

SEPTEMBER 2017

Youth Mentorship And High School Graduation

A Review Of The Literature

Prepared For

Prepared By



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.2 ABOUT THE CYN YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM	4
1.3 ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.....	5
1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW PROCESS	7
SECTION 2.0 BARRIERS AND SUPPORTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.....	8
2.1 ACADEMIC PREPARATION, ACHIEVEMENT, AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT.....	8
2.2 MENTAL HEALTH	19
2.3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	22
2.4 SUBSTANCE USE AND HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOURS.....	25
2.5 EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES	27
2.6 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, RELATIONSHIPS, AND REUNIFICATION	32
2.7 HOUSING	36
2.8 RELATIONSHIP AND SOCIAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT	38
2.9 EARLY PARENTING	42
2.10 ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.....	44
2.11 IMMIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION	47
SECTION 3.0 INTERVENTION APPROACHES AND ELEMENTS	52
3.1 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT	53
3.2 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH VOICE.....	54
3.3 TRAUMA-INFORMED	54
3.4 CULTURAL COMPETENCE	55
3.5 PROMOTING RESILIENCE	56
3.6 NON-JUDGEMENTAL AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICE	56
3.7 STRENGTHS-BASED FOCUS	57
3.8 POSITIVE AND SUSTAINED ADULT SUPPORT	58
3.9 SKILL DEVELOPMENT	58
3.10 PARENT INVOLVEMENT	59
3.11 ADVOCACY AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION	59
3.12 CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION.....	60
SECTION 4.0 EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS IN PRACTICE	61
4.1 BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION	61
4.2 PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING HOMELESS YOUTH.....	69
4.3 PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON SCHOOL-AGED NEWCOMERS	75
SECTION 5.0 HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SUCCESS THROUGH MENTORSHIP	83
5.1 IMPORTANT ROLE OF MENTORS	84
5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR	84
5.3 KEY COMPONENTS FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMING	86
SECTION 6.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	94
SECTION 7.0 CONCLUSION	97
SECTION 8.0 REFERENCES	99

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following programs and organizations that generously responded to our inquiries and provided insights and information about best practices for working with young people and promoting academic success:

- Achievement Centre, Operation Come Home
- All In for Youth, United Way of Calgary and Area
- Check & Connect, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota
- iGrad Program, 360°kids
- Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW), Waterloo Collegiate Institute
- Pass It On: Girls, SWOVA Community Development and Research Society
- Reading Partners
- Real Me, Centre for Newcomers
- Rivers to Success Mentorship, Indspire
- Running & Reading Club Program, Start2Finish
- Youth Program, Refugee Women’s Alliance (ReWA)

SECTION 1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary purpose of the *Youth Mentorship And High School Graduation* literature review is to explore initiatives that assist young people to graduate from high school and the role natural mentoring relationships play in helping young people overcome barriers to high school graduation and experience success.

As part of the review process, an examination of research and initiatives specifically related to supporting young people experiencing homelessness and newcomer youth with educational achievement was also conducted. While the original intention was to prepare three separate literature reviews, results demonstrated overlapping and common elements across the literature of effective interventions, leading to the creation of a single report. Throughout the report, challenges and approaches specifically relating to newcomer youth and young people experiencing homelessness have been highlighted.

The results of the literature review will be used to inform the design, content, and curriculum for the CYN Youth Mentorship Program, as well as programming that will address the specific and complex challenges homeless young people and school-aged newcomers experience in relation to educational success and high school graduation.

1.2 ABOUT THE CYN YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

In 2015, the Ending Poverty and Literacy priority implementation teams of the Child and Youth Network (CYN) came together around the goal of supporting young people in London to graduate from secondary school. To better understand the challenges and solutions related to high school graduation, consultations were conducted with almost 700 young people across the London community. Findings from the consultation processes ultimately resulted in the creation of several youth-focused initiatives to increase high school graduation rates in London, as outlined within the 2017-2021 CYN Child and Youth Agenda.

Building on the finding that meaningful, supportive relationships with adults and peers in mentorship roles are critical to the success of young people, one of the youth-focused initiatives to increase high school graduation rates is the development of a youth mentor training program called the CYN Youth Mentorship Program.

The focus of the CYN Youth Mentorship Program is to assist individuals who work with young people in natural mentorship roles, such as teachers, coaches, parents, and camp counsellors, to learn about the critical role they play in supporting young people to succeed, how to be a positive natural mentor, and how to connect young people to relevant resources that will address their needs and help them overcome barriers to high school graduation. Curriculum for the CYN Youth Mentorship Program will be informed by this literature review along with the experiences and expertise of young people and service providers.

The goal of the CYN Youth Mentorship Program is to provide young people wraparound community supports by empowering natural mentors who work with young people to be effective champions for youth and equipping them with the tools they need to help young people navigate complex service systems, facilitate intentional connections to appropriate services and resources, and support young people to graduate from high school.

1.3 ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

There is consensus across the literature and experts that graduating from high school provides the foundation for future success and is essential for positive transitions to post-secondary education and employment.

Young people may face a variety of different challenges that impact their ability to graduate from high school. Further, the more risk factors a young person experiences, the more likely they are to leave high school (Center for Promise, 2015). These risk factors can occur at the individual, peer, family, and school level (Center for Promise, 2015).

Not graduating from high school can lead to negative outcomes, including increased likelihood of unemployment, poverty, poor health, and criminal involvement (Trypuc & Heller, 2008; Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014). Conversely, young people who graduate from high school are more likely to experience success in post-secondary education and their careers, be healthier, and become productive, engaged members of society (Balfanz, Horning Fox, Bridgeland, & Bruce, 2013).

Unique Challenges Faced By Young People Experiencing Homelessness

Research demonstrates that a significant portion of young people experiencing homelessness do not graduate from high school (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). This group of young people face several complex challenges unique to their situation that can make it difficult to experience academic success.

For example, young people experiencing homelessness are more likely to have experienced family disruption and breakdown, poverty (Government of Alberta, 2015), discrimination, involvement with child and family services, legal involvement, challenges with health, mental health, and substance use, abuse and neglect, and a lack of housing (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016), all of which act as barriers to graduation.

Unique Challenges Faced By Newcomer Youth

Newcomer immigrant and refugee youth from non-English speaking families are also at increased risk for leaving school early and not graduating (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008).

Some newcomer youth face unique challenges related to the immigration process that act as barriers to their academic engagement, including social isolation (Gouin, 2016), adjustment to a new culture, language difficulties, discrimination and marginalization, intergenerational conflict due to differing rates of acculturation, mental health challenges related to experiences of trauma, undocumented citizenship status, interrupted education, and educational mismatch (Oberoi, 2016).

Importance Of Interventions For Supporting High School Graduation

Without adequate support and access to services and resources that can meet their needs, young people facing difficult challenges are at increased risk for not graduating from high school. Therefore, it is critical that interventions focused on increasing high school graduation take into consideration the multiple barriers young people experience graduating from high school and facilitate connections to appropriate supports.

While experiencing significant difficulties create barriers to high school graduation, having one or more caring adults in a young person's life increases the likelihood they will experience success (Murphey, Bandy, Schmitz, & Moore, 2013), demonstrating the importance of promoting natural mentoring relationships and the implementation of the CYN Youth Mentorship Program.

Further, with an understanding that homeless young people and newcomer youth face unique and complex challenges related to educational achievement, the 2017-2021 CYN Child and Youth Agenda includes new initiatives to explore possibilities for enhanced supports to at-risk young people living in London and support for school-aged newcomers to graduate from secondary school.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW PROCESS

The *Youth Mentorship And High School Graduation* literature review process included three core components: 1) a review of academic and grey literature; 2) a review of best and promising practice programs and organizations outside of London; and 3) interviews with relevant organizations and programs derived from the program review.

The questions outlined below were used to guide the literature review process:

- What are the barriers and challenges that (homeless/newcomer) youth experience in achieving educational success?
- What are solutions, interventions, and programs that have been implemented to assist (homeless/newcomer) youth with educational success and graduation from high school?
- What curriculum or content is essential to a youth mentorship program (with a specific focus on homeless/newcomer youth)?
- What knowledge, information, or resources would mentors need to be able to assist (homeless/newcomer) youth to graduate from high school?

Research was collected from a variety of academic journals by conducting a search of social sciences databases. A search for grey literature and education-focused programs was also conducted using Google's search engine. Program materials, guides, websites, and evaluation reports were reviewed and analyzed. Multiple search terms were used within each search.

Further, a total of 11 phone interviews were conducted with leaders from promising practice programs between August 16, 2017 and August 23, 2017 to gather insights about the core elements, approaches, and practices of these programs.

SECTION 2.0

BARRIERS AND SUPPORTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

A review of literature, research, and program evaluation results indicate young people may experience multiple barriers to high school graduation, including level of academic preparation, achievement, and school engagement; mental health difficulties; poor health or well-being; substance use and involvement in high-risk activities; lack of employment and financial resources; low family involvement or difficult family relationships and reunification; limited relationship or social network development; and early parenting. Further, access to housing is a particularly significant barrier for young people experiencing homelessness, while young people who are newcomers may experience unique barriers related to English language proficiency and immigration or acculturation. Results demonstrate that young people may require support to address one or more of these barriers in order to graduate from high school.

Identifying and understanding the barriers and available supports is critical to ensuring natural mentors have the knowledge and resources required to address the needs of the young people they support and facilitate connections to appropriate services. A description of each barrier and examples of how young people can be supported to overcome these barriers are outlined within the sections below.

2.1 ACADEMIC PREPARATION, ACHIEVEMENT, AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

There is significant data demonstrating that a lack of academic preparation, poor school engagement, a negative school environment, adjustment to a new school system, interrupted schooling, educational mismatch, and learning disabilities can all act as barriers to academic achievement and high school graduation for young people.

Academic Preparation And Engagement

When young people lack the knowledge or skills required to succeed in high school, such as grade level literacy development, adequate content knowledge, or study skills, they may be at greater risk for high school dropout. For example, young people who dropped out of high school have reported that poor literacy, limited organizational and time management skills, as well as low self-esteem related to a lack of competence, were all factors contributing to inadequate preparation for high school and course failure (Bridges, 2013).

Poor grades and grade retention may indicate young people are academically unprepared for high school. Research demonstrates that low or failing grades over time are an accurate predictor of high school dropout (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015) and that young people who are held back in school have increased risk for dropout, making them less likely to receive a high school diploma (National Association of School Psychologists, 2017). Further, young people have reported that poor grades and not doing well in school contributed to them leaving high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Burke Morison, 2006).

A lack of school preparation may be particularly significant for some newcomer youth who have had little formal academic training prior to their migration to Canada. For example, some refugee students may come from areas of conflict where their schooling was either disrupted or formal schooling was unavailable (Gouin, 2016; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015), leaving gaps in their education. Disruptions in or lack of formal schooling may cause some newcomer youth to enter school with a lack of understanding of basic concepts, content knowledge, and critical thinking skills (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007; Yip, 2013), meaning they will need to catch up on academic knowledge and skills at the same time as learning English (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010).

Disengagement is also closely related to young people's decision to leave high school (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015). For example, one study found that 47% of young people who dropped out of school reported they were bored, unmotivated, and disengaged (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2016). Some of the underlying factors affecting young people's engagement and motivation cited within the literature include poor teaching, unsatisfactory remedial courses, and curriculum that is not challenging or connected to their lives (Bridges, 2013). Further, young people have identified a lack of connection to the school environment and the perception that school is boring as reasons for why they dropped out of high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Burke Morison, 2006).

School Environment And School Systems

Experiencing a negative school environment has also been linked to poorer academic outcomes for young people (Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, 2006; Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008). For example, experiencing an unwelcoming or difficult school climate has been identified as a school-related risk factor for early school leaving among newcomer youth (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008). Further, discriminatory attitudes of teachers and school structures that do not encourage achievement among minority youth have been connected to low attendance and feelings of hostility towards school (The Joint Centre of Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2008), affecting young people's ability to engage and succeed in their education.

Young people experiencing homelessness may be particularly impacted by their school environment. For example, a review of the literature has found that a lack of academic support or resources in school for young people experiencing homelessness, as well as a poor understanding of their needs, can act as significant barriers to their education (Solomon, 2013). Negative social interactions at school can also act as a barrier for young people experiencing homelessness, with insensitivity of peers and teachers, as well as feelings of rejection, causing some homeless youth to feel embarrassed and discouraged from attending school (Solomon, 2013). Further, research has found that some teachers perceived homeless students as “more difficult,” which can affect how they interact with these young people (Moore, 2013), such as by being unsupportive or uncaring about their situation (Solomon, 2013). Experiencing positive interactions at school is important to young people’s academic success, as perceiving a teacher cares has been linked to improved self-esteem, more regular attendance, and increased effort in schoolwork (Moore, 2013).

Young people who are newcomers may also be more likely to experience unwelcoming or difficult school environments, with some newcomer youth reporting they encountered school climates where they felt alienated, experienced negative stereotypes, and faced linguistic barriers (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008). Further, newcomer youth have reported feeling that many of their teachers demonstrated a lack of cultural competence (Rai, 2013). For example, in one study, young newcomers reported experiencing indifference, cultural insensitivity, and discrimination when interacting with some of their teachers (Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2008). Additionally, some newcomer students described that their teachers sometimes discredited their efforts and did not recognize or value their prior knowledge, skills, and competencies (The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2005). These negative interactions and experiences may affect newcomer youth’s engagement in school and educational outcomes.

Adjusting to a new education system and school environment may also pose an additional barrier for some newcomer and immigrant youth. Some young people who are newcomers may experience approaches and expectations in the Canadian school system that are different from those in their home country (Tremblay, 2012) and might have difficulty adjusting to the new educational system (Rai, 2013). Further, lack of familiarity with the new school system has been identified throughout the literature as a risk factor for high school dropout among newcomer youth (Rai, 2013; Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008). For example, some young people who are new to Canada may not have knowledge of the school routines, customs, and traditions or familiarity with the use of school facilities and equipment, which can lead to misunderstandings, embarrassment, and avoidance of school (The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2005).

Interrupted Enrolment

Missing too many days of school can interrupt a young person’s education and has been identified as a risk factor for dropping out of high school (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014).

For example, some young people who dropped out of high school reported they left school as a result of missing too many days and falling behind in their courses (Bridges, 2013). Further, research demonstrates that chronic absence from school is associated with lower educational attainment for young people (Hernandez, 2011). Interrupted enrolment and missing school may be caused by a number of factors, including suspension and expulsion or high rates of school mobility (i.e. changing schools).

Research shows that the probability a young person will leave school before they graduate more than doubles if they are suspended or expelled from school (Center for Promise, 2015). Suspension and expulsion may pose a particular challenge to school engagement and academic success for young people experiencing homelessness, as they are suspended and expelled from school more frequently than their peers, causing them to miss more school (Murphy, 2011).

High levels of mobility can also negatively affect academic outcomes for young people by interrupting their schooling. Research indicates that young people who experience moving homes are less likely to remain continuously enrolled in school (Center for Promise, 2015). Further, mobility can create a barrier to obtaining consistent education due to lost time in school or time adjusting to a new school, which ultimately leads to gaps in learning (Murphy, 2011). For young people who are highly mobile, negative emotional, social, physical, psychological, and academic effects, such as difficulty concentrating, may occur when they change schools, leading to disengagement, academic failure, and dropout (Moore, 2013). Mobility has also been identified as a barrier preventing young people from being evaluated for and accessing special educational services that could further their education, such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, counselling, and psychological supports (Solomon, 2013).

High mobility is particularly prevalent for some newcomer youth, as their families may not yet be fully established in the community (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010), leading to multiple school moves. Further, moving schools, responsibility for childcare of younger family members, and reduced parental supervision or support at home are all factors that can lead to less stable school attendance for some newcomer youth, creating a significant barrier to their completion of classes and graduation requirements (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008).

Transience and mobility are also common among young people experiencing homelessness who have been found to have a high rate of changing schools (Decter, 2007). Due to the transient nature of homelessness, young people experiencing homelessness often experience interruptions in their schooling and lost time in class (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). Further, research suggests young people experiencing homelessness are significantly more likely to be absent from school and have sporadic attendance compared to their peers (Murphy, 2011). There is also evidence showing that increased school mobility among young people experiencing homelessness is associated with higher rates of grade retention, which is a strong predictor of dropout for this population (Solomon, 2013).

Educational Mismatch

Educational mismatch is a barrier experienced specifically by some newcomer youth who may be placed in a grade according to their age and not educational competence (Oberoi, 2016). Inappropriate assessment and grade placement has been identified within the literature as one of the reasons newcomer youth drop out of high school (Rai, 2013), making educational mismatch an important barrier to address. Young people who are homeless may also experience educational mismatch if they do not have access to their academic records, which may lead to inappropriate placement in school (Solomon, 2013).

For newcomer youth who had extended interruptions in their education and very basic learning skills, improper placement can leave them struggling to catch up (Oberoi, 2016). Gaps in education, differences in curriculum, and limited English proficiency may also impact learning in certain subjects for some newcomer youth (Li & Que, 2016). Further, research shows that as a result of interruptions in schooling or school retention, many newcomer students are over-aged for their grade level, which can negatively impact future dropout (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010).

For other newcomer youth with higher skill levels, placement practices may not recognize their prior educational achievements, which can translate into experiences of disempowerment and discouragement (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008). Although some newcomer youth may be able to demonstrate literacy competence in their native language, poor English proficiency may result in placement in lower-level classes (Rai, 2013) and subsequent disengagement.

Learning Disabilities

Experiencing a learning disability has been identified as a barrier to graduation and academic achievement for young people. For example, research demonstrates that young people with specific learning disabilities are at significant risk of not graduating from high school (Cortiella, 2013). Further, one study of information from students in the Toronto District School Board identified that young people with special needs had higher rates of high school dropout and were less likely to transition to post-secondary education (McCloy & DeClou, 2013).

Addressing learning disabilities may be particularly important for young people experiencing homelessness, as they are two time more likely to have a learning disability than young people who are not experiencing homelessness (Murphy, 2011). Further, due to high mobility and interruptions in schooling, young people experiencing homelessness may face difficulties accessing special education programs (Murphy, 2011).

For English Language Learners, delayed progress in school and poor academic results may be attributed to gaps in language proficiency (Rai, 2013). This means learning disabilities may remain undetected for some young people who are newcomers (Rai, 2013), creating a barrier to academic success.

Supporting Young People To Overcome Academic And Educational Barriers

As school engagement is critical to young people's academic success, and education is a fundamental part of helping young people transition into healthy, independent adults (Gaetz, 2014a), it is imperative that young people facing academic and educational barriers are connected to and receive supports that will help them succeed in school. Further, intrinsic motivation, expectations of academic attainment, and belief in the ability to control academic outcomes have been identified as factors promoting high school graduation (Pathways to Education, 2017a), making it important for young people to have relationships and access to opportunities that strengthen and promote these factors.

A review of the literature demonstrates numerous approaches to helping young people engage in school and address barriers to academic preparation. Outlined below are several examples of approaches found to be effective in supporting young people to succeed in school.

Educational Assessment

Within the literature, formative assessment has been highlighted as an effective approach to helping young people succeed in school. Formative assessment is used to promote young people's learning by altering teaching and learning activities according to assessment results (The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2007). Research shows that using formative assessment can produce increased achievement and engagement in learning (The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2007).

Conducting ongoing formative assessments to inform instruction and planning has been identified as a particularly beneficial approach for young people who are highly mobile and/or experiencing homelessness (Moore, 2013). Further, informal assessment of new students can help identify their skill level and areas of strength or weakness to ensure appropriate instruction (Moore, 2013). One promising practice suggested for helping instructors improve academic performance of young people experiencing homelessness or high mobility is the creation of a student portfolio that can follow young people as they transition to another school, ensuring new teachers receive assessment information about the young person's previous work and learning style (Moore, 2013).

The literature also suggests assessment as a best practice for supporting English Language Learners (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Assessment can help determine level of English proficiency, learning skills, and familiarity with school routines for these young people and provide information about the specific areas in which they may require explicit support (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Further, screening and assessment for learning disabilities may also be important to help young people with learning disabilities access extra support or resources that will help them achieve academic success, such as a formal diagnosis and educational transition supports (Government of Ontario, 2014). One such resource is a web-based toolkit developed by the Government of Ontario, called the *Autism Parent Resource Kit*, that provides young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families with information and resources that can support them throughout their academic development (Government of Ontario, 2014).

School Enrolment Support

Young people may require assistance enrolling in school, particularly when they are highly mobile and lack access to school records, identification, and immunization documents (Solomon, 2013). Support and advocacy for school enrolment may be especially important for young people experiencing homelessness and non-status newcomer youth.

For young people experiencing homelessness who have strained or difficult relationships with their family, obtaining parental consent to enroll in school or participate in school activities may be particularly difficult (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2016). These young people may need support to navigate and meet enrolment requirements.

Young people without immigration status might also require advocacy support to enroll in school. Within the literature, a lack of understanding among school administrators about provincial laws has been identified as a barrier for enrolment of young people without immigration status, with many still being turned away from school (FCJ Refugee Centre, 2016). In Ontario, the Education Act states that children must attend school and it is against the law for schools to refuse admission of a child less than 18 years of age only because the child or child's parent/guardian is in Canada without immigration status (Community Legal Education Ontario, 2011). In order to promote academic engagement and ensure enrolment, it is important that adults supporting young people know about and understand young people's rights to education.

Attendance Monitoring

Research has shown that programs providing young people with encouragement and monitoring for school attendance have resulted in academic achievement and reduced dropout (American Psychological Association, 2012; Hahn et al., 2015), meaning some young people may require support to promote regular school attendance.

Attendance monitoring programs often include academic performance reviews, feedback to participants, and updates to parents about their child's progress in school (Hahn et al., 2015). For example, the Check & Connect program is an intervention implemented with young people showing signs of disengagement or risk of dropout and uses trusting relationships between young people and mentors to advocate for and challenge young people to maintain engagement in school (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2015).

As part of this program, mentors systematically monitor student performance, such as absences, tardiness, behavioural referrals or grades, and provide personalized, timely intervention to help them solve problems, build skills, and enhance their competence (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2015). A randomized study of Check & Connect has demonstrated reduced disciplinary referrals and improved academic performance among participants (Maynard, Kjellstrand, & Thompson, 2013).

Alternative Education Options

Flexible, alternative education options can be beneficial for helping young people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of dropping out of school succeed academically (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010; Moore, 2013). Alternative schooling focuses on providing educational and other services to young people whose needs may not be addressed in a traditional high school setting (Hahn et al., 2015). Alternative options often include smaller classes with intense remediation that help young people address areas of difficulty encountered in traditional schooling, along with additional services, such as social services, childcare, and support groups (Hahn et al., 2015).

Partial credit programs and credit recovery may be particularly beneficial for young people who are highly mobile to help them fill education gaps and allow them to gain credit for previously completed work (Moore, 2013). Further, as young people experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience interruptions in their schooling (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010), online teaching platforms can help them access continuous education and complete high school courses from multiple locations and at their own pace.

Evidence suggests that alternative schooling is effective at increasing high school completion for young people (Hahn et al., 2015). Further, special education or alternative education approaches have been found to help accommodate and address gaps in knowledge and learning (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010), allowing young people struggling in traditional school settings to experience academic success. Interviews with leaders of effective dropout prevention programs also emphasized the importance of flexible, alternative education options, with respondents noting success with independent credit achievement, online learning classrooms, and flexible timing for course completion.

Tutoring Supports

Tutoring is a supplemental academic service that provides young people with assistance in areas where they have demonstrated academic difficulties (Hahn et al., 2015). When conducting interviews with leaders of effective dropout prevention programs, tutoring was identified as a beneficial support for helping young people complete their homework. It was noted that tutoring could be particularly beneficial for newcomer youth who require interpretation or translation assistance to complete their schoolwork.

Further, research has shown successful results among young people experiencing homelessness who received tutoring, with evidence that receiving between 30 to 40 minutes of tutoring a few times a week significantly increased achievement levels for this population (Moore, 2013).

Academic And Career Planning

Accessing opportunities to plan for future education has been identified as an important way to support young people struggling to overcome barriers to high school completion (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016). Connecting young people to further education by helping them think about their plans after high school or access opportunities to tour post-secondary institutions can help improve their school engagement, excitement, and hope for the future (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016).

Supporting young people to create individual career and academic action plans can also help them set attainable goals and identify strategies for achieving their goals (Lessard, 2014). Research has demonstrated that education and career planning programs can create improvements in school engagement, goal achievement, and the development of resilience for young people (Government of Ontario, 2013). Further, career and technical education has been identified as one of several key factors in helping young people understand the relevance of high school education to their future plans and aspirations (Pathways to Education, 2017a).

Access to academic and career planning supports may be particularly beneficial for young people experiencing homelessness, as research indicates young people experiencing homelessness are more likely to report fewer plans for post-secondary education than those who have never experienced homelessness (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010).

Afterschool And Summer Programming

Afterschool programs have been shown to help young people achieve academic success by providing not only academic supports, such as homework help and tutoring, but also mentoring supports, peer connections, and post-secondary education or career planning, vocational or apprenticeship training, and skill development opportunities (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012). Further, a review of the literature demonstrates that academic afterschool and summer programs are especially important for young people at risk of school failure by helping to reduce information loss, inspire young people's interest in a variety of areas, and fill free time with constructive and engaging activities (Pathways to Education, 2015). Interview respondents also identified afterschool and summer programming as an important intervention that provides young people with academic support and positive development activities to enhance their social, emotional, and collaboration skills.

Afterschool programs that support homework may be particularly important for some newcomer youth, as immigrant and refugee youth have reported the need for programs that could provide them with schoolwork help, along with written English language acquisition and practice opportunities (Oberoi, 2016).

There is also evidence demonstrating an association between homework assistance for newcomers and higher levels of homework completion (Tremblay, 2012). Further, when working with their peers, homework assistance has been found to help young people who are newcomers develop learning strategies (Tremblay, 2012), which can help them advance in their learning and education.

Outreach Services

Outreach workers provide non-judgemental information and support to young people experiencing homelessness, assisting with basic needs, system navigation, and making referrals to appropriate services (Government of Alberta, 2015; Raising the Roof, 2009).

Outreach has been identified within the literature as an important component of educational programs for young people experiencing homelessness to ensure their engagement in programming and support services (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). Further, young people who experienced homelessness reported that providing outreach was an important and necessary element of service provision when working with homeless youth (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). Through outreach, young people experiencing homelessness can be supported to access educational supports along with services that can help them address additional barriers to education.

Mentoring Relationships

A review of the literature demonstrates that mentoring relationships can help promote academic success among young people and reduce their likelihood of dropping out of school. For example, evidence from program evaluations demonstrates that mentoring programs can improve attendance for young people, with mentees having fewer unexcused absences from school (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). Further, positive student-teacher relationships have been identified as a key factor in helping young people strengthen school attachment, develop agency, and create high levels of social competence, which all help to promote high school graduation (Pathways to Education, 2017a).

Mentors can also provide young people with guidance and explicit help to address academic challenges (Bridges, 2013). For example, research has shown that young people experiencing homelessness who had a mentoring relationship found their mentor helped them achieve their educational goals, improve their academic performance, and feel empowered to graduate from high school (Greenlee, Henson, Jones, Vance, & Wilson, 2013).

Peer mentoring is another approach that may be particularly important for newcomer and immigrant youth to experience positive transitions to a new school setting. For example, research has shown that peer mentors can help young people who are newcomers navigate school structures and practices, learn social norms, support development of social networks, foster language acquisition, and understand social nuances (Oberoi, 2016).

Further, peer mentors who speak the same language or are from the same region as a newcomer youth may be particularly helpful in explaining or modeling school routines, facilitating peer introductions, and acting as a guide for new students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Transition Supports

As a significant body of research has shown, dropout is particularly prevalent during the first year of high school (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014), with falling off track in Grade 9 being a key predictor of high school dropout (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). Further, young people may experience lower self-esteem and disrupted social relationships during school transitions (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009), which can affect their engagement in school.

Transition programs for incoming high school students have been identified as a successful intervention for promoting academic achievement and preventing dropout (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). Effective transition programs were found to use a range of different support strategies, including fostering academic and social support systems, frequent communication with students, parents, and schools, student shadowing or visitation opportunities, interaction with older students, advice or information about high school classes and facilities, informational parent meetings, and summer courses that provide extra support or enrichment to help young people enter high school academically prepared (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009).

Access to transition supports may be particularly helpful for young people who show signs of not being academically prepared for high schools and newcomer youth who are unfamiliar with the Canadian school system to encourage engagement as they transition into high school.

Literacy Programming

Weak literacy skills has been identified as one of the reasons young people are unprepared for high school, experience course failure, and end up dropping out of high school (Bridges, 2013). To address this barrier, young people may require support to access literacy programming and instruction. For example, explicit instruction focused on literacy development and literacy skills is suggested for young people with limited prior school or who have significant gaps in their education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Interview respondents also identified literacy programming as being important to young people's academic achievement. Specific literacy approaches noted by respondents included independent reading, read alouds, literacy instruction, take home assignments, and focusing on Grade 10 literacy test preparation.

2.2 MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health challenges and experiences of trauma or violence have been associated with increased risk of poor academic outcomes and are particularly prevalent among young people experiencing homelessness, as well as newcomer youth.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Difficulties with mental health can significantly affect a young person's ability to remain in and complete high school. For example, research indicates that young people who experience a major mental health problem, such as depression or anxiety, are at increased risk for interrupted enrolment in school (Center for Promise, 2015), which can affect academic achievement. Further, higher levels of psychological distress in young people has been linked to increased risk for academic decline (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Experiencing one or more significantly stressful events has also been identified as a factor contributing to young people leaving school early (Pathways to Education, 2017b).

While many young people experience mental health difficulties, mental health has been identified as a particularly significant barrier for young people experiencing homelessness, as there is substantial evidence demonstrating they are more likely to experience mental health challenges (Gaetz, 2014a). For example, research has found high rates of suicide among young people experiencing homelessness, as well as Major Depressive Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Raising the Roof, 2009).

Exposure to trauma and violence can also affect young people's mental health, which has been associated with poor learning outcomes. The literature suggests that young people who witness or experience violence might have difficulty focusing and poor concentration, might act out or misbehave, can find it difficult to pay attention, can be withdrawn, and might experience a loss of interest in school (The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2005; Decker, 2007), all of which can prevent learning. Further, a study by Boynton-Jarrett, Hair, and Zuckerman (2013) has demonstrated that cumulative exposure to violence is a predictor for not completing high school. Research also demonstrates that experiences of trauma and abuse may cause longer-term developmental and emotional consequences that affect development of positive relationships and social networks (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016) that can impact academic engagement and success.

Young people experiencing homelessness are particularly at risk for experiencing abuse, victimization, violence, and trauma. While experiencing homelessness has been identified as a traumatic event in itself, young people who experience longer periods of homelessness are more likely to be exposed to exploitation and are at increased risk for sexual assault (Gaetz, 2014a). Further, many young people who are homeless have experienced family violence and/or abuse (Gaetz, 2014a).

These experiences of trauma and abuse can greatly impact the ability of young people experiencing homelessness to engage in school and achieve academic success.

Young people who are newcomers are also at greater risk for having experienced trauma prior to their migration. Some newcomers, particularly young people who are refugees, may have migrated from countries where conflict is present and may have experienced trauma or violence either in their country of origin or during their migration process (Gouin, 2016; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016; Rai, 2013). Research has also demonstrated higher rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among young people who are refugees (Gouin, 2016) and increased experiences of loneliness or depression (Save the Children, 2002), which can affect their ability to succeed in school.

Supporting Young People To Overcome Mental Health Barriers

As the research demonstrates that mental health can pose a significant barrier to high school graduation, it is important that young people have access to supports that can help them address mental health challenges. The literature provides several examples of ways in which young people can be supported to address difficulties with mental health and access appropriate resources, as outlined below.

Symptom Recognition And Assessment

It is important that the adults who support young people are able to identify and recognize the signs and symptoms of poor mental health, as research has demonstrated that some young people may avoid seeking help and have difficulty identifying when they are experiencing levels of stress that are greater than normal (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010). Further, signs and symptoms of depression that can pose challenges to young people include low energy, lack of interest or pleasure in regular activities, difficulties with concentration, coping, or making decisions, feelings of sadness, loneliness, or being unhappy, and persistent physical illness (Government of Alberta, 2010).

Young people may also need support to access mental health assessments to obtain a proper mental health diagnosis and treatment, as untreated and undiagnosed mental health problems can affect young people's school attendance, behaviour, and ability to learn (The California School-Based Health Alliance and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, 2014).

Access To Mental Health And Crisis Services

Research demonstrates that access to counselling, psychological, and social services can promote mental, behavioural, and social-emotional health for young people and achievement in learning (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Further, counselling has been shown to help young people address difficulties with school behaviour, relationships, studying, career planning, substance use, and family challenges or family loss (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015).

Young people may need support to access appropriate mental health specialists, especially those experiencing homelessness who may require increased mental health support. Access to mental health supports may be particularly difficult for young people experiencing homelessness, as they often lack sufficient identification required to obtain medication or a formal diagnosis for a mental health disorder (Raising the Roof, 2009). Therefore, these young people may require assistance applying for and obtaining appropriate identification documents.

Young people should also be supported to access mental health services in a timely manner, as research has shown that delays seeking and obtaining treatment can lead to increased absenteeism (Barua, Esmail, & Jackson, 2014), emotional distress, risk of complications (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2017), decreased health status, and poorer outcomes of care (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2012). Conversely, early intervention and treatment can help young people learn how to effectively manage mental health issues moving forward (Dumais, 2015) and reduce the likelihood of chronic mental health impacts during adulthood (The Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres, The National Infant, Child, and Youth Mental Health Consortium Advisory, & The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO, 2010).

While many young people who seek mental health services and treatment may be referred and connected to an appropriate resource, they may not receive immediate care (Dumais, 2015) and may have to wait to receive specialized services. In these instances, young people should be supported to access complementary or intermediate resources, which may include tele-mental health care services, e-mental health support, school-based care (The Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres, The National Infant, Child, and Youth Mental Health Consortium Advisory, & The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO, 2010), support groups, coping skill development, and information about how to implement strategies for healthy living and self-care (Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario, 2013).

It is also important that young people are provided with information about the available supports and services they can access if they experience a crisis situation (Gaetz, 2014b) to ensure their safety and well-being.

Mentorship

Providing young people with mentorship is another way they can be supported to experience positive mental health and self-concept. For example, research has shown that young people experiencing homelessness who had a mentor experienced decreased feelings of loneliness and stress, as well as increased self-esteem and coping skills (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016), which can promote engagement in learning.

Social-Emotional Skill Development

Social-emotional skills training has been identified as an effective intervention for increasing high school completion among young people (Hahn et al., 2015). Social-emotional skills training focuses on developing young people's emotional self-awareness and emotional regulation, as well as improving self-esteem and attitude towards school (Hahn et al., 2015). Further, social-emotional skills training often incorporates counselling supports that can help young people address negative emotions, behaviours, and thoughts by promoting stress management or relaxation skill development, exploring thought processes, and reframing negative concepts or behaviours (Hahn et al., 2015).

2.3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Poor health and well-being, including physical health problems and inadequate nutrition, can impact young people's ability to learn and experience academic success. Poor health has been identified as a barrier that especially affects young people experiencing homelessness.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Experiencing health problems can lead to poor academic outcomes for young people. For example, there is evidence to demonstrate that poor health among young people is a significant factor contributing to chronic school absence, which can impact academic advancement and lead to high school dropout (National Collaborative on Education and Health, 2015).

Research has also shown a connection between health problems or poor health behaviours, such as physical inactivity and poor nutrition, and academic outcomes, as they can affect young people's sensory perceptions, cognition, school engagement, and school attendance, which leads to dropout (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Further, health-related problems have been associated with decreasing young people's motivation and ability to learn (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015).

Causes of poor health shown to affect young people's learning include physical, vision, and dental problems, as well as environmental factors such as inadequate food and housing (National Collaborative on Education and Health, 2015). Further, significant contributors to chronic absence from school, which can interrupt learning and lead to dropout, include asthma (Civic Enterprises, 2015), being overweight, poor diet, and lack of sleep (ASCD, 2015). Research has also demonstrated that diabetes can lead to decreased attention and poorer test scores among young people (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015).

Inadequate nutrition has also been identified as a factor that can significantly affect young people's academic success, with research establishing a link between sufficient nutrition, learning, and brain development (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016).

Further, hunger has been associated with lower educational achievement, increased hospitalization, and developmental impairments (Civic Enterprises, 2015), which can affect young people's ability to graduate from high school. Inadequate access to food has also been identified by young people as a barrier that makes it difficult for them to do well in school (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, & Schwan, 2016).

Research indicates that young people experiencing homelessness are more likely to have physical health problems (Moore, 2013; Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016). For example, approximately 60% of young people who experience absolute homelessness will spend at least one night in the hospital during the year (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016). Further, a lack of nutrition, adequate hygiene, and greater risk of injury have been identified as significant health problems for young people experiencing homelessness (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, & Schwan, 2016). These results demonstrate that physical health is of particular concern when addressing barriers to high school graduation for young people who are homeless.

Supporting Young People To Overcome Barriers To Health And Well-Being

Young people who experience poor health and well-being may require access to health services and resources that can help them address health barriers and maintain engagement in school. Outlined below are several examples of how young people can be supported to address barriers to their health and well-being.

Mentorship

Mentorship can help promote positive health behaviours among young people, which in turn supports learning and academic success. For example, some group mentoring programs specifically promote healthy behaviours among young people, including nutrition, physical activity, and positive body image (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 2016). Program results have demonstrated that mentees had improved eating habits, increased activity, and a better sense of connectedness to school (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 2016).

Teaching young people about a variety of health behaviours, such as good sleep habits, can promote both increased health literacy and positive impacts on their health and academic outcomes (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Further, Gaetz (2014a) identifies that access to mentoring that promotes self-care skills, such as hygiene, nutrition, cooking, health, and fitness, is important for young people's success, particularly those experiencing homelessness.

Access To Health Services And Health Professionals

Young people experiencing health problems may require support to access health services and various healthcare providers, such as doctors, optometrists, and dentists. Access to physicians and healthcare providers can help young people manage chronic illnesses, which can help to reduce the amount of time they are away from school and minimize interruptions in schooling (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Further, young people experiencing homelessness have identified that improved access to family physicians is of concern to them (Raising the Roof, 2009), demonstrating the importance of facilitating access to physician services.

Support to access vision screening may also be important for young people, as vision impairments have been associated with reduced literacy, reading test scores, reading ability, and spelling (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Due to dental pain, young people with poor oral health are also at greater risk of missing school, which has been associated with poorer grades (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Therefore, young people may also require support to address their dental care needs and access dental services.

Adequate Food And Nutrition

Helping young people access adequate and healthy food, such as through food hampers, providing healthy snacks, and meal programs, has been identified within the literature as a key factor in helping young people overcome barriers to academic success (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016). For example, offering food to young people can help build a relationship with them and may help them feel safe requesting food when they need it (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016).

Research has also shown positive associations between eating breakfast and academic outcomes among young people, including cognitive performance and attendance (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). School breakfast and meal programs may be particularly important in promoting young people's learning and high school success, as research shows participation in school breakfast programs is linked to increased grades and test scores, decreased absenteeism, improved cognitive function, and can help young people learn to develop healthy eating habits (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Further, access to meal programs may be particularly important for young people experiencing homelessness and who have reduced access to adequate or healthy food to ensure they are better able to focus on learning.

Participation In Physical Activity

Interventions that promote participation in physical activity may also be important to young people's academic success, as studies have shown increased access to services that foster physical activity can reverse health-related absences from school (ASCD, 2015).

For example, studies have found a connection between young people’s participation in extracurricular physical activities and higher grades, reduced rates of dropout, and fewer disciplinary issues (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Further, there is evidence demonstrating an association between greater participation in physical education classes and improved school grades, test scores, and behaviour in the classroom (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015).

Moreover, research has consistently shown that physical activity can have a significant positive effect on young people’s cognitive functioning, such as concentration and memory, and that young people who participate in physical activity show improved educational achievement and test scores compared to those who do not participate in physical activity (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Interviews with leaders of effective programs for young people also demonstrated the importance of physical activity in promoting academic success, with interview participants noting a perceived improvement in young people’s attention skills, reduced stress, and improved health and well-being as a result of participating in physical activity.

2.4 SUBSTANCE USE AND HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOURS

Substance use and involvement in high-risk behaviours that lead to criminal justice involvement, such as gang participation, may put young people at increased risk for high school dropout and interrupted schooling. Substance use and criminal justice involvement are particularly significant barriers for young people experiencing homelessness, while young people who are newcomers may be more vulnerable to gang involvement.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Research has consistently demonstrated a strong association between substance use and poor educational outcomes for young people, including academic failure and high school dropout (DuPont et al., 2013). For example, young people who use substances have been found to experience greater risk of academic failure and dropout compared to their non-using peers, particularly when their use is frequent and severe (DuPont et al., 2013). Further, research indicates that increased substance use severity is associated with greater impacts on academic performance and increased risk of dropping out of high school (DuPont et al., 2013).

Substance use may be a particularly significant barrier for young people experiencing homelessness, as research shows young people who are homeless experience significantly higher rates of alcohol and drug dependency (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016). Further, homelessness has been linked to increased and more risky substance use for young people (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016).

Participation in high-risk behaviours, such as gang involvement and substance use, can also lead young people to become involved in the criminal justice system, which can cause interruptions in their schooling and lead to dropout. For example, a review of the literature has identified an association between gang participation and involvement in substance use, dropping out of high school, and contact with the criminal justice system (Dunbar, 2017). Further, a study by Sweeten (2006) demonstrates that court involvement during high school is associated with increased risk of high school dropout.

Criminal justice involvement is particularly prevalent among young people experiencing homelessness, which may further affect their ability to graduate from high school. For example, a significant proportion of young people experiencing homelessness have reported previous contact with the criminal justice system and identified criminal justice involvement as a barrier to achieving their goals (Raising the Roof, 2009). An association has also been found between homelessness, particularly prolonged homelessness, and increased criminal activity (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016), which may lead to legal involvement and school interruption for young people experiencing homelessness.

Some newcomer youth may also be particularly vulnerable to gang involvement (Dunbar, 2017) and therefore at increased risk for legal involvement and high school dropout. Risk factors for gang involvement among immigrant youth include a lack of identity and sense of belonging, experiences of poverty and violence prior to migration, experiences of discrimination and victimization, a lack of school engagement, family stress and acculturation challenges, low parental supervision or lack of parent modeling, and living in low-income, high-crime neighbourhoods where they may not have access to the same resources or programs as other young people (Dunbar, 2017).

Supporting Young People To Access Substance Use Supports And Avoid High-Risk Activities

As substance use and involvement in high-risk behaviours can interrupt schooling and lead to high school dropout, young people engaged in these activities may require support to address these barriers to high school graduation. Some examples identified within the literature of the ways young people can be supported to address these barriers are outlined below.

Identifying Substance Use

A review of the literature has identified that there may be a lack of screening for substance use among young people in educational settings (DuPont et al., 2013). Comprehensive assessment and screening for alcohol or drug use is particularly important when young people start showing signs of difficulty in school, as academic difficulty is often an indicator of substance use (DuPont et al., 2013). It is critical that problem substance use is identified as early as possible to ensure young people remain engaged in school, as research demonstrates improved academic performance among young people when they stop using substances (DuPont et al., 2013).

Addiction Support Services

Young people with substance use disorders may require help to access addiction and substance use support services. Substance use services for young people may include assessment and referral services, withdrawal management, residential services and supports, intensive day treatment, concurrent disorders programs, and counselling (Fraser Health, 2017). When faced with addiction and substance use disorders, some young people may require ongoing substance use supports to help them address problem substance use and help them become more involved in their education, training, employment, and/or meaningful activities (Gaetz, 2014a). Further, young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness may need increased support to access addiction support services (Government of Alberta, 2015).

Mentorship

Mentorship has been identified within the literature as a promising practice in the prevention of substance use among young people, with findings from evaluations of mentorship programs demonstrating reduced likelihood of initiating drug and alcohol use among young mentees (Bridges, 2013; Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). The impact of mentorship on substance use was particularly strong for young people of minority status (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002).

While a study by Briere, Fallu, Morizot, and Janosz (2014) found that the use of illegal substances independently predicted high school dropout among young people, they also identified that an affiliation with deviant peers partially facilitated the connection between illegal substance use and subsequent high school dropout. This finding demonstrates the importance of positive role models and peer connections for young people engaged in substance use, who can help promote constructive behaviours and academic achievement. Positive relationships with adults in a school setting have also been identified as a protective factor for gang involvement (Dunbar, 2017). Further, young people with previous gang involvement have identified that role models were a significant motivator that helped them complete high school and make positive changes, as well as navigate systems and supports as they transitioned out of the justice system (Central Toronto Youth Services, 2016). These insights highlight the significant role mentors and positive adult relationships can play in helping young people reduce their involvement in risky behaviours, access appropriate supports, and graduate from high school.

2.5 EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Experiences of poverty can act as a significant barrier to young people's ability to graduate from high school, with those from a low socioeconomic background being at higher risk for dropout and more likely to leave school to pursue work.

Young people experiencing homelessness and some newcomer youth are particularly at risk for experiencing the negative effects of living in poverty.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Evidence from across the literature indicates that socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of educational attainment (Pathways to Education, 2015; Rai, 2013) and living in poverty is a significant barrier to high school graduation and academic success (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012; Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014). For example, research demonstrates that young people who drop out of high school are more likely to report lower family income (Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn (2015). Further, young people from low-income families have overall lower graduation rates than their higher-income peers and are less likely to graduate on time (Civic Enterprises, 2015). Failing or being held back in school and academic under-achievement are also more common for young people living in poverty (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010).

Many factors associated with income level have been found to significantly affect young people's ability to learn, including parental education, quality of care and education in early childhood, and access to physical and mental health services (Civic Enterprises, 2015). Further, living in poverty may also mean young people have fewer available resources that help to facilitate learning, such as reading materials, private or quiet study environments at home, or materials to complete school projects (Parrett & Budge, 2016). Together, these factors associated with living in poverty contribute to the persistent gap in achievement between low and higher income students (Civic Enterprises, 2015).

Research also demonstrates that earlier life transitions, such as leaving home or having a child, are more common for young people of lower socioeconomic status, which may facilitate early school leaving (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012). Additionally, young people living in poverty may face difficult choices about whether to leave school to work and support themselves and/or their family (Bridges, 2013).

Young people experiencing homelessness in particular may be living in extreme poverty, making work a higher priority than school. For example, research conducted with homeless youth who had dropped out of high school demonstrated that many of these young people were interested in returning to school, but described the need to earn money to get by as a barrier to re-engagement (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010).

Lower socioeconomic status is also a barrier faced by many newcomer youth, with research demonstrating that as a group, recent immigrants to Canada experience higher levels of poverty and are at increased risk for experiencing long-term poverty (Citizens for Public Justice, 2012). As a result, some newcomer youth may experience family financial stress (Rai, 2013) and may feel pressure to drop out of school in order to work and support their families (De Capua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007; Li & Que, 2016).

Further, family financial pressures may affect the ability of some newcomer youth to succeed in school if their parents are working long hours and are unable to help them with homework, ensure they spend time completing schoolwork, and help them get to school on time (Rai, 2013).

Supporting Young People To Access Employment And Financial Supports

Young people may need support accessing resources that can help them address barriers related to their socioeconomic status, such as financial and employment supports. A review of the literature demonstrates a variety of effective approaches to address these barriers, with several examples outlined below.

Access To Direct And Indirect Financial Resources

Facilitating access to financial support can help remove immediate financial barriers that might affect young people's participation in school (Pathways to Education, 2015). Financial supports may be provided in a variety of different ways, from direct financial assistance to in-kind resources that young people from low-income families may not be able to afford.

Young people experiencing homelessness who are unaccompanied and living independently may be eligible for and require assistance accessing government support, such as Ontario Works. Young people under 18 years of age are eligible to receive Ontario Works assistance when it is unsafe for them to live at home, they have been forced to leave home, or their parents refuse to provide for them (Bridging The Gap, 2010). Some research has shown that as many as 47% of young people experiencing homelessness receive their income from some form of government assistance, while as many as one third have no formal source of income (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016).

Further, many young people experiencing homelessness who do receive income assistance find it difficult to comply with the requirements needed to maintain financial support, such as completing forms, attending appointments, and meeting deadlines (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016). These findings demonstrate the important role adults supporting these young people can play in helping them access and maintain government supports that will facilitate improved financial stability and engagement in school.

Another method of providing young people experiencing homelessness with financial support that has been successful for some mentoring programs is the provision of stipends to those participating in the mentorship program (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016). Providing stipends allows these young people to meet their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016), ensuring they are better able to focus on other areas, such as learning and attending school.

Young people may also benefit from funds or services that provide them with access to in-kind resources that are normally costly and act as a barrier to their engagement in school, such as transportation, school materials, and basic needs (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016). Providing in-kind support has been identified as a successful approach, with one program demonstrating positive correlations between young people's school attendance and receiving assistance for transportation, such as bus passes or bus tickets (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2017).

Mentorship

Mentorship is another means by which young people can be supported to address both financial and employment barriers to education. For example, a study by Greenlee, Henson, Jones, Vance, and Wilson (2013) demonstrated that young people experiencing homelessness who had a positive mentor relationship showed increased knowledge about the availability of scholarships and grants for post-secondary education. Further, mentors can help young people develop their financial literacy, which is particularly important for young people experiencing homelessness who often leave home without having developed life skills such as money management (Government of Alberta, 2015). Research also shows increased comfort managing a chequing or savings account among young people experiencing homelessness who had a mentor relationship (Greenlee, Henson, Jones, Vance, & Wilson, 2013). Improved financial management skills can help young people address financial barriers and better engage in their schooling.

Mentorship can also help to increase young people's knowledge about employment and employment-related skills. For example, one study found that as a result of having a mentor, young people experiencing homelessness had more knowledge about how to build a resume (Greenlee, Henson, Jones, Vance, & Wilson, 2013). Further, mentoring has been shown to help young people gain knowledge about career opportunities (Bridges, 2013).

The literature also identifies that teachers and counsellors, who often play a mentoring role in young people's lives, may be involved in guiding young people's job seeking and can help encourage young people to pursue learning opportunities that will allow them to explore vocational interests and abilities (Mortimer, 2010) and remain engaged in their education.

Employment And Vocational Training Opportunities

Connecting young people to employment opportunities may also be important for helping them address barriers to high school graduation. Research demonstrates that young people who have some form of employment experience during their time in high school are less likely to drop out of school than their peers who do not work (Child Trends Data Bank, 2016). Young people have also reported that having employment in high school helped them develop beneficial skills, such as taking responsibility, time-management skills, communication, confidence, and money management (Mortimer, 2010). These skills are also important for helping young people succeed in school.

It is important to note, however, that employment during high school can have both positive and potentially negative impacts, with mixed results about whether working too many hours can lead to lower grades (Mortimer, 2010). While work experience can promote positive development and skill acquisition among young people (Mortimer, 2010), employment can also interfere with academic outcomes when a young person's job conflicts with class attendance or their ability to complete schoolwork (Child Trends Data Bank, 2016). Some studies have shown lower grades and increased risk of dropout among young people who work over 20 hours a week compared with those who work fewer hours (Child Trends Data Bank, 2016). Therefore, adults who support young people should help them identify and manage an appropriate balance between school and work and encourage them to remain engaged in opportunities outside of work that are important to their academic advancement, including extracurricular activities, social development, and completion of schoolwork (Mortimer, 2010).

Vocational training is another opportunity that may be very beneficial for some young people, as it can help prepare them for specific occupations. Vocational training programs may include participation in vocational curriculum in school, occupational internships outside of school, training-related support services, such as transportation and childcare, as well as job placement assistance (Hahn et al., 2015). Research has demonstrated that vocational training is an effective intervention for increasing high school completion among young people (Hahn et al., 2015). Further, summer jobs programs for young people have been found to increase their probability of high school graduation, while school-to-career programs with integrated work experience can increase their likelihood of enrolling in post-secondary education (Child Trends Data Bank, 2016).

Interview respondents also highlighted job readiness and employment programming as a key intervention for helping young people succeed. Connecting young people to available employment opportunities and career resources, preparing them for interviews, and providing career advice were all identified as helpful supports for young people. Further, some interview respondents noted that employment and job readiness supports may be particularly beneficial for young people experiencing homelessness, as maintaining employment can help them address their basic needs, making it easier to focus and learn.

Exploring Employment And Career Options

When young people can imagine what their future career might look like, they are more likely to be engaged in school (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016). Therefore, it is important for young people to be connected to opportunities where they can explore and understand their career options and different career paths.

Career exploration programs, career management supports, and job search, readiness, and matching services can help young people increase their knowledge of career options, improve their readiness for the labour market, and connect to employers (Government of Ontario, 2017). Further, young people may benefit from opportunities to interact with or hear from professionals from a variety of occupational backgrounds (United Way of Calgary and Area, 2016).

Career counselling has also been identified as an intervention that can help young people realize the benefits of their education (Lessard, 2014). Further, career counselling can provide young people with information about the path that will best lead them to their desired career, as well as assistance signing up for the right courses, accessing information about appropriate post-secondary options, and applying for scholarships (Lessard, 2014).

Opportunities to explore employment and career options may be particularly beneficial for some newcomer youth, as they may not have as much knowledge or awareness of the career options available to them in Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Discovering different career paths may provide these young people with encouragement to remain in school and work towards their future career goals.

2.6 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT, RELATIONSHIPS, AND REUNIFICATION

Throughout the literature, experiences of family separation, family conflict, and low parental involvement have been identified as barriers to high school graduation, as they can impact a young person's school attendance, engagement, and ability to navigate the school system, which can lead to dropout. Family separation, conflict, and lack of parental involvement are barriers that may be of particular concern for young people who are homeless and newcomer youth.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Research indicates that experiences of family separation and conflict may be barriers to young people remaining in or returning to school (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). For example, an association has been identified between family instability or disrupted family connections and a young person's school attendance, with attendance becoming sporadic or ceasing altogether (Solomon, 2013). Further, young people may face emotional distress as a result of separation from their home, which can affect their ability to succeed in school (Solomon, 2013).

A common theme among the literature is that experiences of family conflict are common among young people experiencing homelessness. Research shows that homeless youth experience a higher rate of parental abuse and neglect than the general population, and often have a history of maltreatment and difficult family relationships, which may have caused them to leave home (Dang & Miller, 2013).

These findings are significant, as unstable family relationships have been found to negatively affect the ability of unaccompanied young people experiencing homelessness to navigate school and social environments (Solomon, 2013). Further, young people who have left difficult living situations may not be easily trusting of other adults, and therefore experience difficulty accessing services (Raising the Roof, 2009) that could help them succeed in school.

Some newcomer youth may also be more likely to have experienced difficult family relationships as a result of lengthy family separations. For example, some newcomer youth may have experienced long periods of separation from a parent or their family prior to or during their migration (Oberoi, 2016; Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008), which young people have reported led to strained relationships, lack of trust within the parent-child relationship, and difficulty adjusting to new rules (The Joint Centre of Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2008). As experiences of family dysfunction resulting from long periods of family separation have been identified as a factor affecting dropout (Rai, 2013), the impact of difficult family relationships can act as a significant barrier to high school graduation for some newcomer youth.

Lack of parental involvement can also negatively impact young people's academic success. For example, research demonstrates that a lack of encouragement and assistance from parents can negatively impact school attendance (Solomon, 2013). Further, parents' involvement with their child's schooling, their level of comfort contacting school staff, and their confidence supporting their child's learning may be impacted by their own educational background, meaning those with little education may be less able to support their children in school (The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2003). Moreover, a lack of adult support when addressing school administration has also been identified as a barrier to school attendance (Solomon, 2013).

A low level of parental involvement may be a particularly significant barrier to academic success for young people experiencing homelessness and newcomer youth. There is evidence indicating that for young people experiencing homelessness, a lack of parental involvement can act as a barrier to their academic achievement (Solomon, 2013), as they may lack encouragement and support to navigate the school system. For newcomer youth, parental education and language proficiency may act as barriers to their parents' involvement in their education.

For example, research demonstrates that parental level of education is a predictor of high school dropout for newcomer youth (Rai, 2013) and parental lack of official language skills, which may affect their school involvement, had a significant impact on educational outcomes for newcomer youth (Gouin, 2016). Further, some parents of newcomer youth may be unfamiliar with the school system (Rai, 2013), making it difficult for them to help their children navigate challenges in school.

Supporting Young People To Access Supports That Promote Family Involvement, Relationships, And Reunification

Research shows young people whose parents are engaged in their school are more likely to have increased attendance, higher grades and test scores, better social skills, improved behaviour in the classroom, and graduate from high school (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015). Therefore, it is important that young people experiencing difficult family situations are supported to strengthen their family relationships where possible. The literature provides several examples of approaches that can help young people address barriers associated with difficult family situations, as outlined below.

Family Reconnection And Reunification

Throughout the literature, family reconnect programs are recommended as a key support for young people experiencing homelessness. Family reconnect programs provide support to young people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness, and their families, focusing on strengthening family relationships and addressing conflicts between young people who left home and their caregivers (Gaetz, 2014a). To help young people improve their relationships with their family and develop life skills, family reconnect services may provide assessment, individual and family counselling, and referral to appropriate services and supports, such as psychiatric assessment, screening for learning disabilities, and advocacy assistance (Gaetz, 2014a). By strengthening family relationships, access to reunification, counselling, and mediation services may help to prevent young people from experiencing homelessness (Government of Alberta, 2015) and remove a significant barrier to high school graduation.

Individual And Family Mentorship

Providing individual mentorship support has been correlated with improved relationships between young people and their parents. For example, one study showed that young people receiving mentorship felt they trusted their parents more and had better communication with their parents (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). Further, mentorship programs can help decrease family stressors and increase young people's assets, such as anger management, communication skills, and a sense of self-worth, which may help to improve family relationships (Bottomley, 2012).

A more recent approach to mentoring includes family involvement in the mentorship approach, which may be particularly beneficial for refugee or newcomer youth (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010; Oberoi, 2016). Mentorship can be used as a means of strengthening families when a young person is the primary mentee, but the mentor engages the entire family in activities or the mentoring relationship, which can help young people improve their connections to key sources of support and identity development (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010).

For newcomer youth, family involvement in the mentoring relationship can help bridge cultural gaps both within the family and to the new society, particularly when the mentor comes from a similar cultural background or speaks the same language as the family and can act as a translator or advocate within new cultural and school systems (Oberoi, 2016). Further, some refugee and immigrant families may also come from cultures which value interdependence and where parents are the primary decision-makers, and may want to be involved in the supports their children receive (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009), making parent involvement in the mentoring relationships important for these families.

Interviews with leaders of effective dropout prevention programs also highlighted the importance of family engagement for newcomer youth, with respondents noting they work with newcomer families to help them understand, navigate, and integrate into their new society, help families feel like they belong, and work with parents to create a home atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

Removing Barriers To Family Involvement

A key practice identified within the literature that can help encourage parent engagement includes identifying and removing barriers to involvement with their child's school and learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Suggested approaches to encouraging parent engagement include inviting parents for an orientation to the school, planning targeted sessions that help parents understand the school system, and helping parents learn about the role they play in their child's education and academic success (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Research has also shown that providing frequent opportunities for parents to get involved through a variety of activities, such as educational sessions about available school healthcare services, classroom volunteer opportunities, and parent-teacher organization meetings, can help increase parent engagement (Michael, Merlo, Basch, Wentzel, & Wechsler, 2015), and therefore promote academic success among young people.

Family Strengthening

Family strengthening has been identified as one of the most common strategies used by quality dropout prevention programs for young people (Pathways to Education, 2015). Family strengthening has also been identified as a best practice for supporting young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2011). A family strengthening approach has been defined as "a deliberate process of giving parents the necessary opportunities, relationships, networks, and supports to raise their children successfully" (Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2004).

Family strengthening focuses on fostering parenting skills, family management and communication skill development, and strategies that enable parents to help their children with their education (Pathways to Education, 2015).

While there are many approaches that can help strengthen families, the Family Strengthening Policy Centre (2004) outlines the following examples of key strategies for family strengthening:

1. Addressing needs early and responding quickly to help prevent family crises;
2. Offering assistance to meet basic needs, specialized services, and referrals;
3. Reaching out to families;
4. Connecting with families in their home or within home-like centers;
5. Responding in a flexible manner to family needs; and
6. Building on family strengths.

Integrating a family strengthening approach may help ensure young people receive the supports they need from their parents and family to succeed in high school.

2.7 HOUSING

Housing instability and lack of access to permanent housing can act as significant barriers to young people's ability to engage in and graduate from high school, particularly for young people who experience homelessness.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Housing instability has been identified through research as a significant predictor of negative educational outcomes for young people, including poor academic achievement and leaving school (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012; Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). Further, a growing body of research has established a connection between homelessness or housing instability and poor academic outcomes, with findings demonstrating that young people who are homeless or unstably housed often experience absences from school, frequent school changes, lower test scores, slower progression through school, and are at increased risk for dropping out of high school (Galvez & Luna, 2014).

Without permanent, stable housing, accessing educational opportunities can be significantly more difficult for young people who experience homelessness (Government of Alberta, 2015). Further, as a result of not having a fixed address, personal voicemail, and/or identification documents, young people experiencing homelessness may experience greater difficulties accessing services and supports available to them, and may not be aware of the supports available outside of those provided by emergency shelters (Government of Alberta, 2015).

Lack of access to safe, permanent housing can particularly affect the ability of young people experiencing homelessness to succeed in school. For example, young people who live in an emergency shelter or are couch surfing may experience conditions that are not conducive to learning, such as crowdedness, lack of privacy, and an inability to store personal belongings (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010), making it difficult for them to engage in school and learning. It may also be more difficult for young people experiencing homelessness to meet standard school requirements, including attendance, dress code, hygiene, or school fees without access to safe, stable housing (Solomon, 2013), therefore impacting their ability to experience academic success and high school graduation.

Supporting Young People To Access Housing Supports

A review of the literature offers several examples of how young people, particularly those experiencing homelessness, can be supported to address housing insecurity to ensure they are able to engage in school and learning.

Identifying Signs Of Homelessness

While access to safe, permanent housing is imperative for young people to experience success in school, research demonstrates there may be a lack of school staff trained to identify and intervene when young people are experiencing homelessness (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2016). Further, many young people have reported they are uncomfortable telling their friends, peers, teachers, counsellors, or others they are experiencing homelessness, making it more difficult to identify when homelessness is occurring (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2016). These findings indicate the importance of providing training to adults who support young people about how to identify signs of homelessness to ensure they are connected to available supports as soon as possible and are supported to remain engaged in school.

Support To Obtain And Maintain Housing

Young people experiencing homelessness may require support to search for, obtain, and maintain housing that is safe, affordable, and appropriate (Gaetz, 2014a). Housing First programs, through case management and housing supports, are one way young people experiencing homelessness can be supported to access safe, permanent housing. Housing First programs can help young people negotiate with landlords, sign a lease, and understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant, as they likely lack experience and may be vulnerable in these situations (Gaetz, 2014a).

Housing First programs can also help young people learn how to maintain their housing by supporting them to pay rent on time, develop good landlord and neighbour relationships, and manage visitors (Gaetz, 2014a). Helping young people to maintain their housing is critical, as stable housing has been identified as a protective factor for school engagement among young people experiencing homelessness (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010).

For example, research demonstrates that young people experiencing homelessness who were housed for a longer period of time were more likely to participate in school (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010) and a greater length of time housed increased the likelihood they would complete high school (Solomon, 2013).

Supportive And Transitional Housing Options

Supportive and transitional housing may also provide young people experiencing homelessness with the stable living situation they need in order to access and engage in education, training, employment, and appropriate supports (Raising the Roof, 2009). Permanent Supportive Housing offers a combination of rental or housing assistance and individualized support services for those with high needs (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2017), while transitional housing also provides a wide range of supports that help young people prepare for independent living, but is often time limited (Gaetz, 2014b).

Research has shown improved educational outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness who received supportive housing compared with those who did not, including remaining in the same school longer, more consistent school attendance, and increased academic performance (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). As stable housing promotes educational attainment, it is important that adults who support young people are aware of and understand the housing supports available to young people experiencing homelessness to ensure they can connect young people to these services and help them overcome this barrier to high school graduation.

2.8 RELATIONSHIP AND SOCIAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Development of both positive and negative social connections can greatly affect young people's ability to engage in school and experience academic success. Negative social experiences, such as discrimination, bullying, and marginalization can also act as significant social barriers to high school graduation. Young people experiencing homelessness and newcomer youth may be more likely to experience negative social interactions and face social barriers to academic success.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Peer group interactions have consistently been identified as a factor that can significantly influence young people's learning (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014; American Psychological Association, 2012). For example, while positive peer relationships that foster psychological and life skills development have been found to promote academic achievement and motivation, negative peer pressure and negative attitudes towards schoolwork can lead to dropout for some young people (American Psychological Association, 2012). Further, the likelihood a young person will leave school before graduating increases when they have many friends stop attending school (Center for Promise, 2015).

There is also evidence to suggest that school relationships can play a role in promoting socially competent behaviour in the classroom, engagement, and academic achievement (Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2008). For example, research demonstrates that a significant predictor of participation in school is a young person's satisfaction with their social support (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2010). Further, for young people experiencing high mobility, teacher support and peer acceptance may have a positive influence on their attitude towards school (Moore, 2013). A lack of social connections can also negatively impact engagement, with some newcomer youth reporting feelings of loneliness, isolation, and a lack of friends as reasons for not graduating high school (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008).

Development of relationships and social networks may be particularly difficult for young people experiencing homelessness and newcomer youth. For example, young people who are highly mobile or experiencing homelessness tend to demonstrate poor interactions with their peers and adults and often exhibit self-isolating or disruptive behaviour (Moore, 2013), which can prevent them from engaging in school. Further, moving schools has been found to have a negative impact on social engagement, which is significant as social detachment can lead to lower academic performance (Moore, 2013). Research also indicates that refugee and newcomer youth are more likely to experience isolation, have fewer social networks (Gouin, 2016), and face challenges integrating with their peers (Rai, 2013). Experiences of isolation may result from family disconnect or the absence of friends from a young person's home country, while language barriers may prevent them from making new friends (Rai, 2013), all of which affect their ability to connect in school and be engaged in learning.

Stigma, discrimination, marginalization, and bullying can also act as significant social barriers to academic success for young people. Research demonstrates that approximately 20% of Canadian youth have reported an experience of bullying at school, which was identified by young people as a factor that made it difficult for them to do well in school (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, & Schwan, 2016). Further, discrimination has been identified as a contributor to school disengagement and failure for young people (Gaetz, 2014b). There is also evidence showing higher rates of dropout for racial minority groups (Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn, 2015) who often face barriers to academic success, including language barriers and discipline disparities that affect their progress towards graduation (Civic Enterprises, 2015).

Young people who are homeless may be more likely to have experienced stigma and discrimination, with many being marginalized in multiple ways due to racism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia (Gaetz, 2014a), which further impacts their ability to succeed in school. Many young people experiencing homelessness have reported facing stigmatizing labels, such as being apathetic, worthless, criminal, or dangerous (Government of Alberta, 2015). Further, stigma associated with living in emergency shelter may be internalized or imposed through bullying, creating a barrier to school attendance (Decter, 2007).

Young people who are newcomers may also be at greater risk for experiencing marginalization and discrimination, affecting their ability to develop positive social connections and succeed in school. Some newcomer youth may experience racism and stigmatization for the first time, facing challenges such as discrimination based on their ethnicity, culture, language, accent, skin colour, religion, or status as a newcomer (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell & Ferguson, 2008) and anti-immigrant attitudes, politics, and policies (Oberoi, 2016). Further, young people who are newcomers have reported experiencing bullying and school violence (The Joint Centre of Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2008), as well as tokenism and ignorant or racist stereotyping (FCJ Refugee Centre, 2016). Evidence also demonstrates higher rates of dropout for racial minority groups (Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn, 2015) who often face barriers to academic success, including language barriers and discipline disparities that affect their progress towards graduation (Civic Enterprises, 2015).

Supporting Young People To Access Relationship And Social Network Development Opportunities

Having positive peer relationships has been identified as a protective factor for high school graduation that promotes school engagement and educational attainment (Pathways to Education, 2017a). Outlined below are several examples highlighted within the literature of approaches that can support young people to develop positive social connections and address social barriers to graduation.

Mentoring Supports

Through mentorship, young people can receive individual attention and are supported by a caring person with whom they can talk and share any challenges they may be facing, which can help build young people's confidence, reduce loneliness or isolation (Save the Children, 2002), and support their engagement in school. Mentoring supports can be an effective approach to addressing social risk factors for graduation, as positive social, behavioural, and academic outcomes have been associated with quality mentoring relationships (Civic Enterprises, 2015). Further, connection to an adult mentor can help young people receive encouragement and affirmation (Moore, 2013).

Access to peer mentors may also be important for young people who are highly mobile. Peer mentorship provides these young people with a positive connection to someone who can show them around their new school environment, teach them about school routines and class procedures, and help them fit in more successfully at school (Moore, 2013), thereby facilitating improved school engagement.

Social And Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning can be defined as “the process of developing students’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills to manage emotions, build healthy relationships, set goals, and make decisions” (Alberta Education, 2017).

Social and emotional learning has been found to not only increase academic performance for young people, but also foster adaptive cognitive and emotional functioning, creating lifelong impacts for young people (Civic Enterprises, 2015). Social and emotional learning has also been correlated with improved attitudes towards school, reduced depression and stress among young people, and increased prosocial behaviours (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2016). Research has also demonstrated that young people who participate in social and emotional learning programs have increased motivation, commitment, study habits, attendance, and grades, as well as a greater likelihood of graduation (Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014).

Opportunities for young people to develop and enhance their relationship skills are important, as improved social and emotional competence can increase academic behaviours and attitudes towards school (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012).

Interventions that promote relationship skill development may include mentoring, communication and anger management supports, conflict resolution training, and activities through which young people can practice developing healthy relationships (Gaetz, 2014a). Further, teaching young people effective communication skills and helping them recognize, understand, and manage their emotions and social interactions can help reduce problematic or disruptive behaviours (Pathways to Education, 2015) that act as barriers to educational achievement.

Opportunities For Community Integration And Relationship Development

Providing young people with opportunities to integrate into the community can help them establish broader networks of support and may help to reduce stigma for those facing discrimination (Gaetz, 2014a). Community engagement has also been identified as a factor that promotes engagement in school (Gaetz, 2014b).

Opportunities for community integration and relationship development identified within the literature include recreational activities, arts-based programs, sports, volunteering, gardening, pet care, mentorship, or activities identified by a young person as being meaningful to them (Gaetz, 2014a; Gouin, 2016). Connecting young people to extracurricular activities not only helps them develop support networks, but can also translate into improved attendance, academic achievement, and a desire to continue education beyond high school (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2014).

Relationship development opportunities may be particularly important for young people experiencing homelessness who are unable to reunite with their family, as strengthening informal support networks can play a critical role in promoting their success (Government of Alberta, 2015). Further, positive peer relationships and strong social supports have been identified as protective factors for a successful transition out of homelessness for young people (Government of Alberta, 2015), which removes a significant barrier to their educational attainment.

As young people who are newcomers lose their peer groups as a source of reference for identity development when they migrate (Tremblay, 2012), it is particularly important that newcomer youth have opportunities to develop positive social connections. Socializing with peers is also an effective way for newcomer youth with low English proficiency to practice their language skills (Tremblay, 2012), which can help them experience success in school.

For newcomer youth, research demonstrates the importance of providing them with opportunities to connect with peers from the receiving population (Gouin, 2016), as well as young people with similar experiences to their own (Rai, 2013). For example, involvement in community activities such as school events, sports, and volunteering can help young newcomers meet peers from Canada and experience social integration (Gouin, 2016), while bonding with other newcomer youth can foster the development of friendships, trust, and confidence, which in turn promote classroom learning and engagement (Rai, 2013).

Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs are another intervention that helps young people develop positive social supports along with skills that promote academic success. For example, Boys and Girls Clubs provide young people with a range of hands-on activities and opportunities to gain leadership skills, experience meaningful relationships, develop positive self-image and self-confidence, and improve their interpersonal skills (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012)

Research demonstrates that by fostering supportive relationships with adults, skill and competency development in a variety of areas, positive social norms, and a sense of belonging, afterschool programs promote graduation for participants (Pathways to Education, 2017a). Further, afterschool programs offer young people opportunities to develop mentoring relationships, positive peer group connections, and self-esteem (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012), which have been found to promote academic achievement for young people.

2.9 EARLY PARENTING

Becoming a parent while in high school has been shown to interrupt a young person's schooling, which can create a significant barrier to high school graduation, and is of particular concern for young people experiencing homelessness who are more likely to be early parents.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Research shows that young people who become parents are more likely to leave high school before they graduate (Center for Promise, 2015). For example, one study found that 26% of young people who dropped out of high school reported that becoming a parent was the reason they left school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Burke Morison, 2006).

Further, having children has been found to impact school engagement, as each child a young person has during high school can decrease their rate of school participation by 49% (Solomon, 2013). Being an early parent has also been associated with interrupted enrolment in school (Center for Promise, 2015), which can affect progress towards high school graduation.

Being a young parent is particularly prevalent among young people experiencing homelessness, creating an additional barrier to high school graduation. For example, research indicates that young people experiencing homelessness have higher rates of pregnancy than their peers (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016). Additionally, one study of young people experiencing homelessness in Toronto found that 19% were young parents, while 5.4% had more than one child (Gaetz, 2014a), indicating increased risk for not completing high school.

Supporting Young People To Access Supports For Parenting

Young people who become parents may require multiple different supports to help them remain in and graduate from high school. Outlined below are several examples from the literature of the types of supports found to be effective in promoting academic success among young people experiencing early parenthood.

Development Of Parenting And Life Skills

Young people who become parents may require special supports and life skills training (Gaetz, 2014a) to help them prepare for their role as a parent and caregiver. A review of the literature indicates that a key focus of effective programs that support young parents is helping them develop parenting skills while also providing support to complete high school courses (Government of Ontario, 2015). Specifically, skill development in the areas of cooking, household management, family literacy, and self-advocacy, in combination with guidance, career, and life planning, can help set young parents up for success (Government of Ontario, 2015) both as parents and in school.

Further, young parents may want support to re-establish a relationship with or regain custody of their children if they were removed by child welfare services (Gaetz, 2014a). This may be particularly important to young parents experiencing homelessness, as research demonstrates less than 40% lived with their child (Gaetz, 2014a).

Childcare, Transportation, And Finances

Reliable childcare, transportation, and financial difficulties have been identified as three of the most significant barriers to academic success for young parents (Government of Ontario, 2015). Further, young people experiencing homelessness have identified that better access to daycare services is important to them (Raising the Roof, 2009). Therefore, helping young parents address these challenges and access adequate childcare, transportation, and financial supports will allow them to better focus on learning and advance through their high school education (Government of Ontario, 2015).

Multi-Support Programs

Research provides strong evidence that access to programs providing multiple, comprehensive supports and attendance monitoring programs are particularly effective at increasing high school completion for young parents (County Health Rankings, 2017; Hahn et al., 2015). A review of the literature demonstrates that the key components of effective multi-support dropout prevention programs for young parents include academic support or remedial education, vocational training, case management, healthcare services, parenting instruction, transportation assistance, childcare, and help to meet basic needs (County Health Rankings, 2017; Hahn et al., 2015; United Way of Calgary and Area, 2010).

Services providing a combination of nurse home visits, life skills training, and educational counselling have also been shown to improve graduation rates for young mothers (County Health Rankings 2017). Further, parent-child programs that provide counselling and medical support have been associated with fewer repeat pregnancies and improved graduation for young mothers (County Health Rankings, 2017).

2.10 ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

For some newcomer youth, a lack of English language proficiency can be a significant barrier to high school graduation, particularly as it can affect their ability to engage in class, pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, and connect with their peers.

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Research suggests that language is one of the most significant obstacles faced by newcomer youth as they settle, adapt, and integrate into their new country (Tremblay, 2012). For example, young people in Ontario with English as a second language (ESL) have been shown to lag behind and have lower academic achievement than non-ESL students, which can result in slower development, problems with behaviour and self-esteem, and delayed curricular advancement (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008).

Further, young people who are English Language Learners are less likely to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) than their peers, as demonstrated by the 2015-2016 results, where 71% of English Language Learners passed the literacy test compared to 81% of the general population (Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2016). Not passing the OSSLT puts these young people at increased risk of not graduating from high school.

Young people's language proficiency has been found to affect how well they connect to what goes on in the classroom, which can affect their academic performance (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Further, research shows that young people with lower levels of English participate more passively in the classroom and worry more about their intercultural competence (Li & Que, 2016). For example, speaking up during class may cause high anxiety among young people with limited English proficiency (Rai, 2013), while some ESL students have delayed responses due to the process of translation, making it more difficult for them to participate in class discussions (Li & Que, 2016). Language proficiency barriers might affect the ability of these young people to participate in class, which can negatively impact their academic engagement and overall educational achievement.

The ability of English Language Learners to develop academic English skills and language proficiency can affect their academic performance (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Opportunities to develop English language skills are important for young people who are English Language Learners, as a lack of meaningful contact with English-speaking peers can result in linguistic isolation and may impede English language acquisition (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Further, delays in developing language proficiency have been cited as affecting educational performance and outcomes, while slow progress through ESL programs may cause frustration for young people and disengagement from school (Rai, 2013).

Supporting Young People To Access English Language Supports

As English language development and proficiency can act as barriers to high school graduation for some newcomer youth, it is important that they are supported to access opportunities in which they can improve their language skills. Outlined below are some examples of ways in which young English Language Learners can be supported to address language barriers.

English Language Acquisition

Young people who are newcomers from non-English speaking countries may require support to access services that help them develop English language proficiency, such as English language training programs and ESL instruction that is tailored to their level of skill and focused on academic learning (The Joint Centre of Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2008). Access to English language skill development opportunities and services are particularly important for newcomer youth, as English proficiency is a significant determinant of academic success and high school completion, and can affect their ability to graduate high school on time (Yip, 2013).

Some examples of best practices for supporting English language development among young people identified within the literature include increasing small group instruction and collaborative learning activities, using visual aids, and focusing on key concepts or repeating main points (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Further, strategies found to be effective in teaching English literacy to ESL students in any grade include collaborative reading, systematic phonics instruction, multimedia-assisted reading, and diary writing (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Some young newcomers may have had little to no exposure to English (Rai, 2013) or formal education (The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2003) prior to their migration. For English Language Learners who have had interrupted or limited formal schooling, additional support may be required to help them develop fundamental language skills that other English Language Learners already have, such as basic phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and sequencing for logical order of ideas and words (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007), as they may not have learned these skills in their native language. Examples identified within the literature of effective supports for language development among young people with interrupted education include separate classes where ESL instruction is integrated with academic skill development, literacy, and content-specific support, providing bilingual or ESL assistance to young people in mainstream classes, and afterschool programs that focus on helping these young people catch up on lost learning time (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007).

Integrating Native Language And Personal Experiences

The ability of young refugees to maintain and thrive in their native language as they adjust to a new culture has been identified as a key factor affecting their success in school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). This demonstrates the need for young English Language Learners to have access to supports in both their native and new language. For example, bilingual instruction can help foster young people's development of language skills in both their native language and English, which has been shown to reinforce, expand, and accelerate academic learning for English Language Learners (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007). Further, access to native language resources can help fill gaps that may exist in subject content and conceptual learning (Yip, 2013).

Making connections between the concepts or content being taught and the personal experiences or stories of newcomer youth, using their background as a foundation for all areas of learning, has also been identified as a best practice for supporting their English language development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). For example, learning greetings or words in a young person's native language, providing dual or multilingual signs, and translating information (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016) can help young people connect new concepts to their prior knowledge. This can help promote the development of both their native and new language, which ultimately supports improved language proficiency, English language acquisition, and academic performance.

2.11 IMMIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION

Why Is This A Barrier To High School Graduation?

Young people who are newcomers may experience challenges unique to their immigration process that can affect their academic engagement and success. These barriers may include the age at which they migrate, their citizenship status, and challenges related to acculturation.

Age At Immigration

Research demonstrates that for some young people who are newcomers, academic success may be affected by the age at which they arrive in their new country (Rai, 2013). There is evidence demonstrating that increased age at arrival is associated with an increased risk for not graduating from high school (Corak, 2011). For example, young people who migrated after the age of 13 years old showed higher rates of not graduating from high school (Corak, 2011). Further, the ability to adapt to and complete high school can become more difficult the older the young person is when they migrate to a new country (Rummens, Tilleczeck, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008). This may be explained in part by a young person's ability to learn a second language, with a younger age being recognized as a sensitive time for language acquisition (Corak, 2011). Therefore, it may be easier to develop language proficiency required for academic success when newcomer youth arrive earlier in their academic career.

Citizenship Status

For some newcomer youth, citizenship status may be a cause of stress and may act as a barrier to school engagement. For young people who are undocumented immigrants, their citizenship status can be a source of stress, anger, and hopelessness (Oberoi, 2016), particularly about their ability to continue to post-secondary education and obtain desirable employment, which can lead to academic disengagement (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Further, young people who come seeking refugee status may face confusing asylum application procedures and complicated appeals processes (Save the Children, 2002), creating a significant distraction from obtaining their education.

A lack of understanding from school administration about the rights of non-status youth to access education may act as a barrier to school enrolment for some young people who are newcomers (FCJ Refugee Centre, 2016). In order to enroll in school, newcomer youth are often asked to disclose their citizenship status at several points during the enrolment process and may be required to provide documentation (FCJ Refugee Centre, 2016), which can pose challenges to school engagement. Undocumented youth may also fear disclosing their status, particularly when they are unaware of their right to attend high school, keeping them from entering the education system and obtaining a high school diploma (FCJ Refugee Centre, 2016).

Rate Of Acculturation

The rate at which newcomer youth acculturate to their new society and intergenerational differences in acculturation between children and their parents can create conflict and barriers for some young people. Young people who are newcomers may acculturate to their new society more quickly than their parents (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010), which can lead them to take on more adult responsibilities, such as translating for parents when communicating with authorities (Save the Children, 2002).

These young people may experience role reversal, which can cause family conflict (Tremblay, 2012) and may mean they receive less support and guidance from their parents (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010). These acculturative stressors can act as a significant barrier to graduation, as parental involvement is important to promoting academic success for young people.

Differences in acculturation may also cause some newcomer youth to feel disconnected from their ethnic heritage (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010). Further, these young people face the challenge of navigating two worlds, that of their parents and that of their new society or school, and forming an identity that incorporates both cultures (Tremblay, 2012). Challenges associated with acculturation to a new society may include dissonance between the beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices of each culture, a mismatch between a young person's school culture and their own cultural identity, and value differences between young people and their parents, which can create conflict and tension (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008).

Overall, these stressors associated with acculturation challenges can lead to experiences of depression, behavioural problems, a lack of belonging, and academic underachievement (Oberoi, 2016). Young people who feel alienated from their cultural heritage may be at greater risk for failing in school (The Joint Centre of Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2008), while research demonstrates that young people with a stronger sense of ethnic pride and cultural identity perform better in school (Rummens, Tilleczek, Boydell, & Ferguson, 2008).

Supporting Young People To Access Immigration And Cultural Supports

Young people may experience the settlement process differently than adults due to their age, developmental stage, and family position, and their unique needs may go unintentionally unnoticed or unaddressed by broader settlement or mainstream services (Liddy & Stewart, 2015). This demonstrates the importance of identifying and addressing the needs of these young people to ensure their engagement (Liddy & Stewart, 2015) and that they are connected to appropriate supports. Interview respondents also highlighted that being aware of young people's cultural background and connecting them with their culture of origin can help them address any identity challenges they may be facing and feel more comfortable sharing about the issues or concerns they are experiencing.

A review of the literature demonstrates many examples of how young people who are newcomers can be supported to address immigration and acculturation barriers, with several outlined below.

Fostering Connections To Cultural Heritage And Identity

Migrating to a new country may lead some newcomer youth to experience a sense of identity loss or disorientation, which is impacted by the need to adjust to multiple sources of identity (Tremblay, 2012).

To address this challenge and promote positive adjustment, the literature suggests that it is important to help newcomer youth develop both a strong sense of their ethnic heritage and their identity as a member of their new country (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010). Fostering connections to their cultural heritage can help these young people address issues of loss and identity (Save the Children, 2002), while providing opportunities to discuss the culture of the new society can help them better understand and adjust to their new social environment (Tremblay, 2012). Helping young people develop their bicultural identity is important, as research demonstrates it can be an added asset as they transition into adulthood by fostering bilingualism, insights into multicultural communities, flexibility, and greater resilience (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009).

Facilitating cross-cultural connections is one way young people can be supported to engage in their cultural heritage while making meaningful connections in the community (Gaetz, 2014a). Further, helping young people engage in cultural activities has been found to help young people develop a sense of pride about their cultural heritage, ancestry, and identity (Lessard, 2014). Engagement in cultural activities and clubs can also help young people improve their sense of belonging and may foster connections to positive role models or peer supports (Lessard, 2014) who play an important role in academic achievement.

Mentorship

Mentoring relationships is another means by which newcomer youth can be supported to adapt to a new country and experience academic success while also maintaining a connection to their cultural heritage. A review of the literature demonstrates that both formal and informal mentoring may be effective in assisting acculturation and social integration for newcomer youth, as well as promoting engagement in learning and school (Oberoi, 2016).

Further, both same and cross-cultural mentoring relationships can be valuable for newcomer youth (Oberoi, 2016). Recruiting mentors from the same cultural and language background as mentees has been identified within the literature as a best practice of effective mentoring programs for refugee and immigrant youth (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010). When young people are mentored by someone from a similar background, it can provide them with a role model of successful integration (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009) and support with cultural translation (Oberoi, 2016).

Further, peer mentoring whereby older newcomer mentors are paired with young people who are new to the country may also be beneficial for promoting successful integration (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010).

Cross-cultural mentoring can also be beneficial to newcomer youth by generating stimulating conversations about cultural differences between young people and their mentors, thereby facilitating acculturation and promoting the young person's bicultural identity (Oberoi, 2016). It is important to note, however, that the cultural competence of a mentor can impact the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship, highlighting the importance of comprehensive mentor training (Oberoi, 2016).

Research highlights that effective mentorship programs for newcomer youth ensure mentors are trained in cultural competency, create partnerships with cultural communities, and involve young people in program planning to ensure they are culturally appropriate (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010). Strengthening the cultural competence of mentors can ensure newcomer youth receive appropriate support and are connected to opportunities that help them experience both positive integration and academic success.

Immigration And Settlement Services

Research demonstrates that one of the best practices of effective mentoring programs for refugee and immigrant youth is the development of partnerships with the cultural communities they serve (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, 2010; Gouin, 2016). Further, it is important that adults supporting newcomer youth are aware of and connect young people to organizations that provide immigration services, as these services have expertise in issues related to immigration and can help both newcomer youth and their families with their settlement and integration (Tremblay, 2012).

For example, Multicultural Liaison Workers provide newcomer youth with support by connecting them to services that address their needs and help young people adjust to their new school system (Rai, 2013). They can also provide emotional support and counselling about culturally sensitive issues, as well as translation assistance to parents and information about how to graduate from high school (Rai, 2013). Further, newcomer youth may benefit from being connected to community-based cultural organizations (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009) or welcoming centers that can also provide outreach to schools, ESL courses, community orientation support, and assistance accessing social, healthcare, housing, and employment services (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2011).

Young people who are newcomers may also require support to understand the cultural differences and nuances of their new society (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007). Orientation programs can support integration by helping newcomer youth learn culturally appropriate behaviours in school and offering school tours (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007) that can help newcomer youth feel more comfortable in their new environment and positively engage in school.

Family Involvement

Addressing the immigration and acculturation challenges of families and promoting family engagement may also be beneficial for newcomer youth, as addressing family needs can remove barriers to academic involvement for young people. Examples of effective strategies for family involvement and support identified within the literature include translating materials so as to remove language barriers, involving bilingual and bicultural supports to bridge cultural differences and promote trusting relationships with families (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009), and finding opportunities to strengthen relationships with parents or guardians, which can help bridge acculturation gaps between young people and their parents (Oberoi, 2016) and promote parental involvement in their child's schooling, which helps foster academic success.

SECTION 3.0

INTERVENTION APPROACHES AND ELEMENTS

Between 2013 and 2015, the Child and Youth Network (CYN) engaged in a robust process of evaluation, research, community consultation, and youth engagement to create the CYN Youth Framework. The CYN Youth Framework supports collective impact among activities, programs, and services in London, Ontario that help young people thrive (Child and Youth Network, 2015). As part of preparing the CYN Youth Framework, guiding principles for how to work with and support young people were developed through an interactive youth facilitation process.

Outlined below are the six guiding principles defined within the CYN Youth Framework:

1. **Strength-Based** – An approach or framework that acknowledges that young people are dynamic problem-solvers who have the confidence and knowledge to provide contributions that are valuable.
2. **Youth Voice** – The act of listening to young people while respecting their diverse and powerful perspectives. It is understanding and acknowledging the passion that young people bring with them, while also providing the support and space for them to share their ideas.
3. **Inclusivity** – The concept or act of fostering respectful interactions and opportunities in a way that young people can share their opinions and insights without the fear of judgment. It is ensuring that all young people feel comfortable and are treated as valuable members of society.
4. **Accountability** – An action or state of being that requires a participant(s) to be committed to their cause and to consistently act in a responsible way. It requires a high degree of integrity and transparency.
5. **Neighbourhood-Based** – An approach or concept that suggests that the area where young people live has an influence on their understanding and culture. Neighbourhoods are places that provide supportive relationships, where people share resources, and feel safe.
6. **Impact** – The act of creating or offering supportive connections that encourage and influence growth, change, or progress.

(Child and Youth Network, 2015)

A review of the literature of effective high school dropout prevention interventions that support young people to experience success highlights common best practices for intervention approaches and elements that corroborate and align closely with the guiding principles articulated in the CYN Youth Framework.

These common approaches and elements found throughout the literature include positive youth development, youth engagement and youth voice, trauma-informed support, cultural competence, promoting resilience, non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory support, a strengths-based approach, positive and sustained adult support, skill development, parent involvement, advocacy and system navigation, and consistent communication with young people. Outlined below is a description of each approach and element along with evidence to substantiate its value in supporting young people to experience academic success and graduate from high school.

APPROACHES

3.1 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A Positive Youth Development approach takes the developmental needs and strengths of young people into account (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016) and emphasizes the development of their strengths, assets, and competencies through opportunities and positive relationships (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009).

A common framework for promoting Positive Youth Development identifies six core strategies that can help mentors facilitate positive change and development within young people, including:

1. **Competence** – Helping young people discover their skills, transfer their skills to multiple contexts, and learn from their mistakes;
2. **Confidence** – Building supports and skills that help young people solve problems;
3. **Character** – Supporting young people to make their own decisions and role modeling appropriate actions;
4. **Connection** – Facilitating connections within the community and helping young people feel heard;
5. **Caring** – Showing compassion and helping young people learn the benefits of caring for others; and
6. **Contribution** – Building the capacity for young people to help others and give back to their community.

(Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016; The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016)

A Positive Youth Development approach also helps young people acquire and develop assets within multiple social contexts and environments, such as neighbourhoods, community organizations, social programs, workplaces, and schools (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009).

A review of the literature demonstrates a growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of a Positive Youth Development approach (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009), with outcomes including reduced risky behaviours, increased grades, and improved school performance (Silloway, Connors-Tadros, & Marchand, 2009). Further, Gaetz (2014a) emphasizes the need for models of support for young people that use an assets-based approach, acknowledge the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social needs of young people as they develop, and enhance protective factors and resilience, which help young people overcome barriers and succeed in school.

3.2 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH VOICE

Youth engagement facilitates meaningful and continued involvement of young people in positive activities, while the principle of youth voice ensures young people's ideas, concerns, and opinions are heard and respected (CYCC Network, 2013). When young people are placed at the centre of care and provided with opportunities for choice and self-determination, it allows them to identify what they want and need and receive support to make informed decisions about their future (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016).

Providing young people with opportunities for participation and leadership has been identified as a key factor in implementing effective programming for young people (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016). Interview respondents also highlighted the importance of ensuring young people have a voice in program development and receive support for self-advocacy.

When young people have input into their schooling and are given a voice, it allows them to become more engaged in their education (Moore, 2013). Further, research demonstrates that meaningful engagement of young people can lead to improved health and mental health, self-confidence, positive relationship development, less risky behaviour, and positive career outlook (CYCC Network, 2013), all of which promote academic achievement.

3.3 TRAUMA-INFORMED

A trauma-informed approach to supporting young people means being aware of, having knowledge about, and responding to trauma, ensuring young people's physical and emotional safety is addressed, and supporting young people to make choices and experience control in decision-making (Gaetz, 2014a).

A review of the literature demonstrates six common core principles associated with a trauma-informed approach:

1. **Safety** – Establishing a safe physical and emotional environment;

2. **Cultural Competence** – Addressing cultural, historical, and gender issues and understanding trauma through a sociocultural lens;
3. **Empowerment, Voice, And Choice** – Recognizing and building on an individual’s strengths and experiences to support control, choice, and autonomy;
4. **Collaboration And Mutuality** – Sharing power and governance, placing emphasis on partnership;
5. **Trust And Transparency** – Building and maintaining trust and promoting transparency in decision-making; and
6. **Peer Support** – Enhancing collaboration and mutual support between peers to promote safety, hope, and trust.

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014; The Change Collective, 2017)

Interview participants identified the importance and success of implementing a trauma-informed approach when supporting young people through dropout prevention programs. Respondents specifically highlighted that trauma-informed support ensures young people have someone to turn to when they are dealing with traumatic experiences and can help them develop resilience. Further, implementing a trauma-informed approach is important when working with young people, as trauma can negatively impact young people’s development (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, 2013) and ability to engage in school.

3.4 CULTURAL COMPETENCE

As it pertains to mentoring young people, Oberoi (2016) describes cultural competence as “applying the knowledge of the mentee’s culture to strengthen the quality of the mentoring relationship and to make the activities and the program culturally appropriate to increase the likelihood of effectiveness of mentoring for positive youth outcomes.” Developing cultural competence may include exploring the possible assumptions one makes based on cultural differences, promoting awareness of different life experiences of young people from various backgrounds, and understanding the cultural heritage of the young people being supported (Save the Children, 2002).

As many young people may face experiences of prejudice and stereotyping, particularly those who are Indigenous, part of a visible minority group, newcomers, living with a disability, LGBTQ+, or experiencing homelessness, it is important to ensure the supports and services they receive are culturally appropriate (Raising the Roof, 2009).

Cultural competence has consistently been identified throughout the literature as an important approach when working with and supporting young people to achieve success (Liddy & Stewart, 2015; Raising the Roof, 2009; The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016).

Research also demonstrates that when mentors exhibit cultural competence, for example by getting to know the mentee, their family, and culture and respecting cultural differences, it can promote greater closeness and better relationship quality (Oberoi, 2016), which is important for facilitating positive school outcomes for young people.

3.5 PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Resilience can be defined as “an individual’s ability to overcome adversity and continue their normal development” (Government of Alberta, 2010). At its core, resilience promotes positive, adaptive responses when young people are faced with significant adversity (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015).

While research demonstrates there are many strategies that help foster resilience, the following have been identified as some of the overarching evidence-based factors that help to promote resilience in young people:

1. **Access To Basic Needs** – Including housing, enough money to live, safety, transportation, healthy diet, exercise, adequate sleep, play and leisure, and being free from prejudice and discrimination.
2. **Belonging** – Including feeling a sense of place in the world, having good influences, developing many healthy relationships, and making friends.
3. **Learning** – Including developing life skills, understanding career or life plans, and acknowledging achievements.
4. **Coping** – Including understanding boundaries, problem solving, fostering interests, having a positive outlook, and self-regulation.
5. **Core Self** – Including a sense of hope, a sense of empathy, a sense of self, taking responsibility, and fostering talents.

(Hart & Heaver, 2015)

As research has shown an association between characteristics of resilience and improved academic outcomes for young people (ScholarCentric, 2010), it is essential that young people receive support to develop their resilience, strengthen protective factors, and overcome the challenges or barriers they face that may prevent them from graduating high school.

3.6 NON-JUDGEMENTAL AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICE

Creating a non-judgemental, inclusive environment helps to promote respect and positive social norms so young people feel safe and are encouraged to engage in positive behaviours (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, 2014).

Young people have identified that they sometimes needed help to “get back on track” and appreciated when they were offered support and resources without being judged about their circumstances or previous choices (Center for Promise, 2015). Further, respecting young people’s privacy can help to promote a non-judgemental environment in which they do not feel singled out (Moore, 2013) and can feel safe engaging. This may be particularly important for young people experiencing homelessness who do not want their peers knowing about their living situation (Moore, 2013) or newcomer youth who do not want to share their immigration status with others. Interview respondents also noted the importance of providing a non-judgemental space in which young people can feel respected, develop positive coping skills, and enhance their sense of belonging.

Anti-discriminatory practice ensures young people have access to equal opportunities and are encouraged to respect and celebrate their own and others’ cultural backgrounds, identities, and choices (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2007). Implementing anti-discriminatory practices and engaging with young people in a respectful manner have been identified as factors that promote school engagement (Gaetz, 2014b), making these important approaches when working with and supporting young people.

3.7 STRENGTHS-BASED FOCUS

A strengths-based approach places emphasis on promoting the strengths and skills of young people and positions adults as partners rather than professionals who can help facilitate change in partnership with young people (Bonnell & Zizys, 2005; Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016).

The Ontario Mentoring Coalition (2016) highlights some of the ways in which a strengths-based approach can be applied within a mentorship setting, including:

1. Actively listening and engaging mentees in a feedback loop;
2. Adapting activities to suit mentees’ needs;
3. Approaching challenges with a positive lens; and
4. Training and supporting mentors.

Identifying, understanding, and promoting young people’s strengths was identified by interview respondents as an important component of mentorship and dropout prevention programming. Further, respondents suggested that young people can be supported to develop their strengths by recognizing their achievements, giving them credit for their accomplishments, and maintaining expectations at the same time as providing empathy and nurturing support. Research also identifies that young people are able to learn better when their background and strengths are recognized, valued, and used as the foundation for teaching (Moore, 2013).

ELEMENTS

3.8 POSITIVE AND SUSTAINED ADULT SUPPORT

Positive adult support can be provided in a variety of ways, such as role modeling constructive decision-making, promoting conflict resolution, encouraging positive relationship development, helping young people learn from mistakes, and listening to or validating young people's perspectives (Gaetz, 2014a). Approaches and programs that promote Positive Youth Development recognize that positive and sustained adult-youth relationships are necessary in order to support young people's success (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016).

Further, positive relationships with adults not only provide young people with support and guidance, they have also been identified as a key factor in promoting school engagement (Gaetz, 2014b), therefore making them an important element of interventions seeking to help young people graduate from high school.

3.9 SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Life skills development focuses on fostering a wide range of skills, such as peer resistance, conflict resolution, social skills, critical thinking, and communication skills (Pathways to Education, 2015). Programs, mentors, and individual supports can also help young people develop life skills by promoting independence, responsibility, and self-management, for example by helping them register for school, obtain identification documents, set up a bank account, shop for groceries, develop financial literacy, and implement action planning (Gaetz, 2014a).

Goal setting and helping young people achieve their goals was also a common theme across the literature, with goal setting and achievement being a means by which young people can enhance their skill development. Further, goal setting can help young people identify, monitor, and accomplish their goals not only for high school, but also for their post-secondary education and future careers (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012). Interview respondents also identified that mentors play an important role in supporting young people to achieve their goals and engage in goal development activities that help them develop the practical skills, focus, and discipline required for academic success.

Life skills development has been identified as one of the most common elements of effective dropout prevention programs (Pathways to Education, 2015) and a key element of Positive Youth Development approaches that contributes to young people's success (The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba, 2016).

3.10 PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Promoting parent involvement, both through encouraging participation in their children's education and engaging families in mentoring relationships, has been highlighted throughout the literature as a key element of successful approaches to supporting young people's academic success.

Communicating with parents about their children's academic standing and available interventions ensures they remain informed about their children's progress and may help parents feel more comfortable interacting with the school system (Lessard, 2014). Some parents may need additional supports to become more engaged in their children's education, as they may lack the resources that allow them to be involved. For example, some parents may not have access to transportation to attend school meetings and may benefit from flexible accommodations that promote parent-school dialogue, such as a phone conference, after-hours support, or off-site meetings (Moore, 2013).

A review of the literature demonstrates that when supporting young people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, a family-oriented approach may be important for achieving the full benefits of the mentoring relationship (Oberoi, 2016). Further, research has shown that incorporating parental culture and having supports that can communicate in parents' native language can help support parental involvement (Deller & Tomas, 2013), which is critical to promoting educational achievement for young people.

Overall, research demonstrates that when parents are involved in their children's school life, it increases young people's likelihood of graduation (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Burke Morison, 2006; Pathways to Education, 2017a). Further, evidence suggests there are significant positive effects on young people's academic achievement when schools and programs engage parents in their children's education (Pathways to Education, 2017a).

3.11 ADVOCACY AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION

Young people may face challenges and barriers such as a lack of experience or age discrimination when navigating educational and service systems (Gaetz, 2014a). Providing advocacy and system navigation ensures young people are supported to understand their rights, access the services and resources they need and are entitled to, and engage in their education.

Young people may require advocacy and system navigation support to enroll in and attend school. This support may be particularly important for young people experiencing homelessness who do not have easy access to required documentation, such as birth certificates and immunization records (Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawksy, 2010), or for non-status newcomer youth who are seeking school admission. Further, advocacy and system navigation may be helpful for newcomer youth whose parents do not understand the education system or face barriers advocating for their children (Schmidt, Morland, & Rose, 2009).

Overall, advocacy and system navigation supports can help young people remain engaged in school, address barriers that lead to dropout, and experience academic success.

3.12 CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

It is important that young people are asked about their needs on an ongoing basis to ensure they receive appropriate interventions and supports (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016). Consistent communication also allows those supporting young people to alter interventions in a way that best meets the needs of the young person (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016).

Important indicators of effective supportive relationships include familiarity with a young person's needs and interests and the ability to adapt supports accordingly (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008), which can be fostered through regular communication. Further, research demonstrates that regular contact with a mentoring relationship over time can enhance a young person's feelings of security and attachment in both the mentoring and other significant relationships (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Enhancing communication, thereby strengthening supportive relationships, can help young people access the supports they need, address academic barriers, and experience improved academic outcomes.

SECTION 4.0

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS IN PRACTICE

Programs focused on supporting young people to address barriers, experience academic success, and graduate from high school were reviewed and analyzed for implementation of best practice approaches. The following section provides several examples of programs that highlight best practices identified within the other sections of the literature review report. Example programs have been organized according to the program's specific population of focus, with sections including general best practice programs, programs focused on young people experiencing homelessness, and newcomer youth focused programs.

4.1 BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Rogers Raising The Grade

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada delivers a multi-faceted education program called Rogers Raising the Grade. Rogers Raising the Grade is an interactive after-school program that allows youth to explore interests, receive homework support, connect with mentors/tutors, interact with peers, increase their digital literacy, and plan for post-secondary education.

Rogers Raising the Grade includes three key elements:

1. An integrated program that includes supports that are shown to improve academic opportunities for youth, such as tech centres to access computers, high speed internet, and online resources; academic support provided through on-site tutoring/mentoring, homework help, and workshops; and scholarships for post-secondary education;
2. Goal setting to help youth establish, monitor, and accomplish personal goals for high school completion, post-secondary education, and careers; and
3. Interest-building, where youth discover their interests, talents, and new hobbies while using online resources and interacting with mentors and peers.

Source: <https://www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/olqp/Documents/Parents/RRTG-Program-Summary.pdf>

All In For Youth

All In for Youth is a citywide initiative focused on school completion. The initiative aims to reduce the high school dropout rates and improve high school completion rates in Calgary. By supporting youth and removing barriers to success, young Calgarians have the opportunity to reach their potential. All In for Youth works with schools, government, corporations, agencies, and individuals to build a system of supports to help youth reach their potential.

To reach the goals of establishing positive adult-youth connections and improving Calgary's high school completion rate and decrease the dropout rate, All In for Youth has connected youth to positive adults, removed barriers to success, brought youth back to school, and encouraged varied learning and career options. Each program and project is closely monitored to ensure it is working for students, volunteers, and partners, supporting youth to achieve their educational goals.

Since 2012, 1,103 youth have been helped by volunteer math tutors at five YMCA locations across Calgary, 367 students have been connected with a mentor or career connector, and 95% of mentees reported that they had people in their lives they could trust and rely on. Further, 2,576 students have been helped through barrier removal and one-on-one support from success coaches, 167 students have been assisted with issues arising from homelessness, 86% of youth supported through the Detour project felt more confident about what to do to succeed in school, 200 youth contacted through Call Backs were interested in or had already returned to school, 86% of youth who worked with a Success Coach said they had an opportunity to plan for future education and set career goals, and 98% of students who attended a Career Talk agreed they had gained new information to help with career exploration.

Source: <http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/impact/kids/all-in-for-youth>

Check And Connect

Check & Connect is an intervention used with K-12 students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out. At the core of Check & Connect is a trusting relationship between the student and a caring, trained mentor who both advocates for and challenges the student to keep education salient. Students are referred to Check & Connect when they show warning signs of disengaging from school, such as poor attendance, behavioural issues, and/or low grades.

In Check & Connect, the "Check" component refers to the process where mentors systematically monitor student performance variables (e.g., absences, tardies, behavioural referrals, grades), while the "Connect" component refers to mentors providing personalized, timely interventions to help students solve problems, build skills, and enhance competence. Mentors work with caseloads of students and families for at least two years, functioning as liaisons between home and school and striving to build constructive family-school relationships.

Demonstrated outcomes of Check & Connect include decreased truancy, tardies, behaviour referrals, and dropout rates, increased attendance, persistence in school, credits accrued, and school completion, and an impact on literacy.

Source: <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/model/default.html>

Youth Frontiers

Youth Frontiers is aimed at students in years 8 or 9 who have the capacity to benefit from youth mentoring that focuses on leadership and civic engagement. Every year, more than 1,200 young people will have the opportunity to participate in the program delivered across NSW, which encompasses over 30 hours of mentoring by a community volunteer and the development of a community project. In Youth Frontiers, the mentor's main purpose is to help a young person define goals for a community service project and find ways to achieve them. Since the expectations of each young person will vary, the mentor's job is to encourage the development of a flexible relationship that responds to both the mentor's and the young person's needs. By sharing fun activities and exposing a young person to new experiences, a mentor encourages positive choices, promotes high self-esteem, supports academic achievement, and introduces the young person to new ideas.

Source: <https://www.youthfrontiers.com.au/about.php>

High School Graduation Coach Program

The High School Graduation Coach Program (HSGCP) provided by Indspire centres around the creation of a full-time graduation coach position at the school and a space for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students to meet with this coach, tutors, and other students. Staff members are able to offer an innovative program that provides comprehensive, in school support for Indigenous students. The program offers students a home place in which they are able to feel a sense of belonging. The freedom to come and go as they please also enables them to take personal and social responsibility for their own learning.

The program has contributed to the marked improvement in Indigenous student results. These improvements include increased FNMI graduation rates from 14.9% to 60.4%, an estimated retention rate of 85% for the 2012-2013 academic year, and anecdotal evidence from parents, coaches, and students that support the paradigm altering abilities of the program.

Source: <http://indspire.ca/nurturing-capacities/high-school-graduation-coach-program-evaluation-2/>

Pass It On: Girls

In the Pass It On: Health and Safety for Girls and Young Women project, high school young women provide structured group and individual mentorship for Grade 8 girls throughout the school year. Participants are selected in conjunction with the counsellor at the middle school. The mentorship builds relationships that will support the girls at this critical age as they prepare to enter high school. The current Pass It On project is based on previous years and utilizes the tools and models created in order to increase the capacity of rural young women for leadership, self-care, staying safe, and accessing community supports.

Adult women from the community are asked to attend bi-weekly meetings as presenters and to share activities and expertise. This structured group mentorship component of the project creates a venue for adult women from our community to “pass on” their wisdom, skills, and inspirations to the girls and young women and to serve as role models.

Source: <http://www.swova.org/what-we-do/pass-it-on/>

Pass It On: Boys

The initial phase of Pass It On: Engaging Boys and Men’s Project addressed health and wellness needs of boys and young men in the community. This was done through a series of roundtable discussions and input from boys and young men in the community to determine their needs for support as they navigate their way into adulthood. In phase two, the Pass It On: Boys program responds to the request for mentorship between boys and men. Fifteen to thirty adult men will offer mentorship from their own life experience and will explore subjects including self-esteem, healthy masculinity, sexism, health and wellness, leadership, academic success, and violence prevention.

Source: <http://www.swova.org/pass-boys-men-project/>

Project U-Turn

Project U-Turn is a citywide collaborative effort to understand, focus public attention on, and most importantly raise Philadelphia’s graduation, engagement, and re-engagement rates through a collective impact strategy. Programs were expanded or established by Project U-Turn members to provide Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) programs. Programs include:

1. **Accelerated High Schools** – Small high school programs where students can accumulate credits at an accelerated pace and work towards earning a diploma in less than three years. These programs offer teacher- and computer-based instruction.
2. **Gateway to College** – Located on the campus of the Community College of Philadelphia, Gateway to College is a dual enrolment program that allows students to simultaneously earn their high school diploma and college credits.
3. **Educational Options Program (EOP)** – Formerly known as “Twilight Schools,” the Educational Options Program allows students and adults to continue earning credits towards a high school diploma through afternoon and evening classes, which take place at select School District of Philadelphia high schools.
4. **E³ Power Centers** – Offer a holistic approach to preparing disconnected young people and youth returning from juvenile justice placement to achieve long-term educational, career, and personal goals. Services include low-literacy supports, GED-prep classes, post-secondary access and planning, and intensive work-readiness programming that prepares participants for unsubsidized employment.

Other services include job-readiness training, subsidized internships, community-service and service-learning opportunities, and job search assistance.

5. **Early Scholars Program** – Offers students the opportunity to earn up to 12 Community College credits per year while finishing high school at no cost.

Source: <http://www.projectturn.net/#program>

Step Up

Step Up works with girls to prepare for high school graduation and empower them to graduate on time. In Step Up, girls work with each other and their mentors to think about and plan for life after high school. Step Up creates and implements impactful afterschool and mentorship programs that are open to all girls enrolled in a Step Up partner high school. Afterschool programs, which are offered on school campus one or two days a week for two-hour sessions, are designed to empower teens to become confident, college-bound, and career-focused. Mentorship opportunities are open to Step Up members in which teens and women can participate in blended (group) mentorship workshops.

Program results demonstrate that 98% of all Step Up participants graduated high school in 2016 and were accepted into post-secondary education. After just one year of Step Up afterschool programs, teens were more confident and placed a higher value on getting a post-secondary school degree.

Source: <https://www.suwn.org/what-we-do>

Quantum Quinte

Quantum Quinte is a long-term, multi-component intervention program aiming to increase high school graduation rates in students facing various challenges as they enter high school. The program provides wrap-around care for the duration of the student's high school career. This unique program aims to eliminate barriers to success by providing educational, developmental, community opportunities coupled with a sustained relationship with a caring adult.

Quantum is separated into three components: educational activities, personal developmental activities, and community service activities. Educational activities, such as tutoring, study groups, and homework clubs, are intended to improve academic achievement and increase the likelihood of graduation from high school and enrolment in post-secondary education. Personal development activities, such as job planning, recreational activities, life skills, and one-on-one support, are intended to reduce high-risk behaviours, highlight strengths, and encourage positive relationships. Community service is volunteer activities intended to help youth gain valuable experiences and make connections while developing a sense of community and personal responsibility.

The Quantum Program is an evidence-based evaluated program that has had a 70% success rate of high school graduation, over a four-year term.

Source: <https://www.quantumquinte.ca/quantum-overview>

TeamWorks

TeamWorks is a program provided by Los Angeles Team Mentoring. It is an afterschool mentoring program that uses an interactive project and activity-rich curriculum that promotes positive self-image and attitude, builds strong peer-to-peer and peer-to-adult relationships, and emphasizes the importance of teamwork and diversity by utilizing a unique team model to connect youth and adults. Sessions are on a weekly basis, generally during the hours of 3:00 – 5:00 pm. This 30-week, team-based program focuses on the core skills needed to develop resilient young adults, and is divided into the following modules:

- Team building and leadership development;
- Self-awareness and healthy relationships;
- Health and wellness;
- Conflict resolution and anger management; and
- Cultural diversity and community service.

Weekly sessions relate to the main topic, but activities vary from week to week. Each phase culminates with a performance art or visual art-based learning activity to solidify the key objectives. The curriculum is supplemented with additional Saturday activities including college and cultural field trips and activities, student-run community service projects and enrichment field trips, which give youth and their mentors a chance to form a bond and share mutual experiences.

Source:

https://www.latm.org/latm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=207&Itemid=192

Rivers To Success

Rivers to Success is a national mentorship program that supports the academic and career success of Indigenous students. Rivers to success has two streams of mentorship. This includes matches of Indigenous post-secondary students with high school students to support and encourage graduation and transition to post-secondary school.

Rivers to Success also pairs Indigenous post-secondary students with professionals in relevant career fields. The mentoring relationship is driven by the mentee's developmental goals and the mentor's knowledge and experience.

Source: <http://indspire.ca/for-students/mentorship-for-students/>

Achievement For Latinos Through Academic Success (ALAS)

ALAS (Spanish for "wings") is an intervention for middle and high school students that is designed to address student, school, family, and community factors that affect dropping out. Each student is assigned a counsellor/mentor who monitors attendance, behaviour, and academic achievement. The counsellor/mentor provides feedback and coordinates interventions and resources to students, families, and teachers. Counsellors/mentors also serve as advocates for students and intervene when problems are identified. Students are trained in problem-solving, self-control, and assertiveness skills. Parents are trained in parent-child problem solving, how to participate in school activities, and how to contact teachers and school administrators to address issues. ALAS was found to have potentially positive effects on staying in school and progressing in school at the end of the intervention.

Source: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/EvidenceSnapshot/22>

Friends of the Children

The Friends of the Children model focuses on youth facing the highest risks and employs and trains salaried, professional mentors called Friends to provide quality, consistent, and committed mentors. This program commits to every mentee for the long term, from kindergarten through graduation. The program focuses on the complete transformation of each mentee. Each mentee gets a dedicated, one-on-one Friend who spends a minimum of 16 intentional hours per month with them. The program develops a road map for each mentee and designs activities to build life skills and create meaningful experiences to explore each mentee's unique talents and interests. Friends spend time in each mentee's home, school, neighbourhood, and community. They are able to provide continuity in these often unstable environments and serve as a link between the different facets of the mentee's life. This means advocating for mentees at their school and becoming someone their family trusts in emergencies.

Source: <https://friendsofthechildren.org/how-it-works>

The Road Map Project

The Road Map Project is a community-wide effort to drive dramatic improvement in student achievement from cradle to college and career in South King County and South Seattle. The project believes that collective effort is necessary to make large-scale change. The vision is to have every child and youth in South King County and South Seattle, particularly those who are low-income or of colour, to thrive in their education, communities, and life. The common goal and shared vision facilitates coordinated action, both inside and outside school. The Road Map Project has created system-wide racial equity essentials that are cradle-through-college system-level efforts that, if strengthened, will help the region advance racial equity and support student success. These essentials include equitable funding, increased culturally relevant school climate and supports, strong family engagement practices and functions, increased access and dismantled barriers to opportunity, and strong civil rights policies.

Source: <http://www.roadmapproject.org/the-project/our-approach/>

Yorktown Family Services Youth Mentorship Program

The Youth Mentorship Program provides youth (Mentees) access to a consistent, caring adult (Mentor) who supports them in achieving goals and outcomes related to employment/ entrepreneurship, educational achievement and/or civic engagement/leadership. The goal is to support mentees towards making healthy and safe life choices, increase their resiliency, and assist the progress towards identified goals. Youth can be matched with a mentor one on one or matched in a group setting with mentors in a 2:5 ratio.

The goal of the Youth Mentorship Program is to create a new way of connecting meaning for youth by promoting the health and well-being of young people in their communities. It builds on youth experience and knowledge while providing opportunities for youth in becoming more resilient as they grow holistically and experience greater self-esteem. Through mentoring, young people in the community have access to caring and supportive relationships that will allow them to realize their fullest potential and life goals in the areas of education, employment, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement.

Source: <http://www.yorktownfamilyservices.com/child-and-family-centre/youth-mentorship-program/>

Peer Group Connection (PGC) For High Schools

Peer Group Connection (PGC) for High Schools is an evidence-based program that supports and eases students' successful transition from middle to high school. The program taps into the power of high school juniors and seniors to create a nurturing environment for incoming students.

Once per week, pairs of junior and senior peer leaders meet with groups of 10-14 students in outreach sessions designed to strengthen relationships among students across grades. These peer leaders are simultaneously enrolled in a daily, for-credit, year-long leadership course taught by school faculty during regular school hours.

PGC is Centre for Supportive Schools' seminal peer leadership program, and has been implemented with a 70% sustainability rate in more than 175 high schools since 1979. A recently released, four-year longitudinal, randomized-control study found that, among other major results, PGC improves the graduation rates of student participants in an inner city public school by ten percentage points and cuts by half the number of male students who would otherwise drop out.

Source: <http://supportiveschools.org/solutions/peer-group-connection/>

4.2 PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING HOMELESS YOUTH

Youth Reconnect

The Youth Reconnect program is a community based prevention program that reconnects high-risk youth to their home community. Referrals come from high schools, community partners, social services agencies, and police services. Program participants are adolescents between the ages of 16 and 19. Participants are precariously housed and in imminent danger of becoming homeless. This situation forces teens to choose between remaining in school or acquiring their basic needs for shelter, food, and clothing. Often, the result is dropping out of school and leaving their community in search of crisis services. The initiative helps clients access resources and increase their self-sufficiency by assisting adolescents to maintain school attendance, secure housing, and develop a social safety net in their home community.

Youth Reconnect provides advocacy, life skills training, one-on-one mentoring, emergency hostel access, family reunification, and community integration. Provided in partnership with other social service agencies, the program focuses on helping clients to live independently and reduce high-risk behaviours while maintaining school attendance. Evaluation key findings demonstrate that 80% of youth were in housing at the time of discharge compared to only 35% at intake and 70% of individuals were attending an educational institution at the time of discharge.

Source: <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Youth-Reconnect-Works.pdf>

The Fulton Effect

The Fulton Effect is a mentoring program providing unaccompanied homeless youth with a positive mentor relationship that encourages them to maintain adequate attendance and grades, as well as to develop important personal goals and life skills, in efforts to achieve high school graduation. As part of setting up the program, mentor training sessions were coordinated, whereby all mentors were educated about The Fulton Effect's mission, goals, and objectives, mentor responsibilities, and the unique challenges students face being unaccompanied homeless youth. Mentors and students participated in bi-weekly meetings and established positive relationships that encouraged personal and academic growth among students.

Source:

http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=ssw_comproj

Covenant House Onsite High School

Youth who access Covenant House have often had their education interrupted by the circumstances that led them to become homeless. Covenant House has an in-house school for youth who would like to continue their education onsite. They offer both high school credits for younger youth and adult education classes for older youth. Youth aged 16 to 20 can earn credits in compulsory subjects – English, math, science and social sciences – to enable them to reintegrate into a community school. Youth aged 21 to 26 can work towards their high school diploma as well through an online adult education program.

The school, which is called Sheppard Centre High School – McGill Campus, is a partnership between Covenant House and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). Covenant House provides the facilities, food, an educational support worker, and computer maintenance, while TCDSB provides Ontario certified teachers, computers and teaching materials. The school staff work very closely with the youth workers at Covenant House. Teachers are always a part of team meetings to discuss the progress of students.

Source: <http://www.covenanhousetoronto.ca/homeless-youth/Onsite-School>

Dans La Rue

The Emmett Johns School alternative high school has been at the core of Dan la rue's services since 1997. Every year, an average of 16 students enroll in classes with a teacher from the Centre de Ressources Éducatives et Pédagogiques (CREP) of the Commission Scolaire de Montréal. A psychosocial counsellor accompanies the students throughout their studies and helps to ensure their personal and academic development.

In conjunction with several partners, Dans la rue has also established a scholarship fund to provide material and monetary assistance to students in need so they can concentrate on their studies without the stress of struggling to pay for everyday needs. Financial support can go towards housing expenses, tuition, grocery vouchers, public transit passes, and other necessities.

Source: <https://danslarue.org/en/our-actions/a-global-approach/getting-an-education/>

Discovering Choices School

Discovering Choices is a Calgary Board of Education High School outreach program. Discovering Choices offers courses based on Alberta Education high school curriculum and work experience opportunities. Enrolment includes students who are between 15 and 19 years old as of September 1st.

Discovering Choices works in partnership with other organizations to complement/supplement a holistic approach in supporting young people who face life's numerous challenges. Some of the partnerships they work closely with include the Alex, Alberta Health Services, United Way, Youth Justice, Youth Central, Integro, Cenovus, the Food Bank, and Brown Bag.

As part of the partnership with Calgary Achievement Centre for Youth (CACY), Discovering Choices works in conjunction with the Eau Claire YMCA for Physical Education, the City of Calgary (Youth Employment Centre), the Calgary Immigrant Youth Services, Calgary Catholic Family Services and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program to provide services. Clinical resources and outreach support services are also available.

Source: <http://schools.cbe.ab.ca/b868/about.htm>

Eva's Education Program

Eva's Education Program was created in 2014 to respond to the stated needs and desires of young people served by Eva's. They recognized the importance of better education to improved employment, housing, and quality of life outcomes. Housed at Eva's Phoenix transitional housing and employment training facility, the Education Program facilitates reintegration of homeless youth with academic programs and assists them to plan towards their educational goals as they move towards living independently in the community.

Some youth who participate in the program have dropped out of high school and/or have not been able to pursue post-secondary programs. Most face multiple barriers and lack the resources needed to access education. Some have not been in formal academic settings for a while and some have had negative experiences in school settings, such as bullying and curricula that doesn't reflect their communities and histories. As such, the program provides homeless youth specialized supports they need to re-engage with education and grow in confidence and knowledge as they navigate school systems in pursuit of their learning goals.

Nearly 63% of all residents at Eva's Phoenix are working on their education in some manner – 53% of all residents are working on their secondary school diploma or its equivalency and 28% of all residents take up post-secondary education. Further, 53% of all Eva's Phoenix residents went on to stable housing. Of the youth that were housed, 88.9% were engaged with school or had completed school and 64.8% worked with the Education Coordinator.

Source: <http://www.evas.ca/education-program-manual/>

Eyes Wide Open Mentoring

Eyes Wide Open Mentoring (EWOM) empowers homeless youth to rise above their immediate circumstances and take the steps necessary to ensure successful futures. Through a one-to-one mentoring program in the District of Columbia, EWOM pairs middle-school-aged homeless youth with carefully screened adult mentors. By providing an opportunity for these youth to build a healthy relationship with a caring and committed adult mentor, EWOM believes children experiencing homelessness can be inspired to achieve fulfilling futures.

EWOM recognizes that unique personal and circumstantial challenges arise when mentoring homeless youth. For this reason, the program is structured to focus intensive resources on the specialized needs of participating youth. EWOM emphasizes the quality of the mentoring relationship rather than the quantity of participants. The approach is built around a trauma-informed care treatment model and a commitment to evidence-based practices. As a multidisciplinary team, EWOM works with children and their families to create an individualized plan that matches each child's unique circumstances. One of the many roles of the mentor is to help the child identify his or her personal vision of success. When appropriate, EWOM works in tandem with parents/guardians, school personnel, relevant community-based organizations, and other trusted adults in a child's life to better support positive youth development.

Source: <http://www.ewomentoring.org/our-program1.html>

360°kids iGrad Program

The mission of the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) is to advance student achievement and well-being through public education, which motivates learners, fosters inclusion, inspires innovation, and builds community. Working in partnership with 360°kids, the YRDSB facilitates an Alternative Education classroom program called iGrad within the youth hub operated by 360°kids in Richmond Hill in order to provide youth accessing the facility with the opportunity to earn high school credits in working towards completion of their high school diploma.

Students registering for this opportunity work with the teacher in doing online, e-Learning courses. The classroom is open between 9:30 am and 3:30 pm each day (Monday to Friday) and the teacher supports students in working on specific courses independently online. Computers are accessible in the classroom during the set hours, but students are able to access the courses at any time, as they are available through the Internet using any appropriate form of technology.

Source: <https://www.360kids.ca/programs-and-services/igrad/>

Inner City Youth

Inner City Youth operates a senior academic and arts based high school. Inner City High School is accredited by Alberta Education and graduates of the school are equipped to attend Alberta colleges and universities. The purpose of the school is to provide opportunities for youth to earn a high school diploma, develop skills that can lead to full-time employment, and prevent their return to a life on the street. The school offers a flexible but structured environment with small classes that average between four and 12 students, with small group learning and one-on-one support.

Inner City Youth also provides the Youth Engagement Program, which is the foundation of the organization's programming and provides youth with basic needs, such as multi-literacy programs, living skills, food, transportation, school supplies, and the tools, attitudes, and resources needed to change lives. Counselling to repair damaged lives, meals to feed the hungry, transportation when needed, and other preventative programming all fall under the Youth Engagement umbrella. In this program, one-to-one and small group counselling are part of the introduction process. Issues of literacy, attitude, self-discipline, attendance, respect, non-violence, trust, and cooperation are addressed. Extra support is often required and provided to deal with lifestyle issues. Many youth require financial referrals and others face the ever-present problem of homelessness.

Source: <http://innercity.ca/atriskprogramming/>

Operation Come Home Achievement Centre

The Operation Come Home Achievement Centre is a transitional education model designed to engage street involved youth in academic studies outside of the traditional classroom setting. For some youth, an alternative method of learning is required in order to achieve success academically. The school is based on the philosophy that all students can experience success and that some can graduate in a non-traditional academic environment. The Achievement Centre provides full-time course instruction with a licensed teacher through a partnership with Lester B. Pearson High School of the Ottawa Catholic School Board. The teacher provides assistance for all high school courses, GED preparation, co-op courses, and school registration, as well as provides the students with an opportunity to set goals and complete their high school studies.

The Achievement Centre has a social support worker who encourages, motivates and assists youth in an attempt to ensure success through problem solving, as well as a literacy support worker who helps any students needing assistance with reading or writing. The Achievement Centre is beneficial in that youth who are not successful in a traditional high school setting have the opportunity to graduate and go on to College, University, or to choose a career path.

Source: <http://operationcomehome.ca/programs/rogers-achievement-centre/>

Youth On Their Own

Youth On Their Own – a dropout prevention agency – strives to eliminate barriers to education and empower Arizona’s homeless youth to stay in school. For over 30 years, Youth On Their Own has supported the high school graduation of this unique demographic by providing financial assistance, basic human needs, and one-on-one guidance. With the help of supporters nationwide, Youth On Their Own has empowered over 16,000 homeless youth to remain in school and pursue opportunities for self-sufficiency.

Youth On Their Own supports the high school graduation of homeless, abandoned youth in Grades 6 to 12 who are enrolled in a public, private, charter, or alternative school in Pima County. Students must be homeless per the McKinney-Vento definition and be without the care of a long-term parent or long-term guardian. To begin the application process, students must contact their YOTO School Liaison (e.g., principal, teacher, counsellor, etc.) within their school.

Source: <https://yoto.org>

Youth Without Shelter Stay In School Program

Homelessness and leaving school early go hand-in-hand and are a major life-long disadvantage for youth. The 20-bed Youth Without Shelter Stay in School Program removes the barriers a homeless youth faces in completing their education by providing a safe and stable environment to live in and support and guidance from qualified staff.

With safe housing, clothing, hygiene products, nutritious food, and counselling, the program provides valuable elements that enable youth to succeed. Youth in the program have access to volunteer tutors and an on-site computer lab to assist with homework. Students are provided with transit passes, basic school supplies and school-appropriate clothing based upon donations. Packed lunches are available for school days. Youth in the Stay in School Program are responsible for maintaining their grades, attending school regularly, and completing various household chores. Between 2016 and 2017, 5,824 safe bed nights were provided, 29,120 nutritious meals/snacks were provided, 162 transit passes were issued, and 96% of youth felt supported by the staff team.

Source: <http://www.yws.on.ca/how-we-help/stay-in-school-program/>

YouthCare Education Program

YouthCare’s education programs are designed to help recently and currently homeless youth overcome the barriers to education. They combine flexible diploma and GED-track resources with intensive case management, drop-in, and housing services. Over the last two years, they have helped nearly 100 students earn their high school diploma or GED, and more than 100 young people enroll in college.

1. **High School Diploma** – Thanks to their partnership with Seattle Public Schools, teens and young adults can work towards a high school diploma at the University District Youth Center (UDYC) alongside other students who share their experiences. Some arrive only a few credits shy of graduation; others start at the very beginning of the high school curriculum. YouthCare draws up personalized education plans with each of them, and certified SPS teachers and YouthCare tutors, including volunteers, help them succeed.
2. **GED** – YouthCare's GED program enables students to complete their secondary education at a pace that allows for their individual circumstances. YouthCare employs two full-time GED tutors and counts on the further support of many volunteers. Every weekday morning at the Orion Center, tutors are at the side of young people who are working quietly and diligently to master the necessary knowledge and skills, helping them fill in educational gaps, and build confidence for the road ahead.
3. **Post-Secondary** – YouthCare partners with Seattle Education Access (SEA) to help young people get into college. SEA staff help with applications, prepare youth for interviews, and help them access scholarships and financial aid. YouthCare's case managers and staff across programs continue to provide crucial support after enrolment.

Source: <http://www.youthcare.org/our-programs/education#.Wblxd9ZqC-l>

4.3 PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON SCHOOL-AGED NEWCOMERS

NewYouth.ca

NewYouth.ca is a website for newcomer youth in Ontario. This site has information for newcomer youth that have recently arrived to Ontario or just need information about their settlement. It is a place for young newcomers to find reliable information and services to access. Youth can read articles or watch informative videos on newcomer youth-related issues, find services and programs near them, and find newcomer youth-related events to attend. There is information on a variety of topics, such as starting school, volunteering, or finding and keeping a job, locating cheaper healthcare services, and finding language classes, as well as sharing ideas on how to lead a balanced, healthy, and exciting lifestyle.

NewYouth.ca has been continuously asking newcomer youth across Ontario what kind of information they would like to see on the site, resulting in the six major categories that include daily life, school, law, work, health, and immigration. These categories have been selected by newcomer youth as the most important issues relevant to their settlement needs. Strong efforts are made to make the language and information anti-oppressive and inclusive, while being accurate and reliable. It is also committed to using clear and simple language, and providing multi-lingual resources whenever possible.

Source: <http://www.newyouth.ca/about>

Boys And Girls Clubs Of Canada Newcomer Youth Advancement Program

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada Newcomer Youth Advancement Program supports the healthy development of newcomer youth and their families, helping them to build strong social and community connections. The program acts as a launch pad for youth to build skills, develop friendships and support networks, and gain self-confidence. Clubs have tailored outreach strategies to local needs, developing community partnerships with settlement agencies and schools, connecting one-on-one with newcomer youth and families, conducting street outreach efforts, and delivering presentations and information sessions.

The program provides:

1. Academic engagement, such as tutoring programs and education activities, that strengthens academic competencies and helps newcomers adjust to school life.
2. Employment support that helps newcomer youth search for work, create resumes, and prepare for job interviews. It also helps them understand the cultural role of youth employment. Clubs are also a source of employment.
3. Leadership development and civic engagement, which encourage newcomer youth to participate as young leaders in their communities by having them organize Club and community events and participate in volunteer opportunities.
4. Recreational sports that help newcomer youth develop social skills and friendships by interacting with other youth without relying entirely on language skills.
5. Skill development, which provides youth with training and certification in transferrable skills, such as safe food handling, first aid, and babysitting.
6. Cooking activities that help newcomer youth learn about Canadian culture and engage their families in Club life.
7. Arts and multimedia that give newcomer youth innovative ways to express themselves and share their experiences while improving English speaking skills.

Source: <https://www.bgccan.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/03/BGCC-brief-Citizenship-and-Immigration-2016.pdf>

Engaged Immigrant Youth

The Engaged Immigrant Youth program is dedicated to working with school communities to support youth to stay in school and improve their chances of pursuing meaningful employment and educational opportunities. Students in the program come from different backgrounds, including those new to the Vancouver school system and youth who have been in Canada for several years but are having difficulty staying in school. The program provides opportunities for students to participate in activities during lunchtime, after school, and weekends. Youth workers help students to improve their English skills and build leadership skills while enjoying recreational and cultural activities with their peers. At the same time, the program aims to help youth develop the confidence and skills needed to complete their academic goals, including achieving a high school diploma.

Key to the success of the program is the small group size, allowing youth workers to give one-on-one support to youth and for youth to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. A homework club is held weekly and each participating school hold activities twice a week. They also offer tutoring and trauma counselling, which is important in achieving personal goals.

Source: <https://www.vsb.bc.ca/engaged-immigrant-youth>

The Peer Project

The Peer Project matches youth mentors, ages 16-29, with newcomer and at-risk kids, ages 6-15, in a one-on-one peer mentoring relationship. The mentors can help youth face behavioural, social, emotional, and cultural challenges. These youth need someone to talk to, look up to, and most importantly, have fun with. The mentors are young people who want to change lives. They stand up as role models, activity partners, friends, and help their mentees realize their full potential. The mentors also go through their own transformations, developing leadership and social skills to become outstanding professionals and members of their communities.

The Peer Project has developed their mentoring program from helping over 30,000 kids since 1976. The Peer Project's customized program uniquely recruits, assesses, and matches youth based on personality, interests, and location. The program also provides ongoing training, 24-hour support for mentors, and organizes monthly activities to bring matches together.

Source: <http://thepeerproject.com/about/#our-programs>

Homework And Education For Youth Program

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba's After School Program focuses on assisting newcomer children and youth to positively integrate into their new environment in Canada. One component of the After School Program is the Homework and Education for Youth (HEY) Program, which is a drop-in homework club where youth come to do their homework, help their friends with their homework, or get help from staff and volunteers.

Youth have the opportunity to be paired with a mentor for the school year in order to receive more extensive social and educational supports. HEY is run by a certified teacher and two educational assistants who also help liaison with schools and other community organizations to promote education for youth.

Source: <http://www.ircom.ca/programs/after-school-program/homework-and-education-for-youth/>

Real Me

Real Me works with immigrant youth currently involved in gang-related activities, or at risk of becoming involved in those activities. Program staff help youth participants to reach their highest future potential, regardless of their past. Real Me works with youth aged 12-24 years old who are either first-generation immigrants or first generation Canadians regardless of immigration status, and are currently involved in gangs or at high risk of gang involvement.

The Real Me team uses the “High Fidelity Wraparound” model, meaning youth participants are put at the centre and staff work with each youth to build a team of support people who will help them set and achieve their goals. In this way, families and caregivers are also involved in the program if they wish. Real Me identifies priorities, develops a personalized plan, and introduces a support team. The “team” may involve family members, religious leaders, and/or service providers such as addiction counsellors. The “plan” could involve school and job supports, leadership and/or conflict resolution training. In addition to using the Wraparound model, Real Me provides employment and life skills, family support, academic support, prosocial support, counselling, and mentoring.

Source: <http://centrefornewcomers.ca/our-services/children-and-youth-programs/youth-program-real-me>

The Calgary Bridge Foundation For Youth

The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth programs focus on building knowledge of Canada and Calgary’s culture, active participation and integration within the local community, improved English language skills, development of personal, social and leadership skills, and successful graduation from school. Staff are culturally sensitive to the needs of individuals from varying cultures and communities. Supports are tailored to youth and their families based on their background, experience, and level of need. Every interaction is meant to ease the journey to Canadian life for newcomers and immigrants.

Programs provided by The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth include:

1. **The Afterschool Program** – This program works with immigrant and refugee youth throughout their school years and focuses on keeping immigrant youth positively engaged during critical after school hours by providing academic support, English development, and recreational and healthy life skills. Supplementary summer programming is offered every year and is a way for immigrant youth to continue developing their language, social, and life skills. Support is delivered in neighbourhoods with the greatest need. Programs operate for two to three hours after school ends.
2. **Mentorship Program** – The Mentorship Program introduces immigrant youth in grades 10-12 to Calgary, Canada and pairs them with mentors who are successfully integrated. Offering a wealth of resources and services, the goal of this program is to help newcomers achieve their personal, social, and academic goals, as well as better understand the Canadian school systems and communities. Mentors provide a support system by offering school tours, translation, and friendship. The program consists of three main components, along with two unique summer orientation programs to prepare newcomer youth for the upcoming school year. These components include information and orientation, needs assessment and referrals, long-term mentorship, Newcomer Orientation and Welcome for high school students, and Welcome Information for Newcomers for junior high youth.
3. **In-School Settlement Program** – This program fosters the seamless integration of immigrant families into Calgary. It operates in schools across the city offering comprehensive, client-centered settlement services and delivers information sessions and workshops on housing, employment, Canadian customs, traditions, and more. The goal of this program is to ensure youth achieve success and become active, contributing, and happy members of society.
4. **RBC Youth Empowerment Program** – This program uses a holistic approach to help high school immigrant and English learners to overcome challenges in the classroom. The program offers free academic tutoring in math, sciences, literacy, and writing. Youth are also exposed to post-secondary education through tours of universities and colleges. This program seeks to help students increase their grades, practice English language skills, improve reading and writing skills, develop leadership skills, explore Canadian culture, tour post-secondary campuses, win scholarships, and build friendships. The RBC Youth Program offers a safe space for immigrant youth to achieve academic goals, make new friends, and build a sense of belonging.

Source: <http://www.cbfy.ca/programs/>

YMCA Newcomer Youth Program

The YMCA Newcomer Youth Program breaks down cultural barriers offering a safe place to have fun, make friends, and share ideas and experiences with other immigrant youth while exploring a new community, and is currently delivered in YMCA Health Fitness Aquatic facilities.

This free program is geared towards youth 6-21 years old who have been in Canada for less than two years to learn more about their community, practice their English language skills, meet new friends, and go on a field trip. Participants who complete the program earn a three-month free membership to the YMCA.

Source: <http://www.ymcacambridgekw.ca/en/community-programs-services/newcomer-youth-program.asp>

Go-Betweener Mentoring Program

The Go-Betweener Mentoring Program matches both first and second generation youth aged 7-17 very specifically with mentors who are also immigrants and refugees, speak the same home language, and are from the same or very similar home culture. In this way, mentors are able to relate to and support their mentees in a way no one else could. They understand the unique challenges their mentees face and are able to communicate effectively with their families, connecting them with resources in the community and helping them to learn to be successful in their new culture while maintaining their roots with their own culture. Mentors are a caring and supportive adult presence, help with schoolwork, help with English skills, help their mentee to set and work towards goals, connect their mentee and sometimes their family with resources in the community, and foster an attitude of success.

Source: <http://www.logras.gatech.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Go-Betweener-Program-Info-Sheet.pdf>

Arab American And Chaldean Council (ACC) Detroit After-School Program

The ACC Detroit After-School Program provides at-risk youth ages 9-17 from Middle-Eastern heritage with the support and essential life skills needed to improve academic status, reduce risk-taking behaviours, increase accessibility to health services, and improve youth sense of self-image.

Services include academic assistance, tutoring, computer skills training, service learning projects, physical education and recreation, mentoring, substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, and conflict resolution. In a continuing effort to promote positive attitudes towards education, youth are required to submit their most current report cards to register for the ACC after-school program.

Report card verification ensures the youth are enrolled in school and actively attending. It also serves as a measuring tool for academic progress and to identify the students' weak subject areas, allowing ACC staff and the youth to focus on and improve those areas.

Source: <http://www.myacc.org/programs/youth-services/>

ReWA Youth Program

ReWA's Youth Program is committed to providing high quality, culturally relevant services that develop the whole youth. The program's mission is to support students in developing and accomplishing their individual goals so they perform academically in school, pursue their unique passions and interests, and develop deep feelings of self-worth, belonging, curiosity, and investment in their communities. Through parent education and family advocacy, the Youth Program empowers parents to support their youth.

The program believes in the importance of youth voice and choice, the need for youth to process and formulate their cultural identities, and the combined efforts of parents, family members, school staff, and other community partners.

ReWA's Youth Program offers 1st-12th grade afterschool programming grounded in youth leadership development, academic and emotional support for English Language Learner (ELL) students, academic achievement, expression of self through art, civic engagement, and college-bound services; targeted ELL academic interventions geared at developing reading comprehension skills, vocabulary, and writing skills; youth job readiness training that includes job search and resume building skills, service learning opportunities, college tours, and internship placements in local businesses; and parent workshops and home visits that build connections between families and the schools their children attend, helps families understand the education system, rights and resources available for ELL students, and post-secondary options.

Source: <https://www.rewa.org/services/youth-program/>

Newcomer Orientation Week

Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW) is a four-day program funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to welcome and orient high school students who have recently moved to Canada. NOW is designed to help newcomer students succeed academically and socially in the Ontario school system so they can achieve their full potential. It is part of the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program currently operating in schools across Ontario. The program is built upon the recognition that a student's educational success is directly related to their sense of welcome in the school.

The NOW program was designed intentionally to be a peer-led experience that provides students the foundation for a successful educational experience in Canada. Students learn from other students, make friends, and are empowered to begin the school year from a position of strength. Students who have themselves experienced the transition to life in Canada apply to become peer leaders in the spring. In mid-August, these students experience a four-day intensive training program to prepare them for their role in NOW. The NOW program activities last four days in which students fill in self-profiles, learn about bringing lunch to school, find different locations around the school, learn about combination locks and using their locker, take a field trip to a local library or community centre, and learn about graduation requirements.

Source:

http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/atwork/INSCAN_Fall2009_Newcomer_Orientation_Week_in_Ontario_High_Schools.pdf

SECTION 5.0

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SUCCESS THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Throughout the literature review, access to positive mentoring relationships was consistently identified as an effective solution to helping young people address barriers to high school graduation and experience both personal and academic success. The importance of mentoring relationships is further substantiated by the feedback received during the Youth Project Design community engagement process where young people articulated that when faced with challenges, strong relationships with trusted adult mentors that could connect them to the correct resources were critical to their educational success.

Mentoring for young people is commonly defined as “a trusting relationship between a young person and an older, more experienced non-parental figure who provides guidance, support, and encouragement to the mentee” (Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012). While some young people receive mentorship through formal programs, many more develop mentoring relationships through informal networks (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014; Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012), making natural mentoring relationships of critical importance in young people’s lives.

Natural mentors “come from different areas of the young person’s own life, such as their extended family, neighbours, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and employers” (Rhodes, 2005) and often belong to the same community or have similar cultural and social contexts as the young person they support (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). One of the key characteristics of natural mentorship is that young people self-select the individual(s) with whom they connect and identify as playing a mentoring role in their lives. However, as natural mentorship occurs through a self-selection process, natural mentors do not typically receive formal mentorship training and may not have the knowledge, experience, or information they need to effectively help the young people they support to overcome difficult challenges.

For this reason, it is imperative that natural mentors are provided with training about how to effectively support young people through a mentoring relationship and are given easy access to information about the variety of different supports, services, and resources available to young people in the community that address their needs.

Outlined below are the findings from the literature demonstrating the difference mentorship can play in young people’s lives, common characteristics of effective mentors, and key components of mentorship interventions that promote success in mentoring relationships. While the information presented below has been gathered from both formal and informal mentoring programs, the focus is on providing information that supports natural mentoring relationships.

5.1 IMPORTANT ROLE OF MENTORS

Research consistently demonstrates the importance of young people having at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult, as these relationships provide young people with individualized and responsive support that helps protect them from disruptions in their development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). These relationships help young people develop capacities that enable them to respond to adversity, be resilient, and thrive (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015).

Through interviews with leaders of effective dropout prevention programs, respondents identified the significance of mentoring relationships for young people. Respondents highlighted that access to supportive relationships provides young people and their families with role models, a connection to someone who may have had similar life experiences, support for skill development, and encouragement to engage in school.

Research also shows that naturally occurring mentoring relationships have prevailing positive impacts on a variety of different areas of a young person's life, including personal, academic, and professional components (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). For example, a study by DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) found that young people with a natural mentor were less likely to participate in risk taking behaviours, were more likely to have high levels of self-esteem, and had a greater likelihood of completing high school and attending post-secondary education. Further, having at least one stable and supportive relationship can help connect young people to a network of positive relationships, which has been associated with increased likelihood of graduation (Center for Promise, 2015).

Engagement in naturally occurring supportive relationships may be particularly important for vulnerable youth, as these supports are critical to promoting resiliency, social integration, and positive development (The Change Collective, 2017). For example, research has shown positive outcomes in the areas of psychological health, problem behaviours, and school attitude for high-risk groups of young people who had a close connection with a non-parental adult, demonstrating the protective effects of these relationships (Dang & Miller, 2013).

Overall, the literature demonstrates that strengthening supportive and naturally occurring mentoring relationships is a critical strategic intervention for young people who are at risk of not graduating from high school (Center for Promise, 2015).

5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

There are many mentor qualities that promote positive and effective mentoring relationships. A review of the literature highlights some of the key characteristics of effective mentors that promote positive outcomes for young people.

Youth-Focused

Placing the voice of the young person at the centre of the mentoring relationship ensures the support they receive is tailored to their interests and needs. Maintaining a youth-centred approach can help to improve young people's relationships not only with their mentor, but with other adults and is a significant predictor of the quality of the mentoring relationship (Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012).

Successful natural mentorship occurs when mentors reach out to and demonstrate an interest in young people (Dang & Miller, 2013). Being a supportive, youth-focused mentor includes listening to young people, validating their perspectives, providing them with space to make decisions, and helping them access opportunities to explore their evolving roles (Bonnell & Zizys, 2005).

Caring Confidant

In order to realize the benefits of a mentoring relationship, it is necessary for mentors and mentees to develop a strong relationship based on caring and trust (Government of Alberta, 2010). Promoting mutual caring and trust ensures young people feel they have someone with whom they can speak openly and share their personal thoughts and feelings without worry of being judged (Dang & Miller, 2013).

Committed

Strong and effective mentors exhibit persistence, understanding, stability, and consistency in supporting their mentees (Rennie, 2016). Demonstrating consistency, predictability, and commitment to the mentoring relationship helps build rapport and trust (Government of Alberta, 2010), which can strengthen the mentoring relationship.

Reliable And Responsive

Reliability and an unconditional willingness to help during times of need are key characteristics that distinguish mentorship from other relationships (Dang & Miller, 2013). Young people have identified that they need someone who can "be there no matter what," meaning they are present and supportive when young people need help addressing a problem or accessing resources and opportunities (Center for Promise, 2015).

Flexible

Effective mentoring demonstrates flexibility in meeting young people's needs and circumstances (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2014), with the ability to adapt based on young people's needs being a key indicator of relationship quality (Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012). Flexibility is particularly important, as challenges and experiences of crisis may occur at any time (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016).

Positive Role Model

A mentor is someone a young person admires and looks up to (Government of Alberta, 2010; Rennie, 2016). Effective mentors act as positive role models (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012) who help young people learn through modeling positive behaviours and learning strategies that support them in achieving their goals (Price-Mitchell, 2014).

Supportive Guide

Mentors play an important role in guiding young people and providing them with opportunities to learn from experiences that challenge them (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016). Effective mentors create and maintain high expectations (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2012) while providing adequate support to help young people set and achieve their goals (Government of Alberta, 2010).

Encouraging Coach

Effective mentors provide young people with frequent and positive encouragement, reminding them of previous successes when faced with difficult challenges and acknowledging their accomplishments when they succeed (Government of Alberta, 2010). It is important that mentors provide positive coaching by acknowledging young people's efforts, providing assistance and feedback, and encouraging them to succeed (Kipp, Ruffenach, & Janssen, 2016).

5.3 KEY COMPONENTS FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMING

Across the literature, several common themes arose highlighting some of the key components of effective mentoring relationships and programs required to facilitate positive outcomes for young people. These key components include risk assessment and management, comprehensive mentor training and support, helping mentors connect to community resources, strong mentor-mentee relationships, consistent contact between the mentor and mentee over time, ensuring the mentoring relationship is driven by the needs and interests of the young person, and ongoing evaluation and feedback. Each component is outlined in detail below.

Risk Assessment And Management

While effective mentoring relationships have been shown to have significant positive impacts on young people, it is important that mentors, mentees, parents, and mentorship programs also understand the potential risks that can occur as part of mentoring and take steps to manage and reduce the likelihood of identified risks. Several types of risk may occur as part of mentoring, including those that pose physical danger to mentees, emotional risks related to the development of close relationships, and issues that create liability (North & Sherk, 2002).

For example, research demonstrates that ending a mentoring relationship early without closure or explanation can lead to negative outcomes for a young person, including depressed mood and poor performance in school (Spencer, 2012).

To help mentors understand the ethical implications, responsibilities, and obligations that accompany a mentoring relationship with a young person and reduce the likelihood of possible negative impacts that can occur from poor mentorship practices, Rhodes, Liang, and Spencer (2009) developed five principles for ethical youth mentoring. These principles are based on and informed by established ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, practice, and research (Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer, 2009), and have been referenced throughout the literature as a best practice strategy for risk management and mentor training (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015; The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR), 2015).

The five ethical principles for youth mentoring are:

1. **Promote The Welfare And Safety Of The Young Person** – Mentors are responsible for taking positive action and modeling behaviour that benefits their mentee, promotes the welfare of the young person, and that helps them to avoid harm.
 - Harmful behaviours may include sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation, misuse of power, and inappropriate boundaries.
 - Training for mentors should address reporting abuse, preventing disappointment, boundaries and avoiding unsafe dual relationships, addressing power differentials, collaborative decision-making skills, and recognizing when to seek assistance when an issue is outside the mentors' experience or expertise.
2. **Be Trustworthy And Responsible** – Mentors should behave in a manner that is trustworthy and should keep their promises, as consistency and reliability form the basis for the development of trusting relationships.
 - Mentors should receive training about the influence they may have as a mentor, common challenges of mentoring, the phases of a mentoring relationship, and how to effectively manage relationship transitions, such as ending a mentoring relationship in a way that provides closure.
3. **Act With Integrity** – Mentors must be thoughtful and direct about the level of commitment they are able to give to the mentoring relationship in order to establish appropriate expectations.
 - Training can help mentors identify effective ways to communicate with their mentees, address issues and concerns, maintain consistent contact, and manage expectations.

4. **Promote Justice For Young People** – By practicing good judgement and taking steps to explore and address potential biases or prejudices, mentors reduce their risk of applying unfair discrimination within the mentoring relationship.
 - Training related to cultural competence, gender sensitivity, and anti-oppressive practice can help mentors avoid making assumptions about their mentees, reduce cultural bias, and treat mentees and their families with fairness and respect.
5. **Respect The Young Person’s Rights And Dignity** – Mentors should promote self-determination and respect the choices of a young person and their family by seeking to understand their goals, aspirations, and values and empowering young people to make their own decisions.
 - To support this principle, mentors should be trained on topics related to honouring rights to self-determination, young people’s rights to privacy and confidentiality, how to manage sensitive information, how to discuss limits of confidentiality, and obligations to break confidentiality when disclosures of harm or abuse occur.

(Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015; Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer, 2009; The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR), 2015)

Further, young people may need help understanding what a mentor is or characteristics of a good mentor, how they can benefit from having an effective mentoring relationship, and how to identify a potential mentoring relationship they want to strengthen (Spencer, 2016).

In order to promote safe and effective mentoring relationships, it is also important that mentorship programs implement an effective risk assessment and management process, including identifying potential risks, assessing the likelihood of the risk occurring, understanding the seriousness of the risk, and implementing practices and procedures to reduce and safeguard against identified risks (Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, 2007).

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (2007) outlines a high-level framework for risk assessment and management that can be used by both service providers and mentors. The five steps outlined as part of the framework are:

1. **Look For The Hazards** – Identify factors that may pose a risk to those involved in or affected by the mentoring relationship.
 - Potential factors affecting risk may include meeting location, mode of travel, abuse, disclosure, parental consent, forms of contact, background and records checks, supervision, physical and mental health of mentors and/or mentees, accidents, home visits, types of activities mentors and mentees engage in, and resource availability to support the mentoring relationship.
2. **Determine Who Might Be Harmed And How** – For each defined risk factor, identify who might be involved and the harm that might occur for those affected.

3. **Assess The Likelihood Of Risk** – For each identified risk factor, evaluate the likelihood of harm occurring and the severity if it were to occur.
4. **Identify And Record Measures Taken To Address Risk** – Identify actions or measures that are presently implemented to manage each risk and determine actions required to reduce risk further.
 - Decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done to mitigate the risk and record risk assessment findings.
5. **Review The Risk Assessment Regularly** – Develop a risk management procedure that identifies who is responsible for risk assessment and management on an ongoing basis and timelines to ensure regular review and incorporation of changes to risk management procedures.

(Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, 2007)

As part of the risk assessment process, it is also essential for mentoring programs to determine whether insurance coverage should be pursued for any of the identified risks and if so, the appropriate form of insurance to obtain (North & Sherk, 2002).

Overall, research and literature related to managing risk demonstrates the importance of developing clearly defined safety measures, providing mentors with appropriate training to understand and manage risk, and providing mentors, young people, parents, and all those involved in the mentoring relationship with support to ensure mentoring relationships are strong, effective, and promote positive outcomes.

Comprehensive Mentor Training And Ongoing Support

Providing mentors with training and ongoing support has been articulated throughout the research and literature as being critical to ensuring strong and effective mentoring relationships. For example, research demonstrates that mentorship interventions that provide mentor training and support are more likely to be effective than those that do not (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2014).

Findings from interviews with leaders of effective dropout prevention programs further validate the importance of mentor training for ensuring effective mentorship interventions. Interview respondents specifically highlighted the importance of training mentors in the areas of trauma-informed and strengths-based support, facilitating natural supports, promoting youth voice and choice, behavioural management, cultural competency, and parent involvement. Overall, respondents noted that training should help mentors understanding the challenges young people may encounter and the role they play in addressing young people's needs.

As young people may disclose intimate emotional and personal information with those they trust (Dang & Miller, 2013), it is important that mentors receive training about confidentiality, reporting requirements for suspected abuse and neglect, and learn how to support young people through difficult situations.

Further, it is critical that mentors receive training to understand and identify signs of the underlying factors that can create risks and barriers for young people, such as bullying, educational disengagement, abuse, trauma, homelessness, and/or family conflict (Gaetz, 2014b). Providing this training ensures mentors are able to intervene when young people are struggling and can facilitate access to resources and supports that enhance young people's ability to experience resilience (Gaetz, 2014b). As noted previously, training related to confidentiality and reporting has also been identified as an important component of risk management practices for effective mentorship programs.

As identified within the literature on risk assessment and management, it is also important that mentors receive training to understand the role of power and privilege and how it can impact the mentor-mentee relationship. For example, mentors should learn strategies for reducing power imbalance, such as treating mentees as equals, while also learning how to identify situations in which it may be beneficial for mentors to take more control in order to support a mentee and help them feel safe or protected (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016). Helping mentors learn strategies that reduce power imbalance, such as promoting self-determination and personal goal setting, may be particularly important for those that support young people experiencing marginalization (Ontario Mentoring Coalition, 2016) to promote positive outcomes.

Further, it may be important for mentors supporting newcomer youth to receive training about the immigration and settlement process and the potential challenges that can arise for young people and their families as they move to a new country (Tremblay, 2012). Training about the immigration process may include information about the three key transitional phases associated with migration, including pre-migration, trans-migration, and post-migration, and how they can impact young people's learning outcomes (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Overall, research-informed practitioner-supported best practices for mentorship training include a comprehensive set of topics, such as appropriate roles for mentors, mentoring relationship development and maintenance, opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations, ethical and safety issues, health and medical care, sources of assistance available to mentors, family involvement, appropriate physical contact, mandatory reporting requirements, confidentiality and anonymity, substance use, addressing emergency crisis situations, closure of mentoring relationships, and use of digital and social media (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015).

Connecting Mentors With Community Resources

It is imperative that mentors are provided with information about community resources and organizations that can help young people overcome challenges and meet their goals (Community Tool Box, 2017).

Ensuring easy access to information about a wide range of available supports and community resources allows mentors to provide comprehensive support to young people that includes facilitating connections to services, advocating in school systems, and helping to address academic challenges, which together has been shown to create positive impacts for dropout prevention, attendance, test scores, and young people's grades (Pathways to Education, 2015). Further, forming connections with community organizations has been identified as an important contributor to successful programs, particularly as developing connections within the community ensures young people have access to opportunities that may not have been available to them otherwise (Lessard, 2014).

It is also important that mentors receive information about available resources that may be specific to the population they are supporting. For example, providing mentors with information about community resources specific to the needs of newcomer youth, such as English classes, trauma counselling, and government supports for immigrants and refugees, has been identified as important when establishing mentoring interventions for this group of young people (Oberoi, 2016).

Connecting young people to resources in the community was also a common theme across interviews with leaders of effective dropout prevention programs. Respondents identified that connecting young people to resources can help young people address their immediate needs and remove barriers so they can focus on school, as well as prepare for the future. Respondents also recognized that the ability to refer young people to available services allows mentors to address not only young people's individual needs, but also those beyond the young person that relate to their parents and family that may be affecting the young person's ability to engage in school.

Strong Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Closeness and connectedness are considered to be characteristics of a successful mentoring relationship (Government of Alberta, 2010). Research indicates that the strength or closeness of the mentor-mentee relationship is a significant factor influencing the effectiveness of the relationship on promoting positive outcomes for young people (Dang & Miller, 2013).

Mentor-mentee relationships can be strengthened in many ways, such as having fun together, being a friend, having realistic expectations and goals, giving mentees a voice in decision making, remaining positive, listening and communicating, promoting trust and respect, and remaining youth-focused (Garringer & Jucovy, 2008).

Receiving encouragement and affirmation from a mentor can positively impact their perceptions about specific situations or themselves, and can help them cope with the difficulties they face (Dang & Miller, 2013).

Further, engaging with a young person's family can also strengthen the mentor-mentee relationship, with research showing that when young people feel their mentor knows their family well, they are more likely to experience academic success (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002).

As connection and closeness can greatly impact the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship, it is important that young people and their mentors remain in regular contact. Reaching out to young people and supporting them to access resources for staying in touch, such as Internet and phone access or transportation, can help to promote maintained contact and strengthen mentoring relationships (Dang & Miller, 2013).

Consistent Contact Over Time

Positive outcomes result from establishing mentoring relationships that involve patterns of regular contact over a significant period of time (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). Further, regular contact between mentors and mentees can help to establish trust and rapport within the mentoring relationship (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2014).

Consistency of contact may be particularly important when developing mentoring relationships with young people who have experienced previous disappointments or difficult adult relationships (Government of Alberta, 2010) in order to promote trust and closeness. Further, interview respondents noted the importance of maintaining contact consistency when working with young people who are more mobile, as trusting relationships can take time to develop.

Maintaining regular contact over time is also critical for establishing effective mentoring relationships, as evidence demonstrates progressive increases in positive outcomes the longer the mentoring relationship lasts, with findings suggesting that relationships of 12 months or more are the most effective (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2014).

Driven By Young People's Needs And Interests

Personalization has been identified as an essential component of effective dropout prevention interventions (Pathways to Education, 2015). By understanding the academic, social, and personal challenges affecting young people, they are more likely to receive tailored services and support that will address their individualized needs and concerns (Pathways to Education, 2015). As young people leave school for many reasons, they may require access to a variety of different supports, which further demonstrates the need for tailored approaches that meet young people's individual needs (Pathways to Education, 2015).

Research demonstrates that mentoring supports that are driven more by the needs and interests of young people rather than the expectations of adults are more successful and satisfying for both mentors and mentees (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). Further, promoting mentee involvement in the choice of activities as been identified as an important factor when establishing mentoring interventions (Oberoi, 2016).

Interview respondents also identified the importance of individualized services for young people. Respondents articulated that getting to know each young person and meeting them where they are at, helping them assess and articulate their needs, and providing young people with an opportunity to do things in a way that works for them helps young people to be more successful.

Ongoing Evaluation And Feedback

One of the best practices of mentorship interventions highlighted within the literature is to monitor implementation of the intervention and seek feedback from those involved. For example, stakeholder feedback can help identify ongoing improvements, ways in which mentors can be supported to meet the needs of young people, and successful practices that should be maintained (Community Tool Box, 2017). Interview respondents also highlighted the importance of the systematic use of data and evaluation for assessing young people's needs, informing how interventions work with young people, and measuring success.

Implementing evaluation and effective measurement ensures mentorship interventions are able to demonstrate results that are measurable and reflect the tangible benefits of mentoring relationships (Bonnell & Zizys, 2005). Further, seeking feedback ensures program resources and supports remain relevant and are useful in supporting young people to achieve success (Community Tool Box, 2017).

SECTION 6.0

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Youth Mentorship And High School Graduation* literature review provides insights into the many challenges young people face graduating high school, demonstrates examples of supports that address the unique needs and barriers young people experience, articulates best practice intervention approaches and elements that support success, and outlines the important role natural mentors play in assisting young people to graduate from high school, along with the key components required for effective mentorship.

Results from the literature review inform a series of four key findings relating to the implementation of the CYN Youth Mentorship Program, as outlined below.

Finding 1: The Literature Supports The Implementation Of The CYN Youth Mentorship Program

Research substantiates that the challenges young people face may prevent them from graduating high school. Further, mentors have been shown to play a significant role in helping young people experience academic success by providing individualized support and facilitating connections to appropriate resources.

These findings support the implementation of an intervention such as the CYN Youth Mentorship Program that focuses on providing training and resources to mentors that will enable them to address the complex needs of young people, help them navigate service systems, and ultimately improve graduation rates for young people in London.

Finding 2: Young People Have Multiple And Complex Reasons Why They Do Not Graduate

There is substantial evidence that young people have multiple and complex reasons for not graduating high school. Further, dropping out of high school is a cumulative process of disengagement affected by the development of multiple risk factors over time. Therefore, while some youth may face more challenges than others based on their circumstances, such as their socioeconomic status, access to housing, newcomer status, and access to support, it is possible for all young people to experience some degree of difficulty that can put them at increased risk for leaving school without graduating.

As young people face a variety of different types of barriers, focusing only on one type of barrier or support may mean some of their needs remain unaddressed. Therefore, it is recommended that no matter the program, any initiative focused on assisting young people to graduate from high school provides training, support, and resources that enable youth mentors and leaders to connect young people to the numerous different services they may need to experience success.

It is imperative that youth mentors and leaders understand all of the factors addressed within the literature review that can negatively impact young people's success, have access to information that can help them answer the questions young people might have, and know how to navigate the available tools and services that will help young people address their individual needs and graduate from high school.

Finding 3: Strengthening Natural Mentorship Relationships Is An Effective Approach

Findings from the literature review demonstrate that many young people have naturally occurring mentoring relationships. Further, natural mentorship has been found to have lasting positive effects that increase the likelihood young people will complete high school.

Natural mentoring relationships are ones that have already developed mutual trust and rapport, which positions these relationships as a strong asset within the community that can be capitalized upon to promote success for young people. Therefore, it is recommended that the CYN Youth Mentorship Program targets and addresses natural mentors to ensure they have the training, information, and resources required to effectively support and address the needs of the young people they mentor and help them graduate from high school.

Finding 4: Natural Mentors Require A Variety Of Training, Supports, And Resources

Mentoring relationships are most effective when mentors receive comprehensive training and have access to supports and resources that allow them to easily facilitate connections to and navigate services that help young people overcome their challenges. This demonstrates the importance of providing mentors with quality training and connections to community resources.

It is therefore recommended that, as part of the CYN Youth Mentorship Program, natural mentors receive training on a variety of approaches and subjects that will help them strengthen their mentoring relationship and navigate the numerous resources available in the community. Further, training should be based on the common best practices for effective intervention approaches and elements outlined within the literature review to promote high quality mentoring relationships and ensure young people experience positive results.

Based on the literature, training should be comprehensive and address a variety of topics, including the different challenges young people might experience, how to identify signs young people are struggling, the important role of mentors, characteristics of effective mentors, system navigation and available supports, how to respond to emergency or crisis situations, confidentiality and reporting requirements, parent and family involvement, positive youth development, youth engagement and youth voice, trauma-informed support, cultural competence, promoting resilience, non-judgemental and anti-oppressive practice, strengths-based support, skill development, and the importance of positive and sustained support.

What Does This Mean For Initiatives Supporting Homeless Youth?

Young people experiencing homelessness have several unique and complex challenges related to their circumstances that make it particularly difficult for them to engage in school and experience academic success. Some of these barriers include a lack of stable housing, high mobility and transience leading to interrupted enrolment and social isolation, increased risk of experiencing victimization, violence, and trauma, greater likelihood of substance use, experiences of family conflict and lack of family support, stigma and discrimination, and increased risk of early parenting.

As homeless young people experience several distinct barriers to high school graduation, it is recommended that initiatives focused on enhancing supports for at-risk youth understand, take into consideration, and are built to address their unique needs. Further, while interventions for young people experiencing homelessness should include support to address all of their needs, particular focus should be placed on addressing challenges unique to their circumstances, including providing flexible alternative education options, outreach, mental health support, substance use support services, access to financial resources, family reunification, support to obtain and maintain housing, and opportunities for community integration and relationship development.

What Does This Mean For Initiatives Supporting School-Aged Newcomers?

Newcomer youth also face several unique challenges related to the migration and settlement process that put them at increased risk for not graduating from high school. The barriers young newcomers are more likely to experience include educational interruptions or a lack of formal education, cultural insensitivity, discrimination, and stereotyping, adjustment to a new education system and culture, adult responsibilities that take them away from school, such as childcare of siblings or working to support their family, educational mismatch, exposure to trauma and violence, vulnerability to gang involvement, increased likelihood of experiencing poverty, low parental involvement, intergenerational conflict due to acculturation, social isolation, undocumented citizenship status, and English language barriers.

While young people who are newcomers may also require access to a variety of different services, it is recommended that initiatives supporting newcomer youth to graduate from high school specifically focus on understanding and addressing the unique challenges newcomers face prior to, during, and after migration.

Further, it is recommended that programs for newcomer youth focus on developing cultural competence and providing support to navigate school systems, mental health services, opportunities to explore career and employment options, family and parental support and involvement, family strengthening support, opportunities for relationship and social network development, English language acquisition resources, opportunities to explore cultural heritage and identity, and immigration or settlement services.

SECTION 7.0

CONCLUSION

The *Youth Mentorship And High School Graduation* literature review examined initiatives assisting young people to graduate from high school and the important role natural mentoring relationships play in helping young people overcome barriers to high school graduation.

Results from the literature review demonstrate that young people may experience multiple and complex barriers to high school graduation, including level of academic preparation, achievement, and school engagement; mental health difficulties; poor health or well-being; substance use and involvement in high-risk activities; lack of employment and financial resources; low family involvement or difficult family relationships and reunification; limited relationship or social network development; and early parenting. Further, young people experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience barriers to accessing housing, while young newcomers may experience unique barriers related to immigration and acculturation and English language proficiency.

While there are many barriers young people may experience, research and best practices also highlight numerous approaches and supports that can help young people address their needs and overcome each identified barrier in order to experience success. Specifically, access to positive natural mentoring relationships was identified as an effective solution to promoting personal and academic success and helping young people address barriers to high school graduation.

Effective high school dropout prevention interventions and supports that help young people succeed in high school have been found through the literature review to employ a common set of approaches and elements. These include positive youth development, youth engagement and youth voice, trauma-informed support, cultural competence, promoting resilience, non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory support, a strengths-based approach, positive and sustained adult support, skill development, parent involvement, advocacy and system navigation, and consistent communication with young people.

As the literature demonstrates natural mentors play an important role in helping young people succeed, strengthening supportive and naturally occurring mentoring relationships is a strategic intervention for supporting young people who are at risk of not graduating from high school. Key components of effective mentoring interventions required to facilitate positive outcomes for young people identified within the literature include risk assessment and management, comprehensive mentor training and support, helping mentors connect to community resources, strong mentor-mentee relationships, consistent contact between the mentor and mentee over time, ensuring mentoring relationships are driven by the needs and interests of the young person, and ongoing evaluation and feedback.

The findings from the literature review support the implementation of the CYN Youth Mentorship Program to provide training and resources to natural mentors that will enable them to address the complex needs of the young people they support, help them navigate service systems, and promote high school graduation. Further, the literature review demonstrates that comprehensive training should address the common best practices for effective intervention approaches and elements, help natural mentors understand all of the factors that can negatively impact young people's success, provide information and resources that will help natural mentors address the needs of young people and facilitate connections to appropriate supports, and assist natural mentors in strengthening their mentoring relationship and promoting positive outcomes and academic success for young people.

SECTION 8.0

REFERENCES

- Alberta Education. (2017). What is social-emotional learning? Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/social-emotional-learning/what-is-social-emotional-learning/>
- American Psychological Association. (2012). Facing the school dropout dilemma. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/school-dropout-prevention.pdf>
- ASCD. (2015). Making the case for educating the whole child. Retrieved from <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/assets/content/mx-resources/WholeChild-MakingTheCase.pdf>
- Balfanz, R., Horning Fox, J., Bridgeland, J.M., & Bruce, M. (2013). Grad Nation Community Guidebook. Retrieved from <http://guidebook.americaspromise.org>
- Barua, B., Esmail, N., & Jackson, T. (2014). The effect of wait times on mortality in Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/effect-of-wait-times-on-mortality-in-canada.pdf>
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. (2016). The mentoring effect on health. Retrieved from <http://bbbsmentors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Mentoring-Effect-on-Health.pdf>
- Bonnell, J., & Zizys, T. (2005). Best practices for youth programs. Retrieved from <https://culturalbridging.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/youthbestpractices-finalpublicreport.pdf>
- Bottomley, L. (2012). Strengthening youth-parent relationships through mentoring. Retrieved from http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/strengthening_youth_parent_relationships_through_mentoring
- Boynton-Jarrett, R., Hair, E., & Zuckerman, B. (2013). Turbulent times: Effects of turbulence and violence exposure in adolescence on high school completion, health risk behavior, and mental health in young adulthood. *Social Science & Medicine*, 95, 77-86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.09.007>
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. (2012). Ready for success: Educated and engaged. Retrieved from <https://www.bgccan.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/03/Ready-for-Success-Educated-and-Engaged-2012.pdf>

- Bridgeland, J.M., Dilulio Jr., J.J., & Burke Morison, K. (2006). The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts. Retrieved from <https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/thesilentepidemic3-06final.pdf>
- Bridges, L. (2013). Make every student count: How collaboration among families, schools, and communities ensures student success. Retrieved from <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/face/pdf/research-compendium/Compendium.pdf>
- Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services. (2010). New directions in mentoring refugee youth. Retrieved from <http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/BRYCS-BRIEF-Mentoring-Summer-2010.pdf>
- Bridging The Gap. (2010). Youth under 18 years. Retrieved from <http://www.bridgingthegaphalton.ca/links.html>
- Briere, F.N., Fallu, J.S., Morizot, J., & Janosz, M. (2014). Adolescent illicit drug use and subsequent academic and psychosocial adjustment: An examination of socially-mediated pathways. Retrieved from <https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1866/13928/DAD%202014.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2015). Students from refugee backgrounds: A guide for teachers and schools. Retrieved from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/diverse-student-needs/students-from-refugee-backgrounds-guide.pdf>
- Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2014). The mentoring effect: Young people's perspectives on the outcomes and availability of mentoring. Retrieved from http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Report_TheMentoringEffect.pdf
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2009). Effective literacy strategies for immigrant students. Retrieved from http://en.copian.ca/library/research/ccl/immigrant_students/immigrant_students.pdf
- Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2012). Health care in Canada, 2012: A focus on wait times. Retrieved from https://secure.cihi.ca/free_products/HCIC2012-FullReport-ENweb.pdf
- Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (2017). Permanent Supportive/Supported Housing. Retrieved from <http://homelesshub.ca/solutions/transitional-housing/permanent-supportivesupported-housing>

- Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2011). Immigrant children and youth: Enabling their success at school. Retrieved from <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/immigrant.pdf>
- Center for Promise. (2015). Don't quit on me: What young people who left school say about the power of relationships. Retrieved from http://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/2016-10/FullReport%20DontQuit_23mar16_0.pdf
- Central Toronto Youth Services. (2016). Supporting youth who are gang involved: Community consultations report. Retrieved from <http://www.ctys.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/The-Vibe-Report-English.pdf>
- Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2011). Good practice guide. Retrieved from <http://www.cmy.net.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/Youth%20work%20family%20context%202011.pdf>
- Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. (2006). Pathways to success: Immigrant youth at high school. Retrieved from <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/resources/Pathways%20to%20Success%20Immigrant%20Youth%20at%20School%20Final%20Report.pdf>
- Child and Youth Network. (2015). CYN Youth Framework. Retrieved from <http://londoncyn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CYN-Youth-Framework-FINAL-June-2014.pdf>
- Child and Youth Network. (2017). London's Child and Youth Agenda 2017-2021. Retrieved from <http://londoncyn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/5.-CYA3-MAY-12-w-Letters.pdf>
- Child Trends Data Bank. (2016). Youth employment: Indicators of child and youth well-being. Retrieved from https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/120_Youth_Employment.pdf
- Citizens for Public Justice. (2012). Poverty trends scorecard: Canada 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.cpj.ca/files/docs/poverty-trends-scorecard.pdf>
- Civic Enterprises. (2015). Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in ending the high school dropout epidemic. Retrieved from http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/18006_CE_BGN_full_vfnl.pdf
- Cohen, J.S., & Smerdon, B.A. (2009). Tightening the dropout tourniquet: Easing the transition from middle to high school. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 53(3), 177-184. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.53.3.177-184>

- Community Legal Education Ontario. (2011). Helping parents without immigration status get their children into school. Retrieved from <http://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/rightschool>
- Community Tool Box. (2017). Section 3: Training adult mentors. Retrieved from <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/youth-mentoring/train-members/main>
- Corak, M. (2011). Age at immigration and the education outcomes of children. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2011336-eng.pdf>
- Cortiella, C. (2013). Diplomas at risk: A critical look at the graduation rate of students with learning disabilities. Retrieved from <http://www.decodingdyslexiaor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/DiplomasatRisk.pdf>
- County Health Rankings. (2017). Dropout prevention programs for teen mothers. Retrieved from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/policies/dropout-prevention-programs-teen-mothers>
- CYCC Network. (2013). Youth engagement: Empowering youth voices to improve services, programs, and policy. Retrieved from <http://www.multiculturalmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2.2-Summary-Youth-Engagement-Empowering-Youth-Voices-to-Improve-Services-Programs-and-Policy.pdf>
- Dang, M.T., & Miller, E. (2013). Characteristics of natural mentoring relationships from the perspectives of homeless youth. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 26(4). doi:10.1111/jcap.12038
- DeCapua, A., Smathers, W., & Tang, L.F. (2007). Schooling, interrupted. Retrieved from <http://www.academia.edu/5551267/Schooling-Interrupted>
- Decter, A. (2007). Lost in the shuffle: The impact of homelessness on children's education in Toronto. Retrieved from <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/ModelSchools/CSPC%20Report%20on%20Homelessness.pdf>
- Deller, F., & Tomas, S. (2013). Strategies for supporting youth education: A snapshot of early intervention programs in Ontario. Retrieved from http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Early%20Interventions_ENG.pdf
- DuBois, D.L., Holloway, B.E., Valentine, J.C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2), 157-197. doi:10.1023/A:1014628810714

- DuBois, D.L., & Silverthorn, N. (2005). Natural mentoring relationships and adolescent health: Evidence from a national study. Retrieved from <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2003.031476>
- Dumais, B. (2015). Children's mental health Ontario 2015 report card: Child and youth mental health. Retrieved from <http://rockonline.ca/news/childrens-mental-health-ontario-2015-report-card-child-youth-mental-health/>
- Dunbar, L. (2017). Youth gangs in Canada: A review of current topics and issues. Retrieved from <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2017-r001/2017-r001-en.pdf>
- DuPont, R.L., Caldeira, K.M., DuPont, H.S., Vincent, K.B., Shea, C.L., Arria, A.M. (2013). America's dropout crisis: The unrecognized connection to adolescent substance use. Retrieved from <http://www.cls.umd.edu/docs/AmerDropoutCrisis.pdf>
- Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2016). EQAO's provincial secondary school report: Results of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, 2015-2016. Retrieved from <http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/results/assessment-docs-secondary/provincial-report-secondary-2016.pdf>
- Family Strengthening Policy Center. (2004). Introduction to family strengthening. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/fspc-IntroductiontoFamilyStrengthening-2004.pdf>
- FCJ Refugee Centre. (2016). Uprooted education: 2015-2016 Report: Ontario. Retrieved from http://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Report-Card_webFinal_2016.pdf
- Fraser Health. (2017). Youth substance use services. Retrieved from <http://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-info/mental-health-substance-use/child-and-youth/youth-substance-use-services/>
- Freeman, J., & Simonsen, B. (2015). Examining the impact of policy and practice interventions on high school dropout and school completion rates: A systematic review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(2), 205-248. doi:10.3102/0034654314554431
- Gaetz, S. (2014a). A safe and decent place to live: Towards a Housing First framework for youth. Retrieved from http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/HFFWYouth-FullReport_0.pdf
- Gaetz, S. (2014b). Coming of age: Reimagining the response to youth homelessness in Canada. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/ComingOfAgeHH_0.pdf

- Gaetz, S., O'Grady, B., Kidd, S., & Schwan, K. (2016). Without a home: The national youth homelessness survey. Retrieved from <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/WithoutAHome-final.pdf>
- Galvez, M., & Luna, J. (2014). Homelessness and housing instability: The impact on education outcomes. Retrieved from https://tacomahousing.net/sites/default/files/print_pdf/Education/Urban%20Institute%20THA%20Homelessness%20and%20Education%202014-12-22.pdf
- Garringer, M., & Jucovy, L. (2008). Building effective strategies for providing quality relationships: Youth mentoring in schools and communities: A guide for new mentors. Retrieved from <http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/effective-strategies-for-providing-quality-youth-mentoring-in-schools2.pdf>
- Garringer, M., Kupersmidt, J., Rhodes, J., Stelter, R., & Tai, T. (2015). Elements of effective practice for mentoring: Research-informed and practitioner-approved best practices for creating and sustaining impactful mentoring relationships and strong program services. Retrieved from <https://www.millionwomenmentors.com/sites/default/files/resources/Elements%20of%20Effective%20Practice%20for%20Mentoring%20.pdf>
- Gouin, R. (2016). Facilitating the integration of newcomer children and youth: Study on the government's initiative to resettle Syrian refugees to Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.bgccan.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/03/BGCC-brief-Citizenship-and-Immigration-2016.pdf>
- Government of Alberta. (2010). High school teen mentoring handbook. Retrieved from <https://alis.alberta.ca/pdf/cshop/aaet/mentorhandbook.pdf>
- Government of Alberta. (2015). Supporting healthy and successful transitions to adulthood: A plan to prevent and reduce youth homelessness. Retrieved from <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/plan-to-prevent-and-reduce-youth-homelessness.pdf>
- Government of Ontario. (2013). Creating pathways to success: An education and career/life planning program for Ontario schools. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/CreatingPathwaysSuccess.pdf>
- Government of Ontario. (2014). Stepping up: A strategic framework to help Ontario's youth succeed. Retrieved from <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/youthopportunities/steppin gup/steppingup.pdf>

- Government of Ontario. (2015). Supporting teenage and single parent learners to complete high school. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_TeenageParents.pdf
- Government of Ontario. (2017). Youth job link: Addendum to employment services guidelines. Retrieved from <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/yjl-guidelines-2017-en.pdf>
- Greenlee, J., Henson, A., Jones, L., Vance, M.F., & Wilson, P. (2013). Developing a mentor program for unaccompanied homeless youth. Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=ssw_commproj
- Gulliver, A., Griffiths, K.M., & Christensen, H. (2010). Perceived barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking in young people: A systematic review. *BMC Psychiatry*, 10(113), 1-9. doi:10.1186/1471-244X-10-113
- Hahn, R.A., Knopf, J.A., Wilson, S.J., Truman, B.I., Milstein, B., Johnson, R.L., Fielding, J.E., Muntaner, C.J., Jones, C.P., Fullilove, M.T., Moss, R.D., Ueffing, E., Hunt, P.C., & Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2015). Programs to increase high school completion: A community guide systematic health equity review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 48(5), 599-608. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2014.12.005
- Hart, A., & Heaver, B. (2015). Resilience approaches to supporting young people's mental health: Appraising the evidence base for schools and communities. Retrieved from <http://www.boingboing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/bb-guide-to-school-community-resilience-programmes-2015a.pdf>
- Hernandez, D.J. (2011). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED518818.pdf>
- Ingram, E.S., Bridgeland, J.M., Reed, B., & Atwell, M. (2016). Hidden in plain sight: Homeless students in America's public schools. Retrieved from <http://civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/HiddeninPlainSightOfficial.pdf>
- Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs. (2013). Implementing a trauma-informed approach for youth across service sectors. Retrieved from http://youth.gov/docs/Trauma_Informed_Approach_508.pdf
- Jekielek, S.M., Moore, K.A., Hair, E.C., & Scarupa, H.J. (2002). Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development. Retrieved from <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2002/02/MentoringRB.pdf>

- Johnson, V.L., Simon, P., & Mun, E.Y. (2014). A peer-led high school transition program increases graduation rates among Latino males. *Journal of Educational Research*, 107(3), 186-196. doi:10.1080/00220671.2013.788991
- Kipp, H., Ruffenach, C., & Janssen, C. (2016). K-12 student success: Out-of-school time initiative: Positive adult role models: A learning brief. Retrieved from http://www.oregoncf.org/Templates/media/files/grants/k12_student_success/2016%20Positive%20Adult%20Role%20Model%20Learning%20Brief.pdf
- Lessard, S. (2014). High school graduation coach program evaluation. Retrieved from <http://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/indspire-nurturing-capacity-graduation-coach-model-2014-en.pdf>
- Li, X., & Que, H. (2016). Newcomer youth and belonging: Education opportunities and career prospects. Retrieved from <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2016/12/Xuemei-Li-p2p2016.pdf>
- Liddy, N., & Stewart, H. (2015). Good practice with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/Slides%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
- Liljedahl, S., Rae, J., Aubry, T., Klodawsky, F. (2010). Resilient outcome: Academic engagement by youth with histories of homelessness. In *Youth homelessness in Canada: Implications for policy and practice* (269-286). Retrieved from <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/16LILJEDAHLweb.pdf>
- Maynard, B.R., Kjellstrand, E.K., Thompson, A.M. (2013). Effects of Check and Connect on attendance, behavior, and academics. A randomized effectiveness trial. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 24(3), 296-309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731513497804>
- Maynard, B.R., Salas-Wright, C.P. & Vaughn, M.G. (2015). High school dropouts in emerging adulthood: Substance use, mental health problems, and crime. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 51(3), 289-299. doi:10.1007/s10597-014-9760-5
- McCloy, U., & DeClou, L. (2013). Disability in Ontario: Postsecondary education participation rates, student experience and labour market outcomes. Retrieved from http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/At%20Issue%20-%20Disability%20in%20ON_ENG.pdf
- Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. (2007). A guide to effective risk management for providers of mentoring and befriending services. Retrieved from http://www.mandbf.org/wp-content/files_mf/riskmanagementguide.pdf

- Michael, S.L., Merlo, C.L., Basch, C.E., Wentzel, K.R., & Wechsler, H. (2015). Critical connections: Health and academics. *Journal of School Health*, 85(11), 740-758.
doi:10.1111/josh.12309
- Moore, J. (2013). Research summary: Teaching and classroom strategies for homeless and highly mobile students. Retrieved from <https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/res-sum-teach-class.pdf>
- Mortimer, J.T. (2010). The benefits and risks of adolescent employment. *The Prevention Researcher*, 17(2), 8-11. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2936460/>
- Murphey, D., Bandy, T., Schmitz, H., & Moore, K.A. (2013). Caring adults: Important for positive child well-being. Retrieved from <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2013-54CaringAdults.pdf>
- Murphy, J. (2011). Homeless children and youth at risk: The educational impact of displacement. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 16(1), 38-55.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2011.554143>
- National Association of School Psychologists. (2017). Position statement on student grade retention and social promotion. Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/position-statement-student-grade-retention-and-social-promotion>
- National Collaborative on Education and Health. (2015). Brief on chronic absenteeism and school health. Retrieved from <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Chronic-Absenteeism-and-School-Health-Brief-1.pdf>
- National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. (2016). Weaving student engagement into the core practices of schools. Retrieved from <http://dropoutprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/issue-brief-1-2016-09.pdf>
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2015). Supportive relationships and active skill-building strengthen the foundations of resilience. Retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-Science-of-Resilience.pdf>
- North, D., & Sherk, J. (2002). Mentoring essentials: Risk management for mentoring programs. Retrieved from <http://www.emt.org/userfiles/RiskManagement.pdf>

- NSW Department of Education and Communities. (2014). Evaluation of the NSW Youth Mentoring Program. Retrieved from <http://youth.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Final-Evaluation-Report-Pilot-Youth-Mentoring-Program-2014.pdf>
- Oberoi, A.K. (2016). Mentoring for first-generation immigrant and refugee youth. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/29-model-and-population-reviews/228-mentoring-for-first-generation-immigrant-and-refugee-youth.html?highlight=WyJwZWVvliwicGVlcnMiLCJtZW50b3JpbmciLCJtZW50b3liLCJtZW50b3JzliwibWVudG9yJ3MiLCJtZW50b3JlZCIsIm1lbnRvcnMnliwibWVudG9yaW5nJ3MiLCJwZWVvIG1lbnRvcmluZyJd>
- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2017). Access to health services. Retrieved from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/Access-to-Health-Services>
- Ontario Mentoring Coalition. (2016). Toolkit on effective mentoring for youth facing barriers to success. Retrieved from <http://ontariomentoringcoalition.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/OMC-Toolkit.pdf>
- Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health. (2014). Youth engagement toolkit. Retrieved from http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/eecd_YETOOL_E.pdf
- Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario. (2013). What parents can do while waiting for mental health services. Retrieved from <http://www.pleo.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/PLEO-While-you-Wait-E.pdf>
- Parrett, W.H., & Budge, K.M. (2016). How does poverty influence learning? Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/how-does-poverty-influence-learning-william-parrett-kathleen-budge>
- Pathways to Education. (2015). What works in dropout prevention: Research evidence, Pathways to Education program design, and practitioner knowledge. Retrieved from http://blog.pathwaystoeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/Mar2015_What_Works_Dropout_Prevention_EN.pdf
- Pathways to Education. (2017a). Factors that promote high school graduation. Retrieved from http://blog.pathwaystoeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/Summary_10_Factors_Promote_High_School_Graduation.pdf
- Pathways to Education. (2017b). The triggering role of stressful life events in early school leaving. Retrieved from http://blog.pathwaystoeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/Summary_15_Triggering_Life_Events.pdf

- Price-Mitchell, M. (2014). How role models influence youth strategies for success. Retrieved from <http://www.rootsofaction.com/role-models-youth-strategies-success/>
- Rai, A. (2013). Canadian immigrant youth and their academic performance. Retrieved from <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/15322>
- Raising the Roof. (2009). Youth homelessness in Canada: The road to solutions. Retrieved from <http://www.raisingtheroof.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/road2sols-FINAL.pdf>
- Regents of the University of Minnesota. (2015). About Check & Connect. Retrieved from <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/model/default.html>
- Rennie, P. (2016). Guide to effective practice in mentoring for children and youth who are, or have been in receipt of child protection services. Retrieved from http://www.bigbrothersbigsisisters.ca/site-bbbs/media/National/Min_of_Youth_w_appendices_v0.3_lite.pdf
- Rhodes, J. (2005). Natural mentors help mold lives of teens, study says. Retrieved from <http://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org/media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTQvMDcvMDcMTNfMzZfNDZfNjI5X05hdHVyYWxfTWVudG9ycy5wZGYiXV0/Natural%20Mentors.pdf?sha=8114c91c>
- Rhodes, J., Liang, B., & Spencer, R. (2009). First do no harm: Ethical principle for youth mentoring relationships. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40(5), 452-458. doi:10.1037/a0015073
- Rhodes, J., & Lowe, S.R. (2008). Youth mentoring and resilience: Implications for practice. *Child Care in Practice*, 14(1), 9-17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13575270701733666>
- Rummens, J.A., Tilleczek, K., Boydell, K., & Ferguson, B. (2008). Understanding and addressing early school leaving among immigrant and refugee youth. In K. Tilleczek (Ed.), *Why do students drop out of high school? Narrative studies and social critiques* (75-100). New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Save the Children (2002). Young refugees. Setting up mentoring schemes for young refugees in the U.K. Retrieved from http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/mentoring_1.pdf
- Schmidt, S., Morland, L., & Rose, J. (2009). Growing up in a new country: A positive youth development toolkit for working with refugees and immigrants. Retrieved from <http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/GrowingUpInANewCountry-Web.pdf>
- ScholarCentric. (2010). Academic resiliency content is key in school improvement. Retrieved from http://www.scholarcentric.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SH_Academic-Resiliency_School-Improvement-WP.pdf

- Schwartz, S.E.O., Lowe, S.R., & Rhodes, J.E. (2012). Mentoring relationships and adolescent self-esteem. *The Prevention Researcher*, 19(2), 17-20. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3873158/>
- Silloway, T., Connors-Tadros, L., & Marchand, V. (2009). A guide to effective investments in positive youth development: Implications of research for financing and sustaining programs and services for youth. Retrieved from http://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/documents/sustain/PositiveYouthDev_finance_sustaining09.pdf
- Solomon, M.S. (2013). Barriers to education in homeless youth. Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2602&context=etd>
- Spencer, R. (2012). Current trends and issues in youth mentoring. Retrieved from <http://www.youthmentoring.org.nz/content/docs/Current%20Trends%20and%20Issues%20-%20Renee%20Spencer.pdf>
- Spencer, R. (2016). This changes (almost) everything: Mentor, youth, parent and staff perspectives on youth initiated mentoring. Retrieved from <https://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Renee-Spencer-National-Mentoring-Symposium-2016-Presentation.pdf>
- Suarez-Orozco, C., Bang, H.J., O'Connor, E., Gaytan, F.X., Pakes, J., & Rhodes, J. (2010). Academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant youth. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(3), 602-618. doi:10.1037/a0018201
- Suarez-Orozco, C., Pimentel, A., & Martin, M. (2008). The significance of relationships: Academic engagement and achievement among newcomer immigrant youth. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237326463_The_Significance_of_Relationships_Academic_Engagement_and_Achievement_Among_Newcomer_Immigrant_Youth
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach. Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4884/SMA14-4884.pdf>
- Sweeten, G. (2006). Who will graduate? Disruption of high school education by arrest and court involvement. *Justice Quarterly*, 23(4), 462-480. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07418820600985313>

- The California School-Based Health Alliance and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California. (2014). Connecting students to mental health services: Creative collaborations, funding, and evidence-based practices. Retrieved from http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Connecting-Students-to-Mental-Health-Services_FINAL.pdf
- The Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres, The National Infant, Child, and Youth Mental Health Consortium Advisory, & The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO. (2010). Access and wait times in child and youth mental health: A background paper. Retrieved from http://www.excellenceforchildandandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/resource/policy_access_and_wait_times.pdf
- The Change Collective. (2017). Working with vulnerable youth to enhance their natural supports: A practice framework. Retrieved from <http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/images/impact/reports/2017-vulnerable-youth-natural-supports-framework.pdf>
- The Joint Centre of Research on Immigration and Settlement. (2008). The needs of newcomer youth and emerging best practices to meet those needs. Retrieved from http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/Newcomer_Youth_Best_Practices.pdf
- The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2007). What is formative assessment? Retrieved from <http://www.nctm.org/Research-and-Advocacy/Research-Brief-and-Clips/Benefits-of-Formative-Assessment/>
- The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR). (2015). “They always come and they never say goodbye.” Understanding healthy closure in youth mentoring. Retrieved from http://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/JUNE_2015_Resource_Packet.pdf
- The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities. (2005). Safe and caring schools for newcomer students: A guide for teachers. Retrieved from <http://safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/SACSC-for-Newcomer-Students-unbooked.pdf>
- The Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba. (2016). Here and now: The Winnipeg plan to end youth homelessness. Retrieved from http://www.hereandnowwinnipeg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/HereNow-Updated-FIN_WEB.pdf
- Tremblay, Y. (2012). Community-school partnerships: Assisting newcomer youth in Montreal. Retrieved from http://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/object/RULA:1978/datastream/OBJ/download/Community-School_Partnerships__Assisting_Newcomer_Youth_In_Montreal.pdf

- Trypuc, B., & Heller, A. (2008). Breaking the cycle of failure: A funder's primer in understanding Canada's school drop-out epidemic. Retrieved from https://www.charityintelligence.ca/images/Ci_EducationReport_08.pdf
- United Way of Calgary and Area. (2010). Seeds of success. Seeking solutions for teen mothers and their children. Retrieved from http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/images/uwca/get-involved/women-leadership-council/united_way_calgary_teen_mom_report.pdf
- United Way of Calgary and Area. (2016). All in for youth: Annual report. Calgary, AB: United Way of Calgary and Area.
- United Way of Calgary and Area. (2017). All in for youth: Report to stakeholders. Calgary, AB, United Way of Calgary and Area.
- Weissberg, R., Durlak, J.A., Domitrovich, C.E., & Gullotta, T.P. (2016). Why social and emotional learning is essential for students. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/why-sel-essential-for-students-weissberg-durlak-domitrovich-gullotta>
- Yip, J. (2013). The challenges of graduating on time for newcomer immigrant youth in New York City high schools. Retrieved from <https://traue.commons.gc.cuny.edu/issue-2-fall-2013/yip/>
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. (2007). Code of ethical practice: A first step for the Victorian youth sector. Retrieved from <https://www.yacvic.org.au/docman/policy-and-publications/ethics-and-professionalism-in-youth-work/199-the-code-of-ethical-practice/file>