	___	___	___
c) Regular night shift	___	___	___
d) Rotating shift (days to evenings to nights)	___	___	___
e) Split shift	___	___	___
f) On call	___	___	___
g) Other (specify _____)	___	___	___

84. Do you live at home with either one, or both, of your parents/guardians?
___Yes ___No → *If no, skip to question 85*

If yes, please indicate the members of your household (and how many):

a. Household #1

__ mother __female guardian __foster mother __step-mother
__father __male guardian __foster father __step-father
__ sister __half-sister __foster sister __sister (blended family)
__brother __half-brother __foster brother __brother (blended family)__son __daughter
__maternal grandmother __maternal grandfather
__paternal grandmother __paternal grandfather
__maternal aunt __maternal uncle __maternal cousins
__paternal aunt __paternal uncle __paternal cousins
__ roommate(s) __ boarder(s) __ renter(s)
__ other; please specify _____

b. Household #2 ____ **not applicable**

__ mother __female guardian __foster mother __step-mother
__father __male guardian __foster father __step-father
__ sister __half-sister __foster sister __sister (blended family)
__brother __half-brother __foster brother __brother (blended family)__son __daughter
__maternal grandmother __maternal grandfather
__paternal grandmother __paternal grandfather
__maternal aunt __maternal uncle __maternal cousins
__paternal aunt __paternal uncle __paternal cousins
__ roommate(s) __ boarder(s) __ renter(s)
__ other; please specify _____

85. If you do not live at home with parents/guardians, with whom do you live?
→ *If living at home with parents/guardians, skip to question 86*

___ friend ___ roommate ___ boyfriend or girlfriend
___ live alone ___ homeless
___ other family member (specify: _____)
___ other (specify: _____)

86. Compared to other young people in your high school, do you feel that your family is/was:
___ poor (not having enough money)
___ in the middle (some place in the middle between rich and poor)
___ rich (having enough money)

87. Can you estimate in which of the following categories your household income falls? *If you live in more than one household, please check income categories for both households, if possible*.

Is your total household income ….

a) ___ less than $10,000?
b) ___ $10,000 to less than $20,000?
c) ___ $20,000 to less than $30,000?
d) ___ $30,000 to less than $40,000?
e) ___ $40,000 to less than $50,000?
f) ___ $50,000 to less than $60,000?
g) ___ $60,000 to less than $70,000?
h) ___ $70,000 to less than $80,000?
i) ___ $80,000 to less than $90,000?
j) ___ $90,000 to less than $100,000?
k) ___ $100,000 or more?
l) ___ No income or loss
m) ___ Refused n) ___ Don't know

III - ABOUT YOU

88. What is your date of birth (date/month/year)? _____

89. How old are you now? _____

90. With which gender do you identify? ___ male ___ female ___other (specify:_____)

91. What is your marital status? ___single ___ married ___ common-law relationship
___ separated ___ divorced ___ widowed ___ other (specify: _____)

In Canada, one of the ways we describe people is by their cultural origins, lifestyle and practices. A cultural group is made up of people who share a common way of life. They may live in or come from the same area, country or part of the world, speak the same language and do things the same way. Often – though not always – they also look similar to each other.

92. To which cultural group or groups do you feel you belong? _____
Interviewer Instructions: For each of the above responses ask the following question…

a. Do you follow the _____ (*insert cultural group(s) identified*) way of life or participate in the _____ (*insert cultural group(s) identified*) community? __ a lot
__ some __ not much __ not at all

b. Do you follow the _____ (*insert cultural group(s) identified*) way of life or participate in the _____ (*insert cultural group(s) identified*) community? __ a lot __ some __ not much __ not at all __ not applicable

c. Do you follow the _____ (*insert cultural group(s) identified*) way of life or participate in the _____ (*insert cultural group(s) identified*) community? __ a lot __ some __ not much __ not at all __ not applicable

If more than one response is given to question 92:
d. With which of these groups do you MOST identify? _____

93. Do any of your ancestors belong to any of the following aboriginal groups?

North American Indian	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Métis	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Inuit	___ yes	___no	___ don't know

94. Do you belong to any of the following aboriginal groups?

North American Indian	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Métis	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Inuit	___ yes	___no	___ don't know

95. Are you a member of an Indian Band or First Nation?
___ yes, member of an Indian Band (please specify: _____)
or First Nation (please specify:_____)
___ no
___ don't know

96. Are you a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada?
___ yes, Treaty Indian or Registered Indian
___ no
___ don't know

97. Were you born in Canada?
___ yes → *skip to 98*
___ no *If no*, in which country were you born? _____
→ *then skip to 99*

Instructions: For individuals with same gender parents, please check twice as applicable
98. If you were **born** in Canada ….
a. Was your mother/female parental substitute an immigrant or refugee to this country? ___ yes ___no __ don't know ___ not applicable
b. Was your father/male parental substitute an immigrant or refugee to this country? ___ yes ___ no __ don't know ___ not applicable
c. Were your mother's/female parental substitute's parents immigrants or refugees? ___yes ___ no __ don't know ___ not applicable
d. If yes, was this your… ___grandmother ___ grandfather
e. Were your father's/male parental substitute's parents immigrants or refugees?
___yes ___ no __ don't know ___ not applicable
f. If yes, was this your… ___ grandmother ___ grandfather

→ *skip to question 100*

99. If you were **not born** in Canada, in what year did **you** first come to Canada? _____

a. How old were you when you first arrived? _____ *(if unsure, give approximate age)*

b. Did you arrive:

____ together with other family members
____ separately to join family members already in Canada
____ together with family member(s) to join family already in Canada
____ on your own

c. When you first arrived in Canada, did **you** arrive as:

___ a citizen
___ landed immigrant
___ under the family reunification programme
___ under the business entrepreneur programme
___ with a ministerial permit
___ refugee
___ convention refugee
___ other
___ other; please specify _____
___ don't know ___ refused

d. Regardless of your official status, did you consider yourself a refugee? ___ yes ___no

e. Have you spent any time in a refugee camp?

___ yes (specify how many months _____)
___ no
___ refused ___ don't know

f. What country did you **immigrate** from? _____

g. What was the last country you lived in immediately prior to coming to Canada? _____

h. Other than Canada and your country of birth, have you lived in any other countries for three (3) years or more prior to your arrival in Canada?

___yes (specify _____)
___no
___refused ___don't know

i. What is your current immigration status?

___ naturalized citizen
___ landed immigrant (ie. permanent resident under the Immigration Act, 1976)
___ visa student under the Immigration Act, 1976 (Canada)
___ in Canada on the authority of another visa under the Immigration Act, 1976
___ refugee applicant
___ none of the above and attending an off-shore school
___ other; please specify _____

100. Of which country, or countries, are you a citizen? _____

101. What is your mother tongue (*first language learned*)? _____

a. How well do you understand it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well

b. How well do you speak it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well

c. How well do you read it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well

d. How well do you write it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well

102. If English or French (*select relevant interview language)* is not your mother tongue

a. How well do you understand English/French? __none __a little__ fairly well __very well

b. How well do you speak English/French? __none __a little__ fairly well __very well

c. How well do you read English/French? __none __a little__ fairly well __very well

d. How well do you write English/French? __none __a little__ fairly well __very well

Interviewer instructions: Place responses as column headings, then use headings as 'check-off' categories for subsequent questions.

103. What language(s) do you <u>understand</u>? (*declining order of mastery*)	1) _____	2) _____	3) _____	4) _____
104. Which language(s) do you <u>speak</u> at home?				
a. with close friends?				
b. at school?				
105. Which language do you <u>speak</u> most of the time with parent(s)/guardian(s)?				
a. with siblings				
b: with cousins?				
c: with grandparents/older relatives?				
d: with friends?				
e: with classmates at school?				
f: with teachers at school?				

Often, but not always, a person's identification with their country of origin, specific culture, ethnicity, race, religion or lifestyle makes them feels connected to others who share these same traits, values, beliefs and/or practices.

106. Do you feel a sense of belonging to a particular group or groups?

___Yes ___No ___ I don't know

a. If yes, to which group(s)? _____

107. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a group(s) that is/are unfairly treated in Canada?

___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. If yes, of which group or groups? _____

108. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a visible minority group in Canada?

___Yes ___No ___ I don't know

a. If yes, of which group? _____

109. Do you think other people consider you to be a member of a visible minority group in Canada?

___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. If yes, of which group? _____

110. *People in Canada come from many racial or cultural groups. You may belong to one or more than one group on the following list*. Are you …..

___ Aboriginal? (ie. North American Indian, Métis, Inuit)
___ Arab
___ Black
___ Chinese
___ Filipino
___ Japanese
___ Korean?
___ Latin American
___ South Asian? (eg. East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)
___ Southeast Asian? (eg. Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc.)
___ West Asian? (eg. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
___ White?
___ or another group? Please specify: _____
___ Refused
___ Don't know

111. *For some people, religion may be an important part of their ethnicity or culture, while for others it is not.* What is your religion, if any?

___ No religion
___ Anglican (Church of England, Episcopalian)
___ Baptist
___ Buddhist
___ Greek Orthodox
___ Hindu
___ Islam (Muslim)
___ Jehovah's Witnesses
___ Jewish
___ refused
___ Lutheran
___ Mennonite
___ Pentecostal
___ Presbyterian
___ Roman Catholic
___ Sikh
___ Ukrainian Catholic
___ United Church
___ Other (specify:_____)
___ don't know

112. Using a scale of 1 to 5 - where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important - how important is your religion to you?

___ 1 – not very important
___ 2
___ 3
___ 4
___ 5 – very important
___ refused
___ don't know

This next question may be a very personal one. We do not mean to pry into your private life or offend in any way. However, since this information may or may not be relevant to your school experience it would be helpful if you would answer as honestly as possible. Please keep in mind that all of the information you provide is both anonymous (ie. no one will know who you are) and strictly confidential (ie. no one will know what you say).

113. How would you describe your sexual identification (ie. orientation)? _____

Appendix J: Interview Schedule for Youth who have Left School Early

Our goal is to make sense of the process of leaving school, using the widest possible lens to view the circumstances surrounding the lives of young people not completing their secondary school education.

Facilitator instructions
The purpose of the prompts is to elicit information about how youth experience school withdrawal. To facilitate this, please prompt participants to answer each question from the perspective of individual (student), classroom/school and system/policy. To this end, please use the following kinds of statements with the prompts… "How did that work?" "Could you tell me more?" "Do you have an example/story to illustrate that?"

Guideline Questions

For aboriginal youth ask these questions first:

i) What nation are you from? Do you speak the language?

ii) Do you feel proud to be *aboriginal* (use the word they use to identify themselves, i.e. Anishinabek, Cree, etc.)

iii) As far as you know, did anyone in your family attend a residential school?

Interviewer instructions: Note changes in question order for:

- ***Urban aboriginal youth: ask personal questions/prompts 1st, then community, then schooling***
- ***Rural (on reserve) aboriginal youth: ask about community 1st, then personal, then schooling***

---

1) Tell me what was going on in your life at the time you left school?

P R O M P T S

At Home

a) What is the nature of the following relationships (attachment, closeness, communication, emotional space)
   - Youth relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s)
   - Youth Relationship with siblings
   - Marital/common-law relationship of parents/guardians
   - Parent(s)/guardian(s) relationship with the school- personal/culture conflicts

b) What are your parents like?
    - Parent/guardian style (permissive, strict, helpful with school work, expectations, parental attachment/supervision)
    - Parent(s)/guardian(s) work schedules (shifts etc)
    - Attitudes about youth

c) What is your home like?
    - Socioeconomic status and effects of income level
    - Household routines/rituals (what does everyone do? meals, vacations, homework time etc..)
    - Other family events (illness, death, abuse, financial or legal difficulties, substance abuse, geographical moves)
    - Assumption of adult roles at home (caregiving, interpreter)

In the Community

Neighbourhood

- Neighbourhood composition
- homogeneity/diversity
- visible minority status vs. non-visible minority status
- levels of employment/unemployment
- levels of education
- socio-economic status
- Neighbourhood safety (rating question also exists in the Fsheets)
- Community spirit (actual rating question exists in the Fsheets)
- Fears around/associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)
- Societal attitudes about youth (negative/positive; alienation/integration)

At work

- General description of work
- Type of employment/Actual job
- Job satisfaction
- Monies earned
- Interactions with co-workers
- Interactions with the public (where applicable)
- Future aspirations

With friends/alone

- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal activities; integrated vs. alienated)
- type of cliques or crowds and things you most often do together/alone
- Positive or protective factors/risk factors (eg. sexual activity, smoking, drug use, driving, skipping out, other risks – why are they done? alone/with friends)
- Peer pressure (explain)
- Other friends dropping out
- Conflicts (breakup of relationship – platonic or romantic)
- Other major event (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)

Out of school activities (alone or with friends)

- Music, theatre, arts, etc.
- Sports activities (informal/leagues)
- Technology (computer use for entertainment; games; internet; TV, movies, etc.)

- Club memberships
- Involvement in community organizations
- Favourite activities outside of school
- Informal involvement with members of your community (however youth define that)
- *For francophone youth add – involvement with the francophone community*

At School (Critical to probe three levels – policy, school, classroom)

Academic

- School policies (way school is run, fairness, rules, i.e. legal age of withdrawal, zero tolerance, etc)
- School structure (class size, size of school, kind of school, etc)
- Overall school climate/environment
- Relationship with teachers/principal/guidance counsellor/other staff (ability to identify & connect)
- Expectations (fair/respectful treatment of you and other youth, support-guidance and counselling)
- Interest in course material (amount/kind of curriculum)
- Ability to follow curricular demands (keep up with lesson & homework)
- Comfort with methods of teaching (learning styles addressed?)
- Discipline
- Academic performance/Special education classes or programmes
- Behaviour (cutting class, getting into trouble)
- Technology (computer/internet use for education/information)

Social

- Relationship with school peers
- Expectations of peer group
- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal extra-curricular activities)
- School culture in general (bullying, violence, discrimination, abuse) Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, other students
- Reliance on guidance counsellors etc../Fears and associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

With You (ie. Personal)

- Overall personal health (physical or emotional – i.e. self-esteem, depression, etc..)
- Identity issues (e.g. culture, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, gender, world view)
- Conflict (i.e. societal/cultural acceptance of identity expressions, self esteem…)
- Other personal issues (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy, child rearing, marriage, getting in trouble)
- Major events (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)
- Fears around external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

2) What was/were the main reason(s) that you left school? Tell me about whether you feel that you made a decision to leave or were forced to leave school.

3) What could your school have done differently to help you graduate? Was anything done at school to try to convince you to stay in school?

4) What were your plans when you left school
How did you expect to make them happen? What are your plans now? How do you expect to make them happen?

5) What advice would you give to other students to help through high school?

6) What advice would you give to schools as to how to provide an education that is relevant/useful to each student?

Appendix K: Interview Schedule for Youth who are Still in School

Our goal is to make sense of the process of leaving school, using the widest possible lens to view the circumstances surrounding the lives of young people not completing their secondary school education.

Facilitator instructions
The purpose of the prompts is to elicit information about how youth experience school withdrawal. To facilitate this, please prompt participants to answer each question from the perspective of individual (student), classroom/school and system/policy. To this end, please use the following kinds of statements with the prompts… "How did that work?" "Could you tell me more?" "Do you have an example/story to illustrate that?"

Guideline Questions

For aboriginal youth ask these questions first:

i) What nation are you from? Do you speak the language?

ii) Do you feel proud to be *aboriginal* (use the word they use to identify themselves, i.e. Anishinabek, Cree, etc..)

iii) As far as you know, did anyone in your family attend a residential school?

.....

Interviewer instructions: Note changes in question order for:

- ***Urban aboriginal youth: ask personal questions/prompts 1st, then community, then schooling***
- ***Rural (on reserve) aboriginal youth: ask about community 1st, then personal, then schooling***

.....

1) Tell me what has been going on in your life over the last year or so…

P R O M P T S

At Home

d) What is the nature of the following relationships (attachment, closeness, communication, emotional space)

- Youth relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Youth Relationship with siblings
- Marital/common-law relationship of parents/guardians
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) relationship with the school- personal/culture conflicts

e) What are your parents like?
- Parent/guardian style (permissive, strict, helpful with school work, expectations, parental attachment/supervision)
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) work schedules (shifts etc)
- Attitudes about youth

f) What is your home like?
- Socioeconomic status and effects of income level
- Household routines/rituals (what does everyone do? meals, vacations, homework time etc..)
- Other family events (illness, death, abuse, financial or legal difficulties, substance abuse, geographical moves)
- Assumption of adult roles at home (caregiving, interpreter)

In the Community

Neighbourhood
- Neighbourhood composition
- homogeneity/diversity
- visible minority status vs. non-visible minority status
- levels of employment/unemployment
- levels of education
- socio-economic status
- Neighbourhood safety (rating question also exists in the Fsheets)
- Community spirit (actual rating question exists in the Fsheets)
- Fears around/associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)
- Societal attitudes about youth (negative/positive; alienation/integration)

At work
- General description of work
- Type of employment/Actual job
- Job satisfaction
- Monies earned
- Interactions with co-workers
- Interactions with the public (where applicable)
- Future aspirations

With friends/alone
- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal activities; integrated vs. alienated)
- type of cliques or crowds and things you most often do together/alone
- Positive or protective factors/risk factors (eg. sexual activity, smoking, drug use, driving, skipping out, other risks – why are they done?alone/with friends)
- Peer pressure (explain)
- Other friends dropping out
- Conflicts (breakup of relationship – platonic or romantic)
- Other major event (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)

Out of school activities (alone or with friends)
- Music, theatre, arts, etc.
- Sports activities (informal/leagues)
- Technology (computer use for entertainment; games; internet; TV, movies, etc.)

- Club memberships
- Involvement in community organizations
- Favourite activities outside of school
- Informal involvement with members of your community (however youth define that)
- *For francophone youth add – involvement with the francophone community*

At School (Critical to probe three levels – policy, school, classroom)

Academic

- School policies (way school is run, fairness, rules, i.e. legal age of withdrawal, zero tolerance, etc)
- School structure (class size, size of school, kind of school, etc)
- Overall school climate/environment
- Relationship with teachers/principal/guidance counsellor/other staff (ability to identify & connect)
- Expectations (fair/respectful treatment of you and other youth, support-guidance and counselling)
- Interest in course material (amount/kind of curriculum)
- Ability to follow curricular demands (keep up with lesson & homework)
- Comfort with methods of teaching (learning styles addressed?)
- Discipline
- Academic performance/Special education classes or programmes
- Behaviour (cutting class, getting into trouble)
- Technology (computer/internet use for education/information)

Social

- Relationship with school peers
- Expectations of peer group
- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal extra-curricular activities)
- School culture in general (bullying, violence, discrimination, abuse) Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, other students
- Reliance on guidance counsellors etc../Fears and associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

With You (ie. Personal)

- Overall personal health (physical or emotional – i.e. self-esteem, depression, etc..)
- Identity issues (e.g. culture, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, gender, world view)
- Conflict (i.e. societal/cultural acceptance of identity expressions, self esteem…)
- Other personal issues (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy, child rearing, marriage, getting in trouble)
- Major events (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)
- Fears around external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

2) How are you treated at school? How do people see you?

- Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, other students

3) Have you ever thought about leaving high school before graduation? If so, why have you considered this? If not, why do you think that is?

4) What are the kinds of things that you think might help to keep youth in school until graduation?

5) What are your plans for after high school? How do you expect to make these happen?

6) What advice would you give to other students to help them through high school?

7) What advice would you give to schools as to how to provide an education that is relevant to each student?

Appendix L: Interview Schedule for Youth who have Returned and Graduated

Our goal is to make sense of the process of leaving school, using the widest possible lens to view the circumstances surrounding the lives of young people not completing their secondary school education.

Interviewer instructions
The purpose of the prompts is to elicit information about how youth experience school withdrawal. To facilitate this, please prompt participants to answer each question from the perspective of individual (student), classroom/school and system/policy. To this end, please use the following kinds of statements with the prompts… "How did that work?" "Could you tell me more?" "Do you have an example/story to illustrate that?"

Guideline Questions

.

For aboriginal youth ask these questions first:

i) What nation are you from? Do you speak the language?

ii) Do you feel proud to be *aboriginal* (use the word they use to identify themselves, i.e. Anishinabek, Cree, etc..)

iii) As far as you know, did anyone in your family attend a residential school?

.....

Interviewer instructions: Note changes in question order for:

- ***Urban aboriginal youth ask personal questions/prompts 1st, then community, then schooling***
- ***Rural (on reserve) aboriginal youth ask about community 1st, then personal, then schooling***

.....

1) Tell me what was going on in your life before you left high school?

P R O M P T S

At Home

g) What is the nature of the following relationships (attachment, closeness, communication, emotional space)
   - Youth relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s)
   - Youth Relationship with siblings
   - Marital/common-law relationship of parents/guardians
   - Parent(s)/guardian(s) relationship with the school- personal/culture conflicts

h) What are your parents like?

- Parent/guardian style (permissive, strict, helpful with school work, expectations, parental attachment/supervision)
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) work schedules (shifts etc)
- Attitudes about youth

i) What is your home like?

- Socioeconomic status and effects of income level
- Household routines/rituals (what does everyone do? meals, vacations, homework time etc..)
- Other family events (illness, death, abuse, financial or legal difficulties, substance abuse, geographical moves)
- Assumption of adult roles at home (caregiving, interpreter)

In the Community

Neighbourhood

- Neighbourhood composition
- homogeneity/diversity
- visible minority status vs. non-visible minority status
- levels of employment/unemployment
- levels of education
- socio-economic status
- Neighbourhood safety (rating question also exists in the Fsheets)
- Community spirit (actual rating question exists in the Fsheets)
- Fears around/associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)
- Societal attitudes about youth (negative/positive; alienation/integration)

At work

- General description of work
- Type of employment/Actual job
- Job satisfaction
- Monies earned
- Interactions with co-workers
- Interactions with the public (where applicable)
- Future aspirations

With friends/alone

- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal activities; integrated vs. alienated)
- type of cliques or crowds and things you most often do together/alone
- Positive or protective factors/risk factors (eg. sexual activity, smoking, drug use, driving, skipping out, other risks – why are they done?alone/with friends)
- Peer pressure (explain)
- Other friends dropping out
- Conflicts (breakup of relationship – platonic or romantic)
- Other major event (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)

Out of school activities (alone or with friends)

- Music, theatre, arts, etc.
- Sports activities (informal/leagues)
- Technology (computer use for entertainment; games; internet; TV, movies, etc.)
- Club memberships
- Involvement in community organizations
- Favourite activities outside of school

- Informal involvement with members of your community (however youth define that)
- *For francophone youth add – involvement with the francophone community*

At School (Critical to probe three levels – policy, school, classroom)

Academic

- School policies (way school is run, fairness, rules, i.e. legal age of withdrawal, zero tolerance, etc)
- School structure (class size, size of school, kind of school, etc)
- Overall school climate/environment
- Relationship with teachers/principal/guidance counsellor/other staff (ability to identify & connect)
- Expectations (fair/respectful treatment of you and other youth, support-guidance and counselling)
- Interest in course material (amount/kind of curriculum)
- Ability to follow curricular demands (keep up with lesson & homework)
- Comfort with methods of teaching (learning styles addressed?)
- Discipline
- Academic performance/Special education classes or programmes
- Behaviour (cutting class, getting into trouble)
- Technology (computer/internet use for education/information)

Social

- Relationship with school peers
- Expectations of peer group
- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal extra-curricular activities)
- School culture in general (bullying, violence, discrimination, abuse) Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, other students
- Reliance on guidance counsellors etc../Fears and associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

With You (ie. Personal)

- Overall personal health (physical or emotional – i.e. self-esteem, depression, etc..)
- Identity issues (e.g. culture, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, gender, world view)
- Conflict (i.e. societal/cultural acceptance of identity expressions, self esteem...)
- Other personal issues (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy, child rearing, marriage, getting in trouble)
- Major events (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)
- Fears around external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

2) Prior to leaving school, how were you treated in school? How were you treated in school when you went back?

- Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, other students

3) What was the main reason(s) that you left school? Tell me about whether you feel that you made a decision to leave or were forced to leave?

4) When did you first begin to think about returning to school and why did you decide to return to finish your high school education?

5) What were your plans when you first left high school? How did you expect to achieve these? What are your plans now?

6) What could your school have done differently the first time around, to help you graduate? Was anything done at school to try to convince you to stay in school?

7) What advice would you give to other students to help them through high school?

8) What advice would you give to schools as to how to provide an education that is relevant to each student?

Appendix M: Face Sheets for Parent/Guardian Focus Groups

I – COMMUNITY, WORK AND YOUR SON/DAUGHTER'S SCHOOL

1. What is the name of the city, town or reserve where you live? _____

2. What is your postal code(s)? _____

3. How would you rate your neighbourhood in terms of the following:

	Very Good	*Good*	*Not so Good*	*Poor*
a) Safety	___	___	___	___
b) Access to public transportation	___	___	___	___
c) Parks	___	___	___	___
d) Recreational facilities	___	___	___	___
e) Sense of community	___	___	___	___

4. During the past year, what was/were the main activity(ies) of the adult members of your household? *(please select code from list on the following page)*

	You?	*Your son/daughter's other parent?* __ *Not applicable*	*Other adult(s) in house(s)?* __ *Not applicable*
a) Caring for family	____	___	___
b) Working for pay or profit (enter code)	____	___	___
c) Caring for family and working for	____	___	___
d) Pay or profit (code?)	____	___	___
e) Self-employed (code?)	____	____	___
f) Caring for family and self-employed (code)?	____	___	___
g) Going to school	____	___	___
h) Recovering from illness/disability	____	___	___
i) Looking for work	____	___	___
j) Retired	____	___	___

Job Codes

A Management occupations

A0 Senior management occupations
A2 Managers in retail trade/food/accommodation
A1 Specialist managers
A3 Other managers, n.e.c

B Business, finance and administrative occupations

B0 Professional occupations in business/finance
B3 Administrative and regulatory occupations
B1 Finance/insurance administrative occupations
B4 Clerical supervisors
B2 Secretaries
B5 Clerical occupations

C Natural and applied sciences and related occupations

C0 Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences
C1 Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences

D Health occupations

D0 Professional occupations in health
D2 Technical and related occupations in health
D1 Nurse supervisors and registered nurses
D3 Assisting occupations health services

E Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion

E0 Judges, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, ministers of religion, and policy and program officers
E1 Teachers and professors
E2 Paralegals, social services workers and occupations in education and religion, n.e.c.

F Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport

F0 Professional occupations in art and culture
F1 Technical occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport

G Sales and service occupations

G0 Sales and service supervisors
G1 Wholesale, technical, insurance, real estate sales specialists, and retail, wholesale and grain buyers
G2 Retail salespersons and sales clerks
G3 Cashiers
G4 Chefs and cooks
G5 Occupations in food and beverage service
G6 Occupations in protective services
G7 Occupations in travel and accommodation including attendants in recreation and sport
G8 Son/daughter care and home support workers
G9 Sales and service occupations, n.e.c.

H Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations

H0 Contractors and supervisors in trades and transportation
H1 Construction trades
H2 Stationary engineers, power station operators and electrical trades and telecommunications occupations
H3 Machinists, metal forming, shaping and erecting occupations
H4 Mechanics
H5 Other trades, n.e.c.
H6 Heavy equipment and crane operators including drillers
H7 Transportation equipment operators and related workers, excluding labourers
H8 Trades helpers, construction and transportation labourers and related occupations

I Occupations unique to primary industry

I0 Occupations unique to agriculture excluding labourers
I1 Occupations unique to forestry operations, mining, oil and gas extraction and fishing, excluding labourers
I2 Primary production labourers

J Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities

J0 Supervisors in manufacturing
J1 Machine operators in manufacturing
J2 Assemblers in manufacturing
J3 Labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities

5. Which of the following best describes the hours worked by …

	You?	*Your son/daughter's other parent ?* __ *Not applicable*	*Other adult(s) in house(s)?* __ *Not applicable*
a) Regular daytime schedule or shift	___	___	___
b) Regular evening shift	___	___	___
c) Regular night shift	___	___	___
d) Rotating shift (days to evenings to nights)	___	___	___
e) Split shift	___	___	___
f) On call	___	___	___
g) Other (specify _____)	___	___	___

6. What is the number of jobs currently held by …..

You? _____
Your partner? _____ __ Not applicable
Other adult member of household? (please specify_____)
__ Not applicable

7. Was your child's school a ___ public school? ___ Catholic school? ___ private school?
____ hospital-school? _____ First Nations and First Nations Uninspected?
____ federal prison? _____ other? (specify_____)

8. Was this a French language school? ___ yes ___no

9. In what city/town is this school located? _____

10. In what school board district is this school located? _____ ____don't know

11. Under which school authority does this fall? _____ ____don't know

12. How many years had your son/daughter been going to this school? _____
a. If less than one year, indicate the number of months: _____

13. How would you have rated your child's school in terms of the following:

	Very Good	*Good*	*Not so Good*	*Poor*
a) School size	___	___	___	___
b) Classroom size (ratio)	___	___	___	___
c) School ethos/climate	___	___	___	__
d) Diversity of student body	___	___	___	___
e) Diversity of teachers/staff	___	___	___	__
f) Safety	___	___	___	___
g) Student academic outcomes	___	___	___	___
h) Student access to extra-curricular activities	___	___	___	___

i) Open areas for students to "hang out" ___ ___ ___ ___
j) Family outreach ___ ___ ___ ___
k) Supports for students "at-risk" :
i. of academic failure___ ___ ___ ___
ii. of risk activities ___ ___ ___ ___
iii. of early school leaving___ ___ ___ ___
l) Supports for minority youth:
i. LGBT ___ ___ ___ ___
ii. Aboriginal ___ ___ ___ ___
iii. Newcomer ___ ___ ___ ___
iv. ESL ___ ___ ___ ___
v. Visible minority ___ ___ ___ ___
vi. Disabilities ___ ___ ___ ___

14. Which school did your son/daughter attend **before** coming to this school? _____

15. Was this an elementary school? ___ yes ___ no
or a high school? ___ yes ___no

16. Was this a ___ public school? ___Catholic school? ___ private school?
___ hospital-school? ___ First Nations and First Nations Uninspected?
___ federal prison? ___ other? (*specify*_____)

17. Was this a French language school? ___ yes ___no

18. In what city/town was this previous school located? _____

19. In what school board district was this school located? _____
____unknown

20. Under which school authority does this fall? _____ ____don't know

21. How many years did your son/daughter go to this school? _____
a. If less than one year, indicate the number of months: _____

22. At the last school your son/daughter attended was s/he in the academic or applied program?
___ academic ____ applied

23. Was your son/daughter in any of the following programs? (please indicate all that apply)
a) ___ English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)
b) ___ French Immersion
c) ___ Special Education
d) ___ A vocational program
e) ___ Other; please specify: _____
f) ___ Unknown

24. Do you know if your son/daughter was identified as a special education student (e.g. learning/ physical/developmental disability, gifted, blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing, , speech/ language impairment, behavior or mild intellectual disability or autistic)? ___ Yes ___ No ___ I don't know

a. If s/he was identified as a special education student, what was the nature of his/her exceptionality? _____

b. In what grade was your son/daughter first identified (*if unknown, give approximate*) _____

c. Did your son/daughter receive any additional supports or programming at school related to his/her special needs or exceptionality? ___ Yes ___ No ___ I don't know

i. *If yes or 'I don't know'*, what type of supports did your son/daughter receive?

___ help from a Special Education Teacher
___ help from a Resource Teacher
___ special exam/test accommodation
___ interpretation (*including language, oral or sign interpreters*)
___ other (*please specify*: _____)

25. How would you rate the importance of the following roles in keeping youth engaged at school:

	Very important	*Important*	*Not so important*	*Not at all important*
a) Principals	___	___	___	___
b) Teachers	___	___	___	___
c) Guidance counselors	___	___	___	___
d) Parents	___	___	___	___
e) Fellow students	___	___	___	___
f) Friends of young people	___	___	___	___
g) Youth themselves	___	___	___	___
h) Community agencies	___	___	___	___
i) Ministry of Education	___	___	___	___
j) Boards of Education	___	___	___	___
k) Other (please specify: _____)	___	___	___	___

II - YOUR FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

26. What is your marital status? ___single ___ married ___ common-law relationship
___ separated ___ divorced ___ widowed ___ other (specify: _____)

27. How many children do you have? (*including the one we are speaking about*) _____
a. How old are your son(s)? _____ daughter(s)? _____

28. What is your relationship to the son/daughter who left school?
Mother ____ Step-mother ____ Female legal guardian ___ Foster mother
Father ____ Step-father ____ Male legal guardian ___ Foster father

29. What is your relationship to the child/ren in your family? (check as many as apply)

Mother ____ Step-mother ____ Female legal guardian ___ Foster mother
Father ____ Step-father ____ Male legal guardian ___ Foster father

30. Who are your son/daughter's close family members? *Please indicate the number of each type of family member*

__mother __female guardian __foster mother __step-mother
__father __male guardian __foster father __step-father
__sister __half-sister __foster sister __sister (blended family)
__brother __half-brother __foster brother __brother (blended family)
__son __daughter
__maternal grandmother __maternal grandfather
__paternal grandmother __paternal grandfather
__maternal aunt __maternal uncle __maternal cousins
__paternal aunt __paternal uncle __paternal cousins
__Other; please specify _____

31. Please indicate the members of your household (*include yourself, and for each indicate how many*):

__mother __female guardian __foster mother __step-mother
__father __male guardian __foster father __step-father
__sister __half-sister __foster sister __sister (blended family)
__brother __half-brother __foster brother __brother (blended family)
__son __daughter
__maternal grandmother __maternal grandfather
__paternal grandmother __paternal grandfather
__maternal aunt __maternal uncle __maternal cousins
__paternal aunt __paternal uncle __paternal cousins
__ roommate(s) __ boarder(s) __ renter(s)
__other; please specify _____

32. How often does/do your son/daughter live with you?

___ full-time => *skip to question #33*
___ 50% of the time => *go to 32a.*
___ on weekends and holidays => *go to 32a.*
___ other amount (please specify: _____) => *go to 32a.*
___ does not live with me => *go to 32a.*

a. If your son/daughter does **not** live with you full-time, with whom does he/she live?

___ other parent ___ roommate ___ boyfriend or girlfriend
___ other family member (specify: _____)
___ other (specify: _____)
___ live alone
___ homeless

33. ***If applicable*** **- Household #2 ___ not applicable**

Please indicate the members of your son/daughter's other household (*and* indicate *how many*):

__ mother __female guardian __foster mother __step-mother
__father __male guardian __foster father __step-father
__ sister __half-sister __foster sister __sister (blended family)
__brother __half-brother __foster brother __brother (blended family)
__son __daughter
__maternal grandmother __maternal grandfather
__paternal grandmother __paternal grandfather
__maternal aunt __maternal uncle __maternal cousins
__paternal aunt __paternal uncle __paternal cousins
__ roommate(s) __ boarder(s) __ renter(s)
__ other; please specify _____

34. Who is/are the individuals directly involved in the raising of your son/daughter? (*Check as many as apply. If parents are of the same gender, check twice*)

__ mother __female guardian __foster mother __step-mother
__ father __male guardian __foster father __step-father
__ sister __half-sister __foster sister __sister(blended family)
__ brother __half-brother __foster brother __brother(blended family)
__ maternal grandmother __maternal grandfather
__ paternal grandmother __paternal grandfather
__ maternal aunt __maternal uncle __maternal cousins
__ paternal aunt __paternal uncle __paternal cousins
__ other; please specify _____

35. What was the highest level of education obtained by …..

	You?	*Your child's other parent/guardian*? *(if applicable)*	*Your partner? (if applicable)*
Earned Doctorate	____	___	___
Master's Degree	____	___	___
Degree in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Optometry	____	___	___
Bachelor's or Undergraduate Degree, or Teacher's College	____	___	___
Diploma/Certificate from community college, CEGEP or nursing school	____	___	___
Diploma/Certificate from trade, technical or vocational school or business college	____	___	___
Some community college, CEGEP or nursing school	____	___	___
Some trade, technical or vocational school, or business college	____	___	___
High school diploma	____	___	___
Some high school	____	___	___
Elementary school	____	___	___

No schooling	____	___	___
Other (specify _____)	____	___	___
Refused	____	___	___
Don't know	____	___	___

36. In which of the following categories does your household income fall?

a) ___ less than $10,000?
b) ___ $10,000 to less than $20,000?
c) ___ $20,000 to less than $30,000?
d) ___ $30,000 to less than $40,000?
e) ___ $40,000 to less than $50,000?
f) ___ $50,000 to less than $60,000?
g) ___ $60,000 to less than $70,000?
h) ___ $70,000 to less than $80,000?
i) ___ $80,000 to less than $90,000?
j) ___ $90,000 to less than $100,000?
k) ___ $100,000 or more?
l) ___ No income or loss
m) ___ Refused
n) ___ Don't know

III – ABOUT YOU

37. With which gender do you identify? ___ male ___ female ___other (specify:_____)

38. What is your age? __30-40 __41-50 __51-60 __61+

In Canada, one of the ways we describe people is by their cultural origins, lifestyle and practices. A cultural group is made up of people who share a common way of life. They may live in or come from the same area, country or part of the world, speak the same language and do things the same way. Often – though not always – they also look similar to each other.

39. To which cultural group or groups do you feel you belong? _____

If more than one response:

a. With which of these groups do you MOST identify? _____

40. Do any of your ancestors belong to any of the following aboriginal groups?

North American Indian	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Métis	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Inuit	___ yes	___no	___ don't know

41. Are you an Aboriginal person, that is North American Indian, Métis or Inuit?

___ yes, North American Indian
___ yes, Métis
___ yes, Inuit
___ no

42. Are you a member of an Indian Band or First Nation?
___ yes, member of an Indian Band (specify _____) or First Nation (specify _____)
___ no
___ don't know

43. Are you a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada?
___ yes, Treaty Indian or Registered Indian
___ no
___ don't know

44. Were you born in Canada?
___ yes → *skip to 45*
___ no
If no, in which country were you born? _____
→ *skip to question 46*

Instructions: For individuals with same gender parents, please check twice as applicable
45. If you were **born** in Canada ….
a) Was your mother/female parental substitute an immigrant to this country? ___ yes ___no
b) Was your father/male parental substitute an immigrant to this country? ___ yes ___ no
→ *skip to question 47*

46. If you were **not born** in Canada, in what year did you first come to Canada? _____
a) How old were you when you first arrived? _____
b) Did you arrive:
____ together with other family members
____ separately to join family members already in Canada
____ on your own
c) When you first arrived in Canada, did **you** arrive as:
___ a citizen
___ landed immigrant
___ as an independent applicant (skilled worker)
___ under the family reunification programme
___ under the business entrepreneur programme
___ with a ministerial permit
___ refugee
___ convention refugee
___ other
___ other; please specify _____
___ don't know
___ refused
d) Regardless of your official status, did you consider yourself a refugee? ___ yes___no
e) Have you spent any time in a refugee camp?
___ yes (specify how many months _____)
___ no
___ don't know
___ refused
f) What country did you **immigrate** from? _____

g) What was the last country you lived in immediately prior to coming to Canada? _____

h) Besides Canada and your country of birth, have you lived in any other countries for three (3) years or more prior to your arrival in Canada?

___yes (specify _____)
___no
___refused
___don't know

i) What is your current immigration status?

___ naturalized citizen
___ landed immigrant (ie. permanent resident under the Immigration Act, 1976)
___ refugee applicant
___ other; please specify _____

47. Of which country, or countries, are you a citizen? _____

48. What is your mother tongue? _____

a) How well do you understand it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well
b) How well do you speak it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well
c) How well do you read it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well
d) How well do you write it? ___none ___a little ___ fairly well ___very well

49. If English or French (*select relevant interview language)* is not your mother tongue ___ not applicable

a) How well do you understand English/French? ___none ___a little___ fairly well___very well
b) How well do you speak English/French? ___none ___a little___ fairly well ___very well
c) How well do you read English/French? ___none ___a little___ fairly well ___very well
d) How well do you write English/French? ___none ___a little___ fairly well ___very well

Give responses as column headings, then use headings as 'check-off" categories for subsequent questions.

50. What language(s) do you <u>understand</u>? (*in declining order of mastery*)	1) _____	2) _____	3) _____	4) _____
51. Which language(s) do you <u>speak</u> at home?				
52. Which language(s) do you <u>speak</u> with your closest friends?				
53. Which language(s) do you <u>speak</u> at work?				
54. Which language do you <u>speak</u> most of the time …. a: with your son/daughter/?				
b. with your partner?				
c: with your brother(s)/sister(s)?				
d: with your cousins?				
e: with parents/older relatives?				
f: with your friends?				
g: with your co-workers?				
h: with your neighbours?				

Often, but not always, a person's identification with their country of origin, specific culture, ethnicity, race, religion or lifestyle makes them feels connected to others who share these same traits, values, beliefs and/or practices.

55. Do you feel a sense of belonging to a particular group or groups? ___Yes ___No ___ I don't know

a. *If yes*, to which group(s) or population(s)?_____

56. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a population group or groups that is/are unfairly treated in Canada? ___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. *If yes*, of which group or groups? _____

57. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a visible minority group in Canada?

___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. *If yes*, of which group or groups? _____

58. Do you think other people consider you to be a member of a visible minority group in Canada? ___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. *If yes*, of which group? _____

59. *People in Canada come from many racial or cultural groups. You may belong to more than one group on the following list*. Are you …..

___ Aboriginal? (ie. North American Indian, Métis, Inuit)
___ Arab
___ Black
___ Chinese
___ Filipino
___ Japanese
___ Korean?
___ Latin American
___ South Asian? (eg. East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)
___ Southeast Asian? (eg. Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc.)
___ West Asian? (eg. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
___ White?
___ or another group? Please specify: _____
___ Refused
___ Don't know

60. *For some people, religion may be an important part of their ethnicity or culture, while for others it is not.* What is your religion, if any?

___ No religion
___ Anglican (Church of England, Episcopalian)
___ Baptist
___ Buddhist
___ Greek Orthodox
___ Hindu
___ Islam (Muslim)
___ Jehovah's Witnesses
___ Jewish
___ refused
___ Lutheran
___ Mennonite
___ Pentecostal
___ Presbyterian
___ Roman Catholic
___ Sikh
___ Ukrainian Catholic
___ United Church
___ Other (specify:_____)
___ don't know

61. Using a scale of 1 to 5 - where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important - how important is your religion to you?

___ 1 – not very important
___ 2
___ 3
___ 4
___ 5 – very important
___ refused
___ don't know

This next question may be a very personal one. We do not mean to pry into your private life or offend in any way. However, since this information may or may not be relevant to your son/daughter/ren's school experience it would be helpful if you would answer as honestly as possible. Please keep in mind that all of the information you provide is both anonymous (ie. no one will know who you are) and strictly confidential (ie. no one will know what you say).

62. How would you describe your sexual identification (i.e. orientation)? _____

Appendix N: Interview Schedule for Parent/Guardian Focus Groups

Our goal is to make sense of the process of leaving school, using the widest possible lens to view the circumstances surrounding the lives of young people not completing their secondary school education.

Facilitator instructions
The purpose of the prompts is to elicit information about how parents/guardians believe their child experienced school withdrawal. To facilitate this, please prompt participants to answer each question from the perspective of individual child (student), classroom/school and system/policy. To this end, please use the following kinds of statements with the prompts… "How did that work?" "Could you tell me more?" "Do you have an example/story to illustrate that?"

Guideline Questions

1) What are some of the reasons young people leave school before graduating?

2) How did you first become aware that your child was a) disengaging from school b) going to finally leave school?

(examples, stories, etc)

3) What was your child's experience of school? What was your experience with your child's school? How was your child's experience of school similar or different to your own experiences in school?

(examples, stories, etc)

4) What factors do you think contributed to your child leaving high school?

P R O M P T S

At Child's School

Academic

At School **(Critical to probe three levels – classroom, school policy)**

Academic

- School policies (way school is run, fairness, rules, i.e. legal age of withdrawal, zero tolerance, etc)
- School structure (class size, size of school, kind of school, etc)
- Overall school climate/environment
- Relationship with teachers/principal/guidance counsellor/other staff (ability to identify & connect)
- Expectations (fair/respectful treatment of you and other youth, support-guidance and counselling)

- Interest in course material (amount/kind of curriculum)
- Ability to follow curricular demands (keep up with lesson & homework)
- Comfort with methods of teaching (learning styles addressed?)
- Academic performance/Special education classes or programmes (i.e. failure of literacy test, failed, repeated courses)
- Changes in schools/Interruptions in schooling
- Discipline
- Behaviour (cutting class, getting into trouble)
- Technology (computer/internet use for education/information)

Social

- Relationship with school peers
- Expectations of peer group
- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal extra-curricular activities)
- School culture in general (bullying, violence, discrimination, abuse) Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, other students
- Reliance on guidance counsellors etc../Fears and associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)
- Family outreach
- Access and integration of community agencies

In the Community

Neighbourhood

- Neighbourhood composition
- homogeneity/diversity
- visible minority status vs. non-visible minority status
- levels of employment/unemployment
- levels of education
- socio-economic status
- Neighbourhood safety
- Community spirit
- Societal attitudes about youth

At child's work

- General description of child's work
- Type of employment/Actual job/Hours worked
- Job satisfaction
- Monies earned
- Interactions with co-workers
- Interactions with the public (where applicable)
- Future aspirations

With child's friends/on their own

- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal activities; integrated vs. alienated)
- type of cliques or crowds and things you most often do together/alone
- Positive or protective factors/risk factors (eg. sexual activity, smoking, drug use, driving, skipping out, other risks – why are they done? alone/with friends)
- Peer pressure (explain)

- Other friends dropping out
- Conflicts (breakup of relationship – platonic or romantic)
- Other major event (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)

Child's out of school activities (alone or with friends)

- Music, theatre, arts, etc.
- Technology (computer use for entertainment, games, internet; TV, movies, etc.)
- Sports activities (informal/leagues)
- Club memberships
- Involvement in community organizations
- Out of school programmes
- Favourite activities outside of school

At Home

- Parent/guardian-youth relationship
- Marital/common-law relationship of parents/guardians
- Family composition
- Family events (illness, death, abuse, financial or legal difficulties, substance abuse, geographical moves)
- Role of youth at home (caregiving, interpreter)

With Child (ie. Personal) *For aboriginal youth, these questions before school ones.*

- Overall personal health (physical or emotional – i.e. self-esteem, depression, etc..)
- Identity issues (e.g. culture, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, gender, world view)
- Conflict (i.e. societal/cultural acceptance of identity expressions, self esteem...)
- Other personal issues (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy, child rearing, marriage, getting in trouble)
- Major events (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)

5) What were your dreams for your child when he/she was in elementary school? Now that your child has left school, have those dreams changed and in what way?

6) Do you think youth who leave school prior to graduation have made an informed choice about leaving school?

(i.e. are they well informed about consequences?)

7) Tell me about the resources and services which exist in your community to help youth who a) are disengaging from school and b) who have left school early. (school, community, government, etc)

8) What additional resources and services would you like to see in your community? (school, community, government, etc)

9) What other kinds of things do you think could help keep young people engaged at school?

(i.e. by parents/guardians: encouragement to do well in school, assistance with schoolwork: schools – support and encouragement, school-home connections , community group/agencies)

Appendix O: Face Sheets for Educator Focus Groups

I – YOUR WORK AND SCHOOL

1. At which school do you currently work? (*optional for principals*) _____

2. Is this an ____ elementary school? ____ a high school? ____Other? (please specify: _____)

3. Is this a _____ public school? _____ Catholic school? _____ private school?
_____ hospital-school? _____ First Nations and First Nations Uninspected?
___ federal prison? _____ other?

4. Is this a French language school? ___ yes ___no

5. Approximately how many students are currently enrolled at your school? _____

6. In what city/town is this school located? _____

7. For which school authority do you currently work? _____

8. For which school board do you currently work? _____

9. How would you rate the neighbourhood in which your school is located in terms of the following:

	Very Good	*Good*	*Not so Good*	*Poor*
a) Safety	___	___	___	___
b) Access to public transportation	___	___	___	___
c) Parks	___	___	___	___
d) Recreational facilities	___	___	___	___
e) Sense of community	___	___	___	___

10. If you are a teacher, what grade(s) do you currently teach? _____
a. What other grades have you taught? _____

11. If you are a teacher, which subject(s) do you teach? _____

12. If you are a teacher, do you teach students in the academic or applied program?
___ academic ____ applied ___both

13. If you are a teacher, do you teach in any of the following programs? (*please indicate all that apply*)

a) ___ English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)
b) ___ French Immersion
c) ___ Special Education Students
d) ___ A vocational program

e) ___ Other; please specify: _____

14. What is your specific title within the educational system? _____

15. What is your specific role within the educational system? _____

16. How many years have you been in this role? _____

17. How would you rate your school in terms of the following:

	Very Good	*Good*	*Not so Good*	*Poor*
a) School size	___	___	___	___
b) Classroom size (ratio)	___	___	___	___
c) School ethos/climate	___	___	___	___
d) Diversity of student body	___	___	___	___
e) Diversity of teachers/staff	___	___	___	___
f) Safety	___	___	___	___
g) Student academic outcomes	___	___	___	___
h) Student access to extra-curricular activities	___	___	___	___
i) Open areas for students to "hang out"	___	___	___	___
j) Family outreach	___	___	___	___
k) Supports for students "at-risk" :				
i. of academic failure	___	___	___	___
ii. of risk activities	___	___	___	___
iii. of early school leaving	___	___	___	___
l) Supports for minority youth:				
i. LGBT	___	___	___	___
ii. Aboriginal	___	___	___	___
iii. Newcomer	___	___	___	___
iv. ESL	___	___	___	___
v. Visible minority	___	___	___	___
vi. Disabilities	___	___	___	___

18. How would you rate the importance of the following roles in keeping youth engaged at school:

	V*ery important*	*Important*	*Not so Important*	*Not at all important*
a) Principals	___	___	___	___
b) Teachers	___	___	___	___
c) Guidance counsellors	___	___	___	___
d) Parents	___	___	___	___
e) Fellow students	___	___	___	___
f) Friends of young people	___	___	___	___
g) Youth themselves	___	___	___	___
h) Community agencies	___	___	___	___
i) Ministry of Education	___	___	___	___
j) Boards of Education	___	___	___	___
k) Other (please specify: _____)	___	___	___	___

II- ABOUT YOU

19. What is the name of the city, town or reserve where you live? _____

20. With which gender do you identify? ___ male ___ female ___other (*specify*:_____)

21. What is your age? __20-30 __31-40__41-50__51-60 __61 +

22. What is your marital status? ___single ___ married ___ common-law relationship
___ separated ___ divorced ___ widowed ___ other (specify: _____)

23. Do you have children? ___ yes ___no
a. *If yes*, how many children do you have? _____
b. *If yes*, how old are they?: _____

24. What is your relationship to the child/ren in your family? (*check as many as apply*)

Mother ____	Step-mother ____	Female legal guardian ___	Foster mother
Father ____	Step-father ____	Male legal guardian ___	Foster father

25. Were you born in Canada?
___ yes → *skip to 26*
___ no If no, in which country were you born? _____
→ *then skip to 27.*

Instructions: For individuals with same gender parents, please check twice as applicable

26. If you were **born** in Canada ….
a. Was your mother/female parental substitute an immigrant to this country? ___ yes ___no
b. Was your father/male parental substitute an immigrant to this country? ___ yes ___ no → *skip to question 28*

27. If you were **not born** in Canada, in what year did you first come to Canada? _____
a. How old were you when you first arrived? _____ (*if unsure, give approximate age*)
b. What country did you **immigrate** from? _____
c. What was the last country you lived in immediately prior to coming to Canada? _____

28. Of which country, or countries, are you a citizen?_____

In Canada, one of the ways we describe people is by their cultural origins, lifestyle and practices. A cultural group is made up of people who share a common way of life. They may live in or come from the same area, country or part of the world, speak the same language and do things the same way. Often – though not always – they also look similar to each other.

29. To which cultural group or groups do you feel you belong? _____
If more than one response:
a. With which of these groups do you MOST identify? _____

30. Do any of your ancestors belong to any of the following aboriginal groups?

North American Indian	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Métis	___ yes	___no	___ don't know
Inuit	___ yes	___no	___ don't know

31. Do you belong to any of the following aboriginal groups?

___ yes, North American Indian
___ yes, Métis
___ yes, Inuit
___ no

32. Are you a member of an Indian Band or First Nation?

___ yes, member of an Indian Band (specify _____)
or First Nation (specify _____)
___ no
___ don't know

33. Are you a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada?

___ yes, Treaty Indian or Registered Indian
___ no
___ don't know

Often, but not always, a person's identification with their country of origin, specific culture, ethnicity, race, religion or lifestyle makes them feels connected to others who share these same traits, values, beliefs and/or practices.

34. Do you feel a sense of belonging to a particular group or groups? ___Yes ___No ___ I don't know

a. *If yes*, to which group(s) or population(s)? _____

35. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a population group or groups that is/are unfairly treated in Canada? ___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. *If yes*, of which group or groups? _____

36. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a visible minority group in Canada? __Yes __No __I don't know

a. *If yes*, of which group or groups? _____

37. Do you think other people consider you to be a member of a visible minority group in Canada?

___Yes ___No ___I don't know

a. *If yes*, of which group? _____

38. *People in Canada come from many racial or cultural groups. You may belong to more than one group on the following list*. Are you …..

___ Aboriginal? (ie. North American Indian, Métis, Inuit)
___ Arab
___ Black
___ Chinese
___ Filipino
___ Japanese
___ Korean?
___ Latin American
___ South Asian? (eg. East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)

___ Southeast Asian? (eg. Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc.)
___ West Asian? (eg. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
___ White?
___ or another group? Please specify: _____
___ Refused
___ Don't know

39. *For some people, religion may be an important part of their ethnicity or culture, while for others it is not*. What is your religion, if any?

___	No religion	___	Lutheran
___	Anglican (Church of England, Episcopalian)	___	Mennonite
___	Baptist	___	Pentecostal
___	Buddhist	___	Presbyterian
___	Greek Orthodox	___	Roman Catholic
___	Hindu	___	Sikh
___	Islam (Muslim)	___	Ukrainian Catholic
___	Jehovah's Witnesses	___	United Church
___	Jewish	___	Other (specify:_____)
___	refused	___	don't know

40. What is your mother tongue? _____

Give responses as column headings, then use headings as 'check-off' categories for subsequent questions.

41. What language(s) do you <u>understand</u>? (*in declining order of mastery*)	1) _____	2) _____	3) _____	4) _____
42. Which language(s) do you <u>speak</u> a. at home?				
b. with close friends?				
c. at work?				

43. What degree other than a Bachelor of Education have you obtained? _____

44. What are your current educational qualifications (*check as many as apply*):
a) ___ Cooperative education
b) ___ ESL
c) ___ French as a second language
d) ___ Guidance
e) ___ Religious education
f) ___ Science in primary and junior education
g) ___ Special education
h) ___ Visual arts
i) ___ Honours specialist (please specify: _____)
j) ___ Other (please specify: _____)

Appendix P: Interview Schedule for Educator Focus Groups

Our goal is to make sense of the process of leaving school, using the widest possible lens to view the circumstances surrounding the lives of young people not completing their secondary school education.

Facilitator instructions
The purpose of the prompts is to elicit information about how educators believe youth experience school withdrawal. To facilitate this, please prompt participants to answer each question from the perspective of individual (student), classroom/school and system/policy. To this end, please use the following kinds of statements with the prompts… "How did that work?" "Could you tell me more?" "Do you have an example/story to illustrate that?"

Guideline Questions

1) How do you first become aware that students are a) disengaging from school and b) going to finally leave school? (examples, stories)

2) What are your reactions when you become aware that a student is disengaging from school?

3) Who is most likely to leave school without graduating? In your experience, how many leave?

4) What are the main factors that contribute to students leaving high school before graduation?

P R O M P T S

At Student's Home

j) What is your impression of the nature of the following relationships (attachment, closeness, communication, emotional space)
- Youth relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Youth Relationship with siblings
- Marital/common-law relationship of parents/guardians
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) relationship with the school- personal/culture conflicts

k) What is your impression of what parents are like?
- Parent/guardian style (permissive, strict, helpful with school work, expectations, parental attachment/supervision)
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) work schedules (shifts etc)
- Attitudes about youth

l) What is your impression of what youths' homes are like?

- Socioeconomic status and effects of income level
- Household routines/rituals (what does everyone do? meals, vacations, homework time etc..)
- Other family events (illness, death, abuse, financial or legal difficulties, substance abuse, geographical moves)
- Assumption of adult roles at home (caregiving, interpreter)

In the Student's Community

Neighbourhood

- Community agency connections
- Neighbourhood composition
- homogeneity/diversity
- visible minority status vs. non-visible minority status
- levels of employment/unemployment
- levels of education
- socio-economic status
- Neighbourhood safety
- Community spirit
- Societal attitudes about youth

At Student's work

- General description of child's work
- Type of employment/Actual job
- Job satisfaction
- Monies earned
- Interactions with co-workers
- Interactions with the public (where applicable)
- Future aspirations

With student's friends/on their own

- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal activities; integrated vs. alienated)
- type of cliques or crowds and things you most often do together/alone
- Positive or protective factors/risk factors (eg. sexual activity, smoking, drug use, driving, skipping out, other risks – why are they done? alone/with friends)
- Peer pressure (explain)
- Other friends dropping out
- Conflicts (breakup of relationship – platonic or romantic)
- Other major event (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)

Student's out of school activities/on their own

- Music, theatre, arts, etc.
- Technology (computer use for entertainment, ie. games, internet; TV, movies, etc.)
- Sports activities (informal <-> leagues)
- Club memberships
- Involvement in community organizations
- Out of school programmes
- Favourite activities outside of school

At School **(Critical to probe three levels – classroom, school policy)**

Academic

- School policies (way school is run, fairness, rules, i.e. legal age of withdrawal, zero tolerance, etc)
- School structure (class size, size of school, kind of school, etc)

- Overall school climate/environment
- Relationship with teachers/principal/guidance counsellor/other staff (ability to identify & connect)
- Expectations (fair/respectful treatment of you and other youth, support-guidance and counselling)
- Interest in course material (amount/kind of curriculum)
- Ability to follow curricular demands (keep up with lesson & homework)
- Comfort with methods of teaching
- Discipline
- Academic performance/Special education classes or programmes
- Behaviour (cutting class, getting into trouble)
- Technology (computer/internet use for education/information)

Social

- Relationship with school peers
- Expectations of peer group
- Social integration (i.e. formal/informal extra-curricular activities)
- School culture in general (bullying, violence, discrimination, abuse) Racism, homophobia, sexism
- Bullying due to race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, country of origin, language or accent, sexual orientation (actual or perceived), religion, family income level, physical traits (weight, acne etc.), physical abilities, learning abilities, family composition
- Expectations of teachers, principal, other school staff, peers
- Reliance on guidance counsellors etc../Fears and associations with external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)
- Family outreach
- Access and integration of community agencies

With Student (ie. Personal)

- Overall personal health (physical or emotional – i.e. self-esteem, depression, etc..)
- Identity issues (e.g. culture, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, gender, world view)
- Conflict (i.e. societal/cultural acceptance of identity expressions, self esteem…)
- Other personal issues (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy, child rearing, marriage, getting in trouble)
- Major events (illness, death, abuse, other difficulties)
- Fears around external agencies (powers of police, CAS, etc.)

5) Do you think youth who leave school prior to graduation have made an informed choice to leave school?

6) What, if any, mechanisms and practices are in place at your school for preventing a) disengagement from school b) early leaving?

P R O M P T S

- At the classroom level
- At the school level (e.g. academic supports, professional development, etc.)
- At the board level
- At the system level

7) What are the most effective strategies that might keep young people a) engaged in school b) staying in school until graduation?

P R O M P T S

- At the classroom level (e.g. teaching methods, relevance of curriculum)
- At the school level
- At the board level (e.g. anti-discrimination policies)
- At the system level

Appendix Q: Codebook Draft #1

Code family 1: STUDENT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

a) age of school leaving
b) type of school left
c) type of student – leaver, returned, at risk
d) timing of school leaving in school career (grade, etc.)

Code family 2: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Macro Level Variables

a) Low socio-economic status (SES)/social class: poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, low levels of education, single-parent households, and minority and/or blue-collar families; etc.

b) Minority group status: for example, visible minority youth, First Nations/Aboriginal youth; Newcomer/English-as-a-second language youth; Francophone youth; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered youth

c) Gender: males are at a higher risk than females, however the consequences for female leavers are often more severe regarding unemployment and poverty

d) Community characteristics: urban vs. rural youth; poor, socially unstable, unsafe neighbourhoods; areas with high crime rates and/or gang activity, high unemployment rates, high percentages of early leavers, Remote/rural communities where youth must travel long distances to go to school, or must leave home to attend school; Negative beliefs/attitudes/expectations about youth in culture (school, home, community)

Code family 3 : RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Meso Level Variables

a) Household stress: parental rejection; family conflict; marital discord; inadequate parental supervision; inconsistent parental discipline; parental substance abuse; parental mental illness (particularly of mother); financial, legal or health issues; unconventional structure of family; large size of family (four or more siblings); single parent households; high numbers of residential and/or school moves; child neglect abuse

b) Family Process/dynamics: low levels of parent-child bonding/attachment/communication; lack of parental involvement with school issues; marital discord between parents/guardians

c) Limited social support for remaining in school: by teachers and other school personnel (principals, guidance counselors etc..); parents; siblings; friends; parents with low educational levels and real or perceived low educational expectations for their child

d) Conflict between home-school culture: conflict between cultural identity of youth and school culture

e) Assumption of adult roles: translation for family members; providing care for family members; part-time work (more than 15 hours per week); pregnancy; childrearing responsibilities

Code family 4 : RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED -Micro Level Variables

a) Low levels of student involvement with education: low levels of academic and/or social engagement at school; low hopes and/or expectations for academic success/achievement; poor academic achievement, particularly in core subjects such as English and math; low levels of literacy

b) Youth with disabilities/mental illness: learning, cognitive, behavioral, and/or physical disabilities as well as mental illness

c) Experimenting with risk- Friends - social integration or alienation: disregard for curfews; early sexual activity; runaways; homelessness; early cigarette, alcohol, marijuana and/or other substance use; high levels of substance use; involvement with the criminal justice system; association with peers that engage in risk activities

d) Discrimination and identity conflict: low levels of self-esteem/self-confidence/self-efficacy; or high levels of cultural pride, identity and self-esteem, which are in conflict with school culture

Code family 5 : RISK FACTORS- SCHOOL RELATED

a) Ineffective discipline system: discipline system that is perceived to be unfair and/or arbitrary

b) Lack of adequate counselling/referral: lack of support and/or referral from schools to appropriate agencies for youth (and/or families of youths) experiencing personal and/or academic difficulties; lack of representation by visible minorities in positions such as guidance counsellor

c) Negative school climate: structural barriers within the school that alienate minority students; ideological conditions within the school climate such as: racism, classism, discrimination, language barriers, Eurocentrism, homophobia, heterosexism. Negative student-teacher relationships; school policies that prevent youth from expressing themselves as responsible adults; teachers who fail to recognize the critical role they play in students' academic motivation and outcomes

d) Relevance of curriculum: monotonous school environment with no apparent connection to adolescents' experiences in the wider community or the adult world; curriculum that fails to acknowledge and include the

contributions/experiences/history etc. of minority groups; poor quality and superficial curriculum

e) Passive instructional strategies: traditional teaching methods that "teach from the book"; not allowing youth to select any of their own materials; not formulating links between the learning in the classroom, existing community issues and the "real" world

f) Disregard of student learning styles: a disparity between teaching style and students' learning style; teachers who do not recognize the diverse learning needs, strengths, weaknesses and interests of their students; teachers who do not use varied teaching methods to teach diverse student groups

g) Retentions/suspensions: Youth who have been held back in elementary school and/or repeatedly in high school; frequent high school suspensions

h) Streaming: youth in General (academic) or Basic streams

i) Lack of assessment and support for students with disabilities: lack of academic and/or counselling supports for students with disabilities

j) High numbers of transitions between schools; rigid age-grade placement practices;

k) lack of language instruction; more data is needed on the potential

l) large versus small school size, and class size

Code family 6 : PROTECTIVE FACTORS

a) Communities/schools with anti-poverty/anti-discrimination awareness and strategies
b) Educational advantage/high educational aspirations and expectations
c) Mixing students of SES backgrounds- type/structure of school
d) Positive school ethos/climate
e) School size (match between individual needs and size of school)
f) School-home fit
g) School-developmental needs fit
h) Teaching styles – supportive and inclusive
i) Relevant curriculum – popular culture; reflection of diversity
j) School engagement
k) Parental involvement (in school and in general life of youth)
l) Moderate youth employment (10-15 hours per week)

Appendix R: Final Codebook (Draft #16)

QQ - QUOTABLE QUOTES
Segments of text that are particularly poignant/reflective of a code or theme/often selected for reports and manuscripts.
QQ is coded in conjunction with the code family. i.e. if a participant is speaking about growing up poor and her comments are particularly poignant/reflective, that section would be coded as "2a" "QQ"

WC – WILD CARD
Segments of text that are unclear or ambiguous in terms of themes; to be used when uncertain about how to code

NC - NEW CODE
Segments of text for which a code has not yet been developed. These will likely be "Child" codes (a, b, c, etc), as it is unlikely there will be many more "Parent" codes (Code family 1-10) to add. Assuming the text in question fits one of the "Parent" categories, be sure to double code this section with both "NC" and the relevant "Parent" code.

Code family 1: STUDENT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
Age/grade of school leaving
Type of school left
Type of student: leaver, returned, at risk
Timing/context/factors/reasons and short story of moment of school leaving in school career (grade, etc.); affective or emotional response to leaving; decision/forced out/pushed out; response by significant others
Timing/context of returning; factors/reasons affecting return; context/ factors/reasons affecting non-return (positive and negative)
Timing/context of graduating
Timing/context of moment of knowing "at- risk"
General context of geography and community – not necessarily related to the process or a risk factor, but simply describes the locale
Aboriginal context: context and affect of native status, residential schooling etc.
Immigrant/Newcomer context

Code family 2: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Macro Level Variables
Low socio-economic status (SES)/social class: poverty; inadequate housing; unemployment; low levels of education; working-class/working poor families; etc.
Minority group status: for example, visible minority youth; First Nations/Aboriginal youth; Newcomer/English-as-a-second language youth; Francophone youth; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered youth
Gender: males are at a higher risk than females, however the consequences for female leavers are often more severe regarding unemployment and poverty
Community characteristics: urban vs. rural youth; poor, socially unstable, unsafe neighbourhoods; areas with high crime rates and/or gang activity; high percentages of early leavers; communities where youth must travel long distances to go to school, or must leave home to attend school; not much for youth to do
Specific programs in the community are not useful, helpful, apparent, trusted (CAS, Police)

Youth culture: consumerism, commodification (i.e. push to buy brands and look certain way); Negative beliefs/attitudes/expectations about youth in culture (school, home, community); Negative societal messages/stereotypes;
Immigration/resettlement: acculturation difficulties; differential acculturation across generations within the family; cultural dissonance (intergenerational; intercultural); migration patterns/immigration trajectory (eg. staggered migration); trans-nationalism; need to learn a new language/language difficulties; lack of familiarity with the school system and/or school rules; differential educational levels between school in country of origin and in receiving society; lack of recognition pf prior schooling achievements overseas; financial stresses

Code family 3: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Meso Level Variables
Household stress: absent parent; parental rejection/abandonment; family conflict; marital discord; inadequate parental supervision; inconsistent parental discipline; parental substance abuse; parental mental/physical illness; parental experience of abuse; impact of parental experiences/problems on child; financial, legal or health issues; structure of family; large size of family (four or more siblings); single parent households; high numbers of residential moves; child neglect; sexual, emotional, and/or physical abuse; blended families; change in household structure; significant value differences; stresses in youth's own home arrangement with partner and/or child; foster family; disconnected from family; family/parents deceased; CAS involvement;
Family Process/Dynamics: low levels of parent-child bonding/attachment/communication; lack of parental involvement with school issues; few or no family rituals (vacation, meals); poor parenting/lack of guidance; sibling comparisons; parental pressure/over-involvement re: school achievement; alienated from birth/adopted/foster parents and/or siblings; siblings who are early school leavers; poor relationships with siblings
Limited social support for remaining in school: by parents; siblings; friends; parents with low educational levels; real or perceived low educational expectations by parent(s) for their child; by outside agencies
Conflict/mismatch between home-school: between cultural identity of youth and school culture; between school-home social class/SES; between values, language, etc.
Assumption of adult roles: translation for family members; providing care for family members; supporting family financially; part- or full-time work (more than 15 hours per week); pregnancy; childrearing responsibilities, including for siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews; runaways; homelessness (living in shelter; on the street; in group home); "loss" of childhood

Code family 4: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Micro Level Variables
Youth with disabilities/mental illness/health problems/illness: learning, cognitive, behavioural, physical and/or mental disabilities/illness; ill health; attempted suicide;
Experimenting with risk/Friends - social integration: disregard for curfews; early sexual activity; early cigarette, alcohol, marijuana and/or other substance use; high levels of substance use; involvement with the criminal justice system; fighting or bullying others; association with peers that engage in risk activities; friends who are CAS; friends who are drop-outs; destructive;
Social isolation/alienation: no friends; break-up with boyfriend/girlfriend; no extra-curricular activities; no community involvement; lack of individual(s) who "care"; lonely
Self-Identity: low levels of self-esteem/self-confidence/self-efficacy; or high levels of cultural pride, identity and self-esteem, which may be are in conflict with school culture; inter-personal (i.e. my "nature"; don't like rules; I am a bully; my idea to leave; I take responsibility for my actions; how youth refer to themselves)

High numbers of transitions between schools/Interruptions/Changes in schooling

Code family 5: RISK FACTORS - SCHOOL RELATED

Youth Level

Low levels of student involvement with education: low levels of academic and/or social interest or engagement; skipping class/school; regularly late for school; low hopes and/or expectations for academic success/achievement; poor academic achievement, particularly in core subjects such as English and math; low levels of literacy; no extra-curricular activities; unimportance of school;

Retentions/suspensions: Youth who have been held back in elementary and/or repeatedly in high school; frequent high school suspensions, detentions

Classroom Level – Teachers, Pedagogy

Negative student-teacher relationships: teachers who fail to recognize the critical role they play in students' academic motivation and outcomes; conflicts with particular teachers; labelled by teachers; teachers look the other way from bullying; arrogant teachers; teachers picking on students; lack of respect for students; teachers who 'don't care'/ 'are only there for the money'

Curriculum: monotonous school environment with no apparent connection to adolescents' experiences in the wider community or the adult world; curriculum that fails to acknowledge and include the contributions/experiences/history etc. of minority groups; poor quality and superficial curriculum; curriculum not challenging; difficulty with curriculum; difficulty with "new" curriculum;

Passive instructional strategies: traditional teaching methods that "teach from the book"; not allowing youth to select any of their own materials; not formulating links between the learning in the classroom, existing community issues and the "real" world

Disregard of student learning styles: a disparity between teaching style and students' learning style; teachers who do not recognize the diverse learning needs, strengths, weaknesses and interests of their students; teachers who do not use varied teaching methods to teach diverse student groups

Lack of support: Lack of assistance with schoolwork/homework; lack of support by teachers, principals, guidance counsellors etc. for doing well/remaining in school; no one at school (teachers etc) to talk to; teachers/counsellors over-worked and thus not available

Systemic or School Structure/Culture Level

Ineffective discipline system: discipline system that is perceived to be unfair and/or arbitrary; the system is invisible to students; ineffective discipline

Lack of adequate counselling/referral: lack of support and/or referral from schools to appropriate agencies for youth (and/or families of youth) experiencing personal and/or academic difficulties; lack of representation by visible minorities in positions such as guidance counsellor; counselling is out of reach or invisible or inaccessible; counselling not effective

Negative school climate: structural barriers within the school that alienate minority students; ideological conditions within the school climate such as: racism, classism, discrimination, language barriers, Eurocentrism, homophobia, heterosexism; stigmatization of 'group home kids', of pregnant teens; school policies that prevent youth from expressing themselves as responsible adults, bullying; not fitting in; intimidating environment; heavy police monitoring of school; negative stereotypes; cliques/gangs; ethnic balkanization; school impersonal; lack of school spirit; overemphasis on sports at expense of academics

Negative student-administrator relationships: Particular conflicts with principal, vice-principal, counsellor, board of education etc.

School structures/systems: youth in General (academic) or Basic streams; lack of language instruction; large versus small school/class size; rigid age-grade placement practices; inadequate demonstration of the importance of school; timing of admissions (students "too late" or "too old"); forced out of system via loophole or rule; mismatch between school systems across countries; rigid/inappropriate linguistic assessment/placement; poor class scheduling; school starting time too early

Lack of assessment and support for students with disabilities

Conflict/disparity between previous and current school climates; difficult 'fit' with new classmates; difficult transition from elementary or middle to high school

Code family 6: PROTECTIVE FACTORS - School Related

Youth-School Level

Friends/peers/classmates; same culture/same experiences

School-home fit

School-developmental needs fit; likes school

Classroom Level
Teaching styles/supportive teachers/counsellors/school staff: supportive and inclusive; feeling important to teachers; caring; personal attention; Rewards/Positive Feedback/Achievement; flexibility in terms of balancing family/work/home/school responsibilities
Relevant curriculum – popular culture; reflection of diversity
Systemic or School Structure/Culture Level
Positive school ethos/climate: school flexibility, i.e. letting youth back in after leaving; reducing hours; extra-curricular activities; mixing students of SES backgrounds; positive school responsiveness to issues such as bullying; local/national/global events (i.e. school assembly, grief counselling, etc); supportive principals/vice-principals/school staff; mature students; incentives for staying
School/class size (match between individual needs and size of school/class); also match with school starting time and length of school day
Tutors (arranged by the school)
Alternative forms of education: co-op; correspondence;

Code family 7: PROTECTIVE FACTORS- Non-School Related
Communities/schools with anti-poverty/anti-discrimination awareness and strategies; safe communities; supportive communities
Educational advantage/high educational aspirations and expectations/doing well in school
Familial involvement (in school and in general life of youth); sibling support; grandparents, etc
Moderate youth employment (10-15 hours per week)
Supportive Others: community agencies and linkages (Probation officers, CAS, and other programs, eg. transitional housing etc); workplace employer; co-op supervisor;
Friends/peers (including fellow convicts)/boyfriend/girlfriend
Healthy lifestyles; little negative risk-taking; socially integrated via volunteer work etc.; extracurricular activities; religious faith
Insight/Reflection/Motivation/Determination (ie. better future for own child)

Code family 8: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUTH
To Schools: "allow us back when we are ready"; be patient with youth; don't label youth; individualize instruction/attention; encourage integration, ie. school uniforms; more supports in schools; teachers should get to know each student and communicate; interactive classrooms; lunch programs; provide bus tickets/transportation; sex-drug education; have drop-outs talk to kids in the classroom; crack down on bullying, youth should be forced to stay until 18; counselling help from guidance counsellor/teacher; peer counselling; give youth opportunities for input and feedback; organize more counselling programs; teachers should know how to recognize signs of sexual, physical and emotional abuse; support extra-curricular activities; build school spirit; instil climate of mutual respect between/among teachers and students; involve students in decisions regarding course selections; provide more flexibility (eg. correspondence option); understand the challenges and experiences of newcomers; listen, listen, listen; treat youth with respect; take youth seriously; always listen to both sides; give equal respect to students and teachers; don't focus only on A-students; remember that 'one size does not fit all;' superintendents should visit individual schools regularly; monitor progress across schools; keep learning fun, make it interesting; focus should be on learning, not evaluation; make education more relevant – connect directly with future job possibilities and aspirations; make school more relevant by matching student personality, aptitudes and interests with future occupational possibilities; give youth more school options; provide a challenge; provide support for

academics; put cameras in the classroom too, not just the hallways; get rid of ineffective or poorly motivated teachers; consider later school starting date; consider shorter school day to allow for other activities/responsibilities as well; more leisure time/activities/extracurricular activities; organize school events for everyone; smaller classes; provide more supervision and support; support students with problems/experiencing difficulties; give youth more responsibility; have more structured discipline; link more with parents; also give positive feedback; treat everyone the same, regardless of colour
To Community Outreach and Linkages and Government: schools for street kids; CAS should increase age of leaving foster home from 18 to 21 years; evaluate teachers for effectiveness via in-class assessments; link school directly with youth agencies
To youth: stay in school; ask for help; use all available support; find someone who will listen and give you advice; watch the teachers who are problem; don't be intimidated by teachers; find your way through; listen to yourself; be yourself regardless of what others say; avoid alcohol/drugs; go beyond what is provided and study on your own; explore different schools and schooling options; just get your diploma – it has an impact on every aspect of your future; focus on your goals
To Parents/Family: be involved; show interest; have realistic expectations; provide direction and guidance; communicate with the school and stay connected
To Newcomer Immigrants/refugees: persevere despite challenges

Code family 9: YOUTH PLANS - FUTURE ASPIRATIONS
Immediate needs/undefined plans: no plans, sleeping in, getting my licence, partying, hanging out, treatment centre, getting my head together etc.
Going back to/remaining in school: secondary, GED, night school, technical school, college, university
Looking for or beginning a particular job: make money; start a business
Family-partnership: home; find birth mother; get married

Code Family 10: INTER-RELATIONAL TEXT (micro-macro connections)
Self/identity relating to schooling: i.e. I am not the kind of person who takes orders and school always gives orders; helping others who are bullied (protector identity)
Inter-relation of risk-protective factors: paradox of both appearing at the same time; help available but youth would not take it
Social class, race, ethnicity: bullied, mistreated because poor "classism" "racism"
Teacher or school culture affected my learning
Inter-relation of multiple risk factors: i.e. poverty/visible minority status/ language barriers; home/family/work/school – the need to balance or choose;– youth describes all these factors together as being overwhelmingly stressful
Benefits of leaving school early

Code Family 11: PATHWAYS OF DISENGAGEMENT
NOTE: this code is to be used for the one paragraph "trajectory story" coders include as a pathway summary of the youth's experience/story

a) Starting from Scratch: i.e. Struggles at home/ familial abuse; low grades and identity issues- school A; moves to get away/on street; tries to re-join school school B gates/declines; persists and re-enters - school C; protective schooling but home struggles

b) Mostly Protected: i.e. Enjoying school; supportive home and community; friends and social integration; illness/trauma/misses class; school non-support; asked to leave/identity issues; negotiates way back in

c) The In-Between: i.e. Low socio-economic status/working poor family; likes school/doing well in school academically; school culture negative/bullying re. classism and youth commodity; unsatisfactory resolution/fear; learning suffers/avoids school; stays away/seeks alternative education; parental support for alternative and learning; peer support/new peers

Appendix S: French Language Code Book

MANUEL DE CODES
Pour
RECHERCHE QUALITATIVE SUR LES DÉCROCHEURS FRANCOPHONES EN ONTARIO

2005-04-21

Ébauche 1

Code famille 1: DESCRIPTION SOCIO-DÉMOGRAPHIQUE DU JEUNE

e) L'âge du départ de l'école
f) L'école de départ (type)

g) Catégorie de jeune – décrocheur, raccrocheur, risque

h) Le moment du départ (étape scolaire du jeune…)

Code famille 2 : FACTEURS DE RISQUE : NON LIÉS À L'ÉCOLE

Variables macro-socioéconomiques

- Statut socioéconomique / classe sociale inférieurs
    - pauvreté, logement inadéquat, chômage, faible niveau de scolarité, famille monoparentale, famille appartenant à un groupe minoritaire ou cols bleus, etc.
- Statut de groupe minoritaire
    - par exemple, jeune appartenant à un groupe minoritaire visible, jeune des Premières nations ou autochtone, jeune nouvel immigrant ou dont l'anglais est une langue seconde, jeune francophone, jeune lesbienne, gai, bisexuel, transgenre
- Sexe
    - les garçons présentent un plus grand risque que les filles, toutefois les conséquences du décrochage scolaire sont souvent plus graves pour les filles sur les plans du chômage et de la pauvreté
- Caractéristiques communautaires
    - jeune habitant en milieu urbain par opposition à un jeune habitant en milieu rural; quartiers dangereux, pauvres, instable socialement; quartiers où les taux de «gangs» ou d'activités criminelles sont élevés; taux de chômage élevé; pourcentage élevé de décrocheurs; collectivités éloignées ou rurales où les jeunes doivent parcourir une grande distance pour se rendre à l'école ou doivent quitter leur famille pour fréquenter l'école; croyances, attitudes et attentes négatives à l'égard des jeunes dans la culture (école, foyer, communauté)

Code famille 3 : FACTEURS DE RISQUE : NON LIÉS À L'ÉCOLE

Variables méso-socioéconomiques

a) Stress à la maison
    a. rejet parental; conflit familial; difficultés conjugales; supervision parentale inadéquate; discipline parentale non constante; abus d'alcool ou d'autres drogues par les parents; maladie mentale des parents (surtout de al mère); problèmes touchant les finances, la loi ou la santé; structure familiale non conventionnelle; famille nombreuse (au moins quatre frères et sœurs); famille monoparentale; nombre élevé de déménagements ou de changements d'école; enfant victime de négligence
b) Processus / dynamique de la famille
    a. niveaux faibles de liens affectifs et d'attachement ou de communication entre l'enfant et ses parents; manque d'intérêt des parents à l'égard des questions touchant l'école; difficultés conjugales entre les parents ou les tutrices et tuteurs
c) Soutien social limité pour rester à l'école
    a. de la part du personnel enseignant et d'autres membres du personnel de l'école (direction, conseiller d'orientation, etc.); des parents, des frères et sœurs et des amis; parents ayant un faible niveau de scolarité et des attentes réelles ou perçues peu élevées à l'égard de la scolarité de leur enfant
d) Conflit entre la culture au foyer et à l'école
    a. conflit entre l'identité culturelle du jeune et la culture scolaire
e) Prise en charge du rôle d'un adulte
    a. traduction pour les membres de la famille; soins prodigués aux membres de la famille; emploi à temps partiel (plus de 15 heures par semaine); grossesse; responsabilités d'élever d'autres enfants

Code famille 4 : FACTEURS DE RISQUE : NON LIÉS À L'ÉCOLE

Variables micro-socioéconomiques

a) Faibles niveaux d'intérêt de l'élève à l'égard de ses études
    a. niveaux inférieurs d'engagement aux cours ou à la vie sociale à l'école; espoirs ou attentes inférieurs en matière de réussite ou de rendement scolaire; rendement scolaire médiocre, surtout dans les matières principales comme le français et les mathématiques; niveau de littératie inférieur
b) Jeune ayant un handicap ou une maladie mentale
    a. difficultés d'apprentissage, troubles cognitifs ou du comportement ou handicap physique ou maladie mentale
c) Expérimentation du risque – amis – intégration ou aliénation sociales
    a. non-respect des couvre-feu; activité sexuelle précoce; fugues; sans-abri; fumer, consommer de l'alcool, de la marijuana ou utilisation d'autres stupéfiants à un jeune âge; grande utilisation d'alcool ou de drogues; démêlés avec le système de justice pénale; fréquentation de jeunes qui se livrent à des activités à risque
d) Discrimination et conflit d'identité
    a. niveaux inférieurs d'estime de soi, de confiance en soi et d'auto-efficacité; ou niveaux supérieurs de fierté, d'identité et d'estime de soi culturelles qui sont en conflit avec la culture scolaire

Code famille 5 : <u>FACTEURS DE RISQUE : LIÉS À L'ÉCOLE - généralement</u>

a) Système de discipline inefficace
    a. système de discipline qui est perçu comme étant injuste ou arbitraire
b) Absence de counseling ou d'aiguillage appropriés
    a. manque de soutien ou d' aiguillage de la part de l'école vers des organismes appropriés de service aux jeunes (ou à leurs familles) qui éprouvent des difficultés personnelles ou scolaires; manque de représentation par des personnes appartenant à un groupe minoritaire visible occupant un poste comme celui de conseiller d'orientation
c) Climat scolaire négatif
    a. obstacles structurels au sein de l'école qui isolent les élèves appartenant à des groupes minoritaires visibles; conditions idéologiques au sein de l'école, comme : le racisme, le classisme, la discrimination, les barrières linguistiques, l'eurocentrisme, l'homophobie, l'hétérosexisme. Relations négatives entre les élèves et le personnel enseignant; les politiques scolaires empêchant les jeunes de s'exprimer en tant qu'adultes responsables; des enseignants qui ne reconnaissent pas le rôle critique qu'ils jouent dans la motivation et le rendement scolaires des élèves
d) Pertinence du curriculum
    a. environnement scolaire monotone sans relation apparente avec les expériences des adolescents dans la communauté plus large ou dans le monde adulte; un curriculum qui ne prend pas en considération et qui n'inclut pas, entre autres, les contributions, les expériences et l'histoire des groupes minoritaires; qualité médiocre et superficialité du curriculum
e) Stratégies d'éducation passives
    a. méthodes d'enseignement traditionnelles qui « suivent le livre à la lettre »; ne laissent aux jeunes aucune possibilité de choisir le matériel de cours; n'établissent pas de liens entre les sujets appris en classe, les problèmes existant dans la communauté et le monde « réel »
f) Non-respect des styles d'apprentissage des élèves
    a. disparité entre le style de l'enseignant et celui de l'élève; un personnel enseignant qui ne reconnaît pas les divers besoins, points forts et intérêts d'apprentissage des élèves; un personnel enseignant qui n'utilise pas de méthodes d'enseignement varié pour enseigner à divers groupes d'élèves
g) Echecs et suspensions
    des jeunes qui ont doublé à l'école élémentaire ou à l'école secondaire à plusieurs reprises; suspensions fréquentes à l'école secondaire
h) Groupement par aptitudes
    jeunes qui suivent la filière de cours générale (académique) ou de base
i) Manque d'évaluation et de soutien des élèves en difficulté
    manque de soutien scolaire ou de counseling destinés aux élèves en difficulté
j) Autres
    nombre élevé de changements d'écoles; pratiques de placement rigides selon l'âge et l'année; lacune quant à la langue d'enseignement; besoin de données additionnelles sur les risques potentiels associés à la taille des écoles et des classes (grandes par opposition à petites)
k) Décrochage culturel du jeune
l) Décrochage culturel de l'enseignant

Code famille 6 : FACTEURS DE PROTECTION

a) Des communautés et des écoles ayant une sensibilisation et des stratégies anti-pauvreté et anti-discrimination

b) Aspiration et attentes liées à l'avantage procuré par la scolarité / à un haut niveau de scolarité

c) Groupe mixte d'élèves de divers antécédents socio-économiques – type/structure de l'école

d) Éthos/climat scolaire positif

e) Taille de l'école (faire correspondre les besoins individuels et la taille de l'école)

f) Harmonie entre l'école et le foyer

g) Harmonie entre l'école et les besoins de développement

h) Style d'enseignement – encourageant et inclusif

i) Pertinence du curriculum – culture populaire; reflet de la diversité

j) Engagement à l'école

k) Participation des parents (aux niveaux de l'école et de la vie générale du jeune)

l) Emploi modéré du jeune (de 10 à 15 heures de travail)

m) Engagement de l'école face à l'engagement culturel

n) Engagement du conseil face à l'engagement culturel

Appendix T: French Language Code Book #15

MANUEL DE CODES
RECHERCHE QUALITATIVE SUR LES DÉCROCHEURS FRANCOPHONES EN ONTARIO

Ébauche 15f

QQ - QUOTABLE QUOTES
Segments of text that are particularly poignant/reflective of a code or theme/often selected for reports and manuscripts.
QQ is coded in conjunction with the code family. i.e. if a participant is speaking about growing up poor and her comments are particularly poignant/reflective, that section would be coded as "2a" "QQ"

WC – WILD CARD
Segments of text that are unclear or ambiguous in terms of themes; to be used when uncertain about how to code

NC - NEW CODE
Segments of text for which a code has not yet been developed. These will likely be "Child" codes (a, b, c, etc), as it is unlikely there will be many more "Parent" codes (Code family 1-10) to add. Assuming the text in question fits one of the "Parent" categories, be sure to double code this section with both "NC" and the relevant "Parent" code.

Code family 1: STUDENT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
Age/grade of school leaving
Type of school left
Type of student: leaver, returned, at risk
Timing/context/factors/reasons and short story of moment of school leaving in school career (grade, etc.); affective or emotional response to leaving; decision/forced out/pushed out; ***pull factors; response of significant others to youth leaving school***
Timing/context of returning; factors/reasons affecting return; context/ factors/reasons affecting non-return (positive and negative)
Timing/context of graduating
Timing/context of moment of knowing "at- risk"
General context of geography and community – not necessarily related to the process or a risk factor, but simply describes the locale
Aboriginal context: context and affect of native status, residential schooling etc.
Immigrant/Newcomer context
Francophone context : eg ***different sets of friends (school versus community)***

Code family 2: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Macro Level Variables
Low socio-economic status (SES)/social class: poverty; inadequate housing; unemployment; low levels of education; working-class/working poor families; etc.

Minority group status: for example, visible minority youth; First Nations/Aboriginal youth; Newcomer/English-as-a-second language youth; Francophone youth; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered youth
Gender: males are at a higher risk than females, however the consequences for female leavers are often more severe regarding unemployment and poverty
Community characteristics: urban vs. rural youth; poor, socially unstable, unsafe neighbourhoods; areas with high crime rates and/or gang activity; high percentages of early leavers; communities where youth must travel long distances to go to school, or must leave home to attend school; not much for youth to do
Specific programs in the community are not useful, helpful, apparent, trusted (CAS, Police)
Youth culture: consumerism, commodification (i.e. push to buy brands and look certain way); Negative beliefs/attitudes/expectations about youth in culture (school, home, community); Negative societal messages/stereotypes;
Immigration/resettlement: acculturation difficulties; differential acculturation across generations within the family; cultural dissonance (intergenerational; intercultural); migration patterns/immigration trajectory (eg. staggered migration); trans-nationalism; need to learn a new language/language difficulties; lack of familiarity with the school system; differential levels between school in country of origin and in receiving society; ***isolation and alienation.***

Code family 3: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Meso Level Variables
Household stress: absent parent; parental rejection; family conflict; marital discord; inadequate parental supervision; inconsistent parental discipline; parental substance abuse; parental mental illness; parental experience of abuse; impact of parental experiences/problems on child; financial, legal or health issues; structure of family; large size of family (four or more siblings); single parent households; high numbers of residential moves; child neglect/abuse; blended families; change in household structure; significant value differences; stresses in youth's own home arrangement with partner and/or child; foster family; disconnected from family; family/parents deceased; CAS involvement;
Family Process/Dynamics: low levels of parent-child bonding/attachment/communication; lack of parental involvement with school issues; few or no family rituals (vacation, meals); sibling comparisons; parental pressure/over-involvement re: school achievement; alienated from birth/adopted/foster parents and/or siblings
Limited social support for remaining in school***: by parents and other family members*** ; siblings; friends; parents with low educational levels; real or perceived low educational expectations by parent(s) for their child; by outside agencies
Conflict/mismatch between home-school: between cultural identity of youth and school culture; between school-home social class/SES; between values, language, etc.
Assumption of adult roles: translation for family members; providing care for family members; part- or full-time work (more than 15 hours per week); pregnancy; childrearing responsibilities, including for siblings; runaways; homelessness (living in shelter; on the street; in group home)

Code family 4: RISK FACTORS NON-SCHOOL RELATED - Micro Level Variables
Youth with disabilities/mental illness/health problems/illness: learning, cognitive, behavioural, physical and/or mental disabilities/illness; ill health; attempted suicide;
Experimenting with risk/Friends - social integration: disregard for curfews; early sexual activity; early cigarette, alcohol, marijuana and/or other substance use; high levels of substance use; involvement with the criminal justice system; fighting or bullying others; association with peers that engage in risk activities; friends who are CAS; friends who are drop-outs;
Social isolation/alienation: no friends; break-up with boyfriend/girlfriend; no extra-curricular activities; no community involvement; lack of individual(s) who "care"
Self-Identity: low levels of self-esteem/self-confidence/self-efficacy; or high levels of cultural pride, identity and self-esteem, which may be are in conflict with school culture; inter-personal (i.e. my "nature"; don't like rules; I am a bully; my idea to leave; I take responsibility for my actions; how youth refer to themselves)
High numbers of transitions between schools/Interruptions in schooling; ***multiple residential moves***

***Cultural Disconnects*: having to leave the francophone culture: not being able to identify with francophone culture; leaving the French language school system for the English language system**

Code family 5: RISK FACTORS - SCHOOL RELATED

Youth Level

Low levels of student involvement with education: low levels of academic and/or social interest or engagement; skipping class/school; low hopes and/or expectations for academic success/achievement; poor academic achievement, particularly in core subjects such as English and math; low levels of literacy; no extra-curricular activities; unimportance of school;

Retentions/suspensions: Youth who have been held back in elementary and/or repeatedly in high school; frequent high school suspensions, detentions

Classroom Level – Teachers, Pedagogy

Negative student-teacher relationships: teachers who fail to recognize the critical role they play in students' academic motivation and outcomes; conflicts with particular teachers; labelled by teachers; teachers look the other way from bullying; arrogant teachers; teachers picking on students; ***low student expectation by teachers.***

Curriculum: monotonous school environment with no apparent connection to adolescents' experiences in the wider community or the adult world; ***not relevant to life aspirations or plans;*** curriculum that fails to acknowledge and include the contributions/experiences/history etc. of minority groups; poor quality and superficial curriculum; difficulty with curriculum; difficulty with "new" curriculum;

Passive instructional strategies: traditional teaching methods that "teach from the book"; not allowing youth to select any of their own materials; not formulating links between the learning in the classroom, existing community issues and the "real" world

Disregard of student learning styles: a disparity between teaching style and students' learning style; teachers who do not recognize the diverse learning needs, strengths, weaknesses and interests of their students; teachers who do not use varied teaching methods to teach diverse student groups; ***student not able to learn at own pace***

Lack of support: Lack of assistance with schoolwork/homework; lack of support by teachers, principals, guidance counsellors etc. for doing well/remaining in school; no one at school (teachers etc) to talk to;

Systemic or School Structure/Culture Level

Ineffective discipline system: discipline system that is perceived to be unfair and/or arbitrary; the system is invisible to students; ineffective discipline;***unfair rules; not allowing students to learn from mistakes***

Lack of adequate counselling/referral: lack of support and/or referral from schools to appropriate agencies for youth (and/or families of youth) experiencing personal and/or academic difficulties; lack of representation by visible minorities in positions such as guidance counsellor; counselling is out of reach or invisible or inaccessible

Negative school climate: structural barriers within the school that alienate minority students; ideological conditions within the school climate such as: racism, classism, discrimination, language barriers, Eurocentrism, homophobia, heterosexism; school policies that prevent youth from expressing themselves as responsible adults, bullying; not fitting in; intimidating environment; negative stereotypes; cliques/gangs; school impersonal; lack of school spirit; ***prejudice stereotype; police surveillance; zero-tolerance***

Negative student-administrator relationships: Particular conflicts with principal, vice-principal, counsellor, board of education etc.

School structures/systems: youth in General (academic) or Basic streams; lack of language instruction; large versus small school/class size; rigid age-grade placement practices; inadequate demonstration of the importance of school; timing of admissions (students "too late" or "too old"); forced out of system via loophole or rule; mismatch between school systems across countries; rigid/inappropriate linguistic assessment/placement; ***high turn-over of personnel; slow response to home work; students asked to assume organizational responsibilities; grouping of challenged students together; early school day start; course scheduling***

Lack of assessment and support for students with disabilities

Conflict/disparity between previous and current school climates

***Linguistic Issues*: difficulty with French despite Francophone identity; indications of limited language comprehension; 'forced to speak French'; different rules for various linguistic groups reflected in the school**
***Youth/Classmate/Teacher/School Cultural Disconnects*: non-recognition of the youth's cultural and linguistic reality; cross-cultural misunderstanding.**

Code family 6: PROTECTIVE FACTORS - School Related
Youth-School Level
Friends/peers/classmates; same culture/same expereinces
School-home fit
School-developmental needs fit
Classroom Level
Teaching styles/supportive teachers/counsellors: supportive and inclusive; feeling important to teachers; caring; personal attention; Rewards/Positive Feedback/Achievement; flexibility in terms of balancing family/work/home/school responsibilities; ***respect***
Relevant curriculum – popular culture; reflection of diversity; ***curriculum adapted to what I do well in life/school***
Systemic or School Structure/Culture Level
Positive school ethos/climate: school flexibility, i.e. letting youth back in after leaving; reducing hours; extra-curricular activities; mixing students of SES backgrounds; positive school responsiveness to issues such as bullying; local/national/global events (i.e. school assembly, grief counselling, etc); supportive principals/vice-principals
School/class size (match between individual needs and size of school/class)
Tutors (arranged by the school)
Alternative forms of education: co-op, correspondence
***Cultural and linguistic fit*: support of francophone culture/language/identity**

Code family 7: PROTECTIVE FACTORS- Non-School Related
Communities/schools with anti-poverty/anti-discrimination awareness and strategies; safe communities; supportive communities
Educational advantage/high educational aspirations and expectations/doing well in school
Familial involvement (in school and in general life of youth); sibling support; grandparents, etc
Moderate youth employment (10-15 hours per week)
Supportive Others: community agencies and linkages (Probation officers, CAS, other programs, eg. transitional housing etc); workplace employer; co-op supervisor; ***sufficient financial support to be able to continue schooling (including welfare).***
Friends/peers/boyfriend/girlfriend
Healthy lifestyles; little negative risk-taking; socially integrated via volunteer work etc.; extracurricular activities; religious faith
Insight/Reflection/Motivation/Determination (ie. better future for own child)

Code family 8: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUTH
To Schools: "allow us back when we are ready"; be patient with youth; don't label youth; individualize instruction/attention; encourage integration, ie. school uniforms; more supports in schools; teachers should get to know each student and communicate; interactive classrooms; lunch programs; provide bus tickets/transportation; sex-drug education; have drop-outs talk to kids in the classroom; crack down on bullying, youth should be forced to stay until 18; counselling help from guidance counsellor/teacher; peer counselling give youth opportunities for input and feedback; teachers should know how to recognize signs of sexual, physical and emotional abuse; support extra-curricular activities; build school spirit; instil climate of mutual respect between/among teachers and students; involve students in decisions regarding course selections; provide more flexibility (eg. correspondence option); understand the challenges and experiences of newcomers; listen, listen, listen; treat youth with respect; ***more communication with parents; make it relevant; focus on the person; allow more time for career***

decisions; work for the student not the school; make school more relevant to life and future; use different pedagogical techniques; ensure better inter-provincial coordination
To Community Outreach and Linkages: schools for street kids; CAS should increase age of leaving foster home from 18 to 21 years
To youth: stay in school; ask for help; watch the teachers who are problem; don't be intimidated by teachers; find your way through; listen to yourself; avoid alcohol/drugs; go beyond what is provided and study on your own; ***think of the future, take school seriously; do it for yourself; you have many options; change school if needed***
To Parents/Family: be involved; show interest; have realistic expectations
To Newcomer Immigrants/refugees: persevere despite challenges

Code family 9: YOUTH PLANS - FUTURE ASPIRATIONS
No plans at this time
Going back to school - secondary, GED, night school, technical school, college, university; ***go on welfare in order to be able to return to school***
Looking for or beginning a particular job - make money
Family-partnership, home; find birth mother
Other - take a break; get back on track; go on a world trip

Code Family 10: INTER-RELATIONAL TEXT (micro-macro connections)
Self/identity relating to schooling: i.e. I am not the kind of person who takes orders and school always gives orders; helping others who are bullied (protector identity)
Inter-relation of risk-protective factors: paradox of both appearing at the same time
Social class, race, ethnicity: bullied, mistreated because poor "classism" "racism"
Teacher or school culture affected my learning
Inter-relation of multiple risk factors: i.e. poverty/visible minority status/ language barriers; home/family/work/school – the need to balance or choose;– youth describes all these factors together as being overwhelmingly stressful
Benefits of leaving school early

Code Family 11: PATHWAYS OF DISENGAGEMENT

NOTE: this code is to be used for the one paragraph "trajectory story" coders include as a pathway summary of the youth's experience/story

Starting from Scratch: i.e. Struggles at home/ familial abuse; low grades and identity issues- school A; moves to get away/on street; tries to re-join school school B gates/declines; persists and re-enters - school C; protective schooling but home struggles
Mostly Protected: i.e. Enjoying school; supportive home and community; friends and social integration; illness/trauma/misses class; school non-support; asked to leave/identity issues; negotiates way back in
The In-Between: i.e. Low social class but likes school; doing well in school academically; school culture negative/bullying re. classism and youth commodity; unsatisfactory resolution/fear; learning suffers/avoids school; stays away/seeks alternative education; parental support for alternative and learning; peer support/new peers

NC Looking back - what would you have done differently?
NC Experience of others – youth reports regarding the school leaving experience of peers

Appendix U: Sample break down for youth interviews by site

Sudbury (30)	Francophone (10)			Aboriginal (8)			3rd+ Generation Non Visible (12)		
	urban	#	Male-Fem	rural	#	Male-Fem	rural	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	7	4M & 3F	dropout	4	3M & 1F	dropout	8	5M & 3F
	returner	2	1M & 1F	returner	1	1F	returner	2	1M & 1F
	in school	2	1F	in school	3	2M & 1F	in school	2	1M & 1F

Thunder Bay (12)	Aboriginal (12)		
	rural	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	8	7M & 1F
	returner	2	1M & 1F
	in school	2	2F

Ottawa (16)	Francophone (6)			3rd+ Generation Non Visible (10)		
	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	2	2M	dropout	6	3M & 3F
	returner	3	1M & 2F	returner	3	1M & 2F
	in school	1	1M	in school	1	1M

GTA (98)	Aboriginal (11)			LGBT (10)			Newcomer Visible Minority (18)		
	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	8	6M & 2F	dropout	8	5M & 3F	dropout	10	8M & 2F
	returner	2	1M & 1F	returner	2	1M & 1F	returner	5	2M & 3F
	in school	1	1M	in school	0	n/a	in school	2	3F
	Newcomer Non Visible (3)			2nd Generation Visible Minority (11)			2nd Generation Non Visible (11)		
	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	1	1F	dropout	8	7M & 1F	dropout	9	5M & 4F
	returner	0	n/a	returner	1	1F	returner	2	n/a
	in school	2	1M & 1F	in school	2	2F	in school	0	1M & 1F
	3rd+ Gen Visible Minority (2)			3rd+ Generation Non Visible (21)			Francophone (11)		
	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem	urban	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	2	2F	dropout	18	9M & 9F	dropout	3	2M & 1F
	returner	0	n/a	returner	2	2M & 1F	returner	0	n/a
	in school	0	n/a	in school	0	n/a	in school	8	6M & 2F

Kitchener-Waterloo (25)	Newcomer Visible Minority (7)			2nd Generation Visible Minority(5)		
	urban	#	Male-Female	urban	#	Male-Female
	dropout	5	3M & 2F	dropout	3	2M & 1F
	returner	0	n/a	returner	1	1M
	in school	2	1M & 1F	in school	1	1F
	3rd+ Generation Non Visible (11)			2nd Generation Non Visible (2)		
	urban	100%	Male-Female	urban	100%	Male-Female
	dropout	8	4M & 4F	dropout	2	2M
	returner	2	1M & 1F	returner	0	n/a
	in school	1	1M	in school	0	n/a

Owen Sound (12)	3rd+ Generation Non Visible (12)		
	rural	#	Male-Fem
	dropout	8	3M & 5F
	returner	2	2M
	in school	2	2M