



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Student Aspirations

Aspirations reflect student ambitions to complete secondary school, pursue post-secondary education or enter the labour market. Research has demonstrated that educational aspirations are formed during the school years and largely remain static after students graduate from high school (Andres et al., 2007).



Why is it important?

- Educational aspirations are influenced by parental expectations and peer-related factors, such as whether friends plan to attend post-secondary education (Christofides et al., 2015).
- The formation of a career or vocational identity is a critical developmental task of childhood and adolescence (Skorikov, & Vondtacek, 2011).
- Schools can play a key role in helping students develop their career identity (Gysber, 2013).

In Practice

Schools can provide students with career-related experiences and help guide critical future decisions.



What can schools do?

Creating opportunities for students to explore future opportunities can involve:

- Creating an environment that fosters success and supports students to reach their goals and aspirations.
- Hosting education and job fairs so that career-related information is widely available to students and to ensure they can make informed decisions regarding their future.
- Finding opportunities for job shadowing and work-experience placements so that students can learn about prospective careers outside of the classroom.
- Looking out for early predictors of school dropout, including poor attendance, poor behaviour and failing grades, and intervening as needed (Balfanz et al., 2007).



In the Classroom

While students will vary with regards to their level of readiness to seek information and make decisions related to their aspirations, school staff can help prepare all students at an early age.

- In elementary school, as a precursor to career planning, discuss different jobs and encourage roleplay to help students gain exposure to various careers (Hartung et al., 2008).
- At the junior high level, inform students of the different pathways available to them, and create awareness of how high school course selections can impact future career prospects (Bardick et al., 2004).
- For high school students, provide further guidance about course selections and career options, including information on post-secondary institutes (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2015).

Educators can further support students with their post graduation plans by:

- Setting realistic expectations by providing detailed job descriptions that go beyond generalizations and common media portrayals.
- Equipping students, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, with the requisite skills to support their aspirations (Cummings et al., 2012).
- Making coordinated efforts to ensure that both parents and students have sufficient information related to their post-secondary education goals (Gibbons et al., 2006).

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