

High School Completion

Increasing the number of students that complete high school is one of two jurisdictional goals. The strategies we are employing to achieve this is based on several guiding statements:

1. Our programs and strategies will utilize research.
2. Actions, programs and strategies must be sustainable and embed themselves in school and jurisdictional practice.
3. The initiative must have a reasonable opportunity for success and be measurable.

The Research on High School Completion

There are two levels of research to be viewed. Our own jurisdictional data and research on non-completing students in external locations. The latter of these two has already been completed and reveals common traits of early school leavers that are highly likely to be supported in a review of our jurisdictional data.

This external data is sufficient to support us beginning specific initiatives that will impact high school completion. It becomes clear in the research that there is no single contributor determining whether a person will fail to complete school or not. There are multiple factors at play continuously and these collectively create the decision to drop out of school. Any initiative to impact the dropout rate has to be holistic in nature and schools will have to reflect that in their approach. Alberta Education's 2001 report [Removing the Barriers to High School Completion](#) suggests that past practices at impacting completion rates have not been "...basic or intense enough to counteract the multiple primary causes of early school leaving." There is considerable opinion that factors outside the school and in the domain of the community and the family have to be impacted if approaches are to be effective.

School Completion Factors

The key contributing factors for students dropping out of school can be grouped into one of the three headings. There may be single or multiple factors influencing the decisions to not complete school.

1. Student-related factors

- a. Physical, sensory, learning or behavioural disorders
- b. Education not seen as important to future
- c. Alienation – Not feeling cared for, powerless, isolated
- d. Historically unsuccessful in terms of learning success
- e. Not involved in own learning or activities at school
- f. Poor attendance
- g. Social immaturity and low self-esteem
- h. Negative peer influence
- i. Minority ethnic background
- j. Early pregnancy



2. School-related factors

- a. Negative student-teacher dynamics
- b. Unsafe environment – students ridiculed
- c. Teaching methods do not match learning style
- d. Low teacher expectations of students
- e. Programming. Few opportunities to be successful
- f. High teacher turnover
- g. Inadequate teacher training



3. Community/family factors

- a. Family and welfare issues – single parent
- b. Weak family support, dysfunctional, socially isolated
- c. Poverty level
- d. Low parental education
- e. Transience
- f. Work too much
- g. Lure of employment

