The '5 Types' of Students – Practical Tips and Strategies

OurSCHOOL

A statistical technique called cluster analysis was used to identify types of students that have similar profiles in terms of their assets for school completion. Students can fall into one of the five groups below. Practical tips and initiative ideas are provided that you can use to work with individual students, as a school-wide initiative, or even at the jurisdiction level. Have a look below for the strategy that best suits the context of your school to ensure your students have the best chance for success at school completion.

> **Pro Tip:** Find a breakdown of the percentage of students in each of the '5 types' in your school within your School Completion Thematic Report!

5 Types of Students	Characteristics	Areas for Improvement	Ways to Help: Targeted Interventions
1. Engaged	o high grades o high scores on all three types of engagement (social, institutional, and intellectual engagement) o positive mental health	o continue meeting the needs of engaged students	o It is important to keep students engaged. Frequently checking in with students is important to ensure they are still interested and motivated at school. Also, It is important that students are kept in 'flow,' or that their skill level is maintained, and they are appropriately challenged. This can be measured using the skills-challenge on the OurSCHOOL survey.
2. Disconnected	o high grades o complies with the formal rules of schooling o very low scores on social engagement o many have low self-esteem o high levels of anxiety and depression	o increase social engagement o increase self-esteem o decrease anxiety and depression	o Help students become affiliated with school through clubs, sports, volunteer activities, or other school events. o Develop school-wide and individual interventions to help those suffering anxiety or depression.
3. Disengaged	o reasonably good grades o low scores on all three types of engagement (social, institutional, and intellectual engagement)	o improve grades o increase all forms of engagement	o Identify advocates and mentors for disengaged students, as many high-risk youths do not feel they have someone at school they can turn to for help. o Increase teachers' expectations for success (as teacher expectations for students' educational attainment can strongly impact student motivation; Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011). o Help students become affiliated with the school through clubs, sports, volunteer activities, or other school events.

4. Struggling	o very low grades o strive to comply with the formal rules of schooling o positive self-esteem o positive mental health	o improve grades	o Implement an intervention to build literacy skills in the early years. For example, try the Confident Learners program.
5. Alienated	o very low grades o low levels of engagement o tend to have poor attendance o poor homework behaviours o do not value school o very low levels of self-esteem o poor mental health	o improve grades o increase engagement o improve attendance o improve homework behaviours o increase how much students value school o increase self-esteem o decrease anxiety and depression	o Help students become affiliated with school through clubs, sports, volunteer activities, or other school events. o Check in daily with students that display behavioral problems. o Develop school-wide and individual interventions to help those suffering anxiety or depression. o Try Check and Connect, the wide-spread dropout prevention program that has four components: regular monitoring of students' academic progress and engagement; a mentor working with students and families; efforts to establish students' connectedness to school; and strong family-school partnerships (Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Reschly Anderson, 2003). o Students who are at moderate or high risk of dropping out require more intensive monitoring. o Detailed tracking of homework and attendance, and perhaps a daily diary.

Ways to Help: School-Wide Initiatives

Improve Social Engagement :

o Improve social engagement by promoting a culture of caring and school connectedness. For example, schools can establish smaller learning communities, student advisory groups, and vertical teaming (or "looping") which has teachers working in cross-grade teams so that transitions from one grade to the next are smoother. In some models, there is a teacher that works with the same group of students for at least one class every year throughout their full middle or secondary school years.

o Schools can also develop consistent strategies for dealing with absenteeism and misbehaviour. Teachers can recognize and reward positive behaviours, and ensure that every incident of absenteeism or misbehaviour brings a consistent response (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007; Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003).

o In the same vein, school staff must be able to recognize different forms of bullying and be willing to step in when they observe a student being bullied (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler & Charach, 1994). Positive school policies and practices can make it safe for students to report bullying when it occurs and ensure that there are clear consequences that are consistently enforced.

Ensure Students Have an Advocate:

o Ensure that each student has an advocate at school. Advocates can be teachers, coaches, or other staff members. Relationships can form as part of a formal program, or an informal matching system developed by the school. Student-advocate relationships are most effective when students feel that their mentor is interested in them because of their personal qualities, and if the advocate shows respect, provides emotional support, and if the student can speak frequently and openly with them (Beam et al., 2002).

Involve Family:

o Schools can improve school completion rates with family-school partnerships that strive to improve school attendance with activities that involve parents and students, by stressing positive, reinforcing activities rather than punitive ones, and by maintaining a sustained focus on school attendance. As with effective mentorship, family-school partnerships are most effective when they are focused on the interim outcomes critical for student success, such as attendance and behaviour, and supported and guided by school leaders.

Start Early:

- Develop an early warning system.
- Implement an intervention to build literacy skills...diagnose early!
- Researchers have increasingly recognized the importance of the early years – from birth to school entry – in developing the skills required for school (McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007; Rouse, Brooks-Gunn, & McLanahan, 2005).
- It is important to monitor children on school entry in several key areas, including: physical well-being and motor development, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, cognitive development and general knowledge (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2005).
  - This is consistent with the schema underlying the Early Years Evaluation (EYE), an assessment tool that provides teachers and school administrators with detailed information on the learning needs of children as they enter school.
  - Data from the EYE provide an important leading indicator of whether children will successfully learn to read by the end of grade 3. If children are not able to read with ease and understand what they have read when they enter fourth grade, they are less able to take advantage of the learning opportunities that lie ahead.
- Most students who are struggling readers at the end of the fourth grade continue to have problems into high school (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz & Fletcher, 1996).

Other Approaches:

- Implement and continuously monitor the effectiveness of programs to deal with bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment.
- Develop and continuously monitor the effectiveness of school-wide and individual interventions to help those suffering anxiety or depression.

Ways to Help: What School Jurisdictions Can Do

The three main elements of an effective program to improve school completion rates include:

1. *Set high but achievable goals and monitor progress towards those goals.*

2. *Invest in staff development:* Improving the intermediate outcomes that lead to school completion – literacy skills, engagement, and behaviour – require sustained professional development that is focused on these outcomes. Some schools will likely require staff training on how to implement effective dropout prevention programs.

3. *Examine the structural features of schools and determine whether they are aligned with improving school completion:* The third element is more complex and difficult to achieve. Large gains will require schools to reconsider the long-standing structural features of schools that affect student learning, engagement, and behaviour, such as:

    o how students are grouped for instruction,
    o teaching arrangements,
    o school and class schedules,
    o the use of leading indicators, and
    o assignment of students to classes and schools.