

Pathways to Education Canada Backgrounder

The Issue

The dropout rate among Canadian youth has long been a major economic and social problem. High school dropouts tend to earn lower wages, pay less tax, commit more crime and have higher social service costs than graduates and those with post-secondary education. They are also far more likely to be incarcerated or unemployed. Education is one of the key determinants of a healthy and productive society. In Canada, by 2013, nearly 70 per cent per cent of new and replacement jobs will require post-secondary education.

Attempts to reduce the dropout rate in low-income communities have been largely unsuccessful. School-based initiatives and reforms alone have not successfully addressed the issue as risk factors are found both in the community and the schools.

The Solution

In 2001, The Pathways to Education Program™ was developed as an initiative of the Regent Park Community Health Centre, which is located in a neighbourhood where the average family income was less than \$18,000 and the high school dropout rate was an astonishing 56 per cent. The program was implemented with the mission to reduce poverty and its effects by lowering the high school dropout rate and increasing participation in post-secondary education among disadvantaged youth.

Pathways to Education works at the community level by delivering academic tutoring, group and career-oriented mentoring, and student advocacy. The program also offers financial support, including transit tickets or meal vouchers, as well as scholarships for graduates who pursue post-secondary education. It is this comprehensive approach that differentiates the Pathways Program from comparable programs across the continent. Pathways to Education has also shown that this model can be implemented in a remarkably cost-effective way.

The Results

The Pathways program demonstrates that the dropout rate and other factors that keep youth from succeeding can be significantly improved through its four pillars of support (academic, social, financial and advocacy). Results from the original program in Regent Park, show that Pathways has helped to:

- Reduce the dropout rate by over 70%
- Increase the participation rate in post-secondary programs by 400 per cent (from 20 per cent to 80 per cent)

In 2007, and again in 2010, the Boston Consulting Group released a comprehensive report analyzing the cost/benefit of Pathways to society. The report's conclusions are impressive:

- The direct societal Return on Investment for a dollar invested in Pathways is \$24
- The cumulative incremental benefit to society of a Pathways student is \$600,000

Pathways Expansion

Based on the program's success in Regent Park, many other economically disadvantaged communities have expressed interest in establishing their own Pathways programs, spurring the creation of Pathways Canada in 2005. After working with a number of interested communities, Pathways identified several additional locations that each had the capacity, need and desire to replicate the Pathways program in their own communities. In September 2007, five communities adopted the Pathways programs: Rexdale and Lawrence Heights in Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener and Montreal. In September 2009, Hamilton and Scarborough Village were added to the list of communities providing the Pathways to Education program. In 2010, Pathways launched three additional sites in Halifax (Spryfield), Kingston and Winnipeg.

The Future

Pathways Canada's goal is to continue to reach out to communities that have the need, desire and capacity to implement the program. We envisage a day when no student is left unable to complete high-school and pursue a post-secondary education, regardless of their background, income or location.

About Pathways to Education Canada - www.pathwaystoeducation.ca

Pathways to Education Canada is a charitable organization that helps youth in low-income communities graduate from high school and successfully transition into post-secondary education or training. Pathways addresses systemic barriers to education by providing leadership, expertise and a community-based program proven to lower dropout rates. Founded in 2001, Pathways operates in eleven communities across Canada, with programs in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

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