Support for students having difficulty

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

What the research says

In recent years, research has shown that it is possible to considerably reduce the number of students having difficulty, both academically and behaviourally, by organizing student services into a three-tier system.[1][2] This model organizes interventions, whether universal or targeted, such that their frequency and intensity increase based on individual students' needs. This is effective in managing interventions with students who exhibit both learning and behavioural difficulties.

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

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

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

Finally, this program pulls together all educational services around the students. This is called the "wraparound approach."[4]
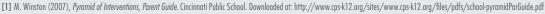
The "wraparound" is a model of services and support for youth and their families that relies on the community to create an enveloping support network. The approach centres on the strengths of youth, their families, members of the community, and the professionals that make up the intervention team. This approach is especially effective for solving complex problems.

EFFECTIVE ACTION

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

[1] M. Winston (2007), *Pyramid of Interventions, Parent Guide.* Cincinnati Public School. Downloaded at: http://www.cps-k12.org/sites/www.cps-k12.org/files/pdfs/school-pyramidParGuide.pdf
[2] See the reference document that accompany these fact sheets: *Taking Effective Action on the Determinants of School Perseverance and Educational Success* (2013), p. 12.
[3] "At-risk" students are preschool, elementary and/or high school students with vulnerabilities that are likely to affect their learning or behaviour—especially with respect to their success in school or their socialization—if they do not receive early intervention.
[4] http://www.pathwayschildrenyouth.org/index.cfm?CategoryID=1&SubCategoryID=10

Taking effective action

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

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

INTENSITY OF NEEDS AND SERVICES

Low	Moderate	Sustained
Universal interventions	Targeted interventions	Personalized interventions
- Early screening and intervention - Effective teaching - Effective classroom management - Development of social skills - Positive behaviour support	- Individualized intervention plans - School-family partnerships - Differentiated interventions - Intensive interventions - Crisis interventions - School-community partnerships	- Individualized and inter-sectorial service plans - Customized and intensive individual interventions - Services provided by specialized external organizations - Wraparound services

Avenues for effective action related to support for students having difficulty

Put in place screening and intervention mechanisms:
- to ensure early screening and intervention,
- to facilitate ongoing monitoring and evaluation of both academic and behavioural interventions.

Put in place organizational models that make use of universal, targeted, and personalized measures:
- to facilitate universal prevention measures,
- to ensure continuity of services,
- by basing interventions on effective and research-based approaches,
- to differentiate interventions according to needs,
- to optimize resource use.

Promote a climate of achievement and learning in the school:
- by initiating a system of positive discipline,
- by ensuring that staff is highly skilled,
- by continually upgrading the expertise of staff.

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

Create collaborative spaces with community partners:
- to roll out interventions that complement their work,
- to maximize community resources,
- to make use of outside expertise or specialists,
- to direct parents to appropriate resources

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