

# **Educational Change: Bridging Theory and Practice**

## **Ontario Ministry of Education's Student Success / Learning to 18 Strategy**

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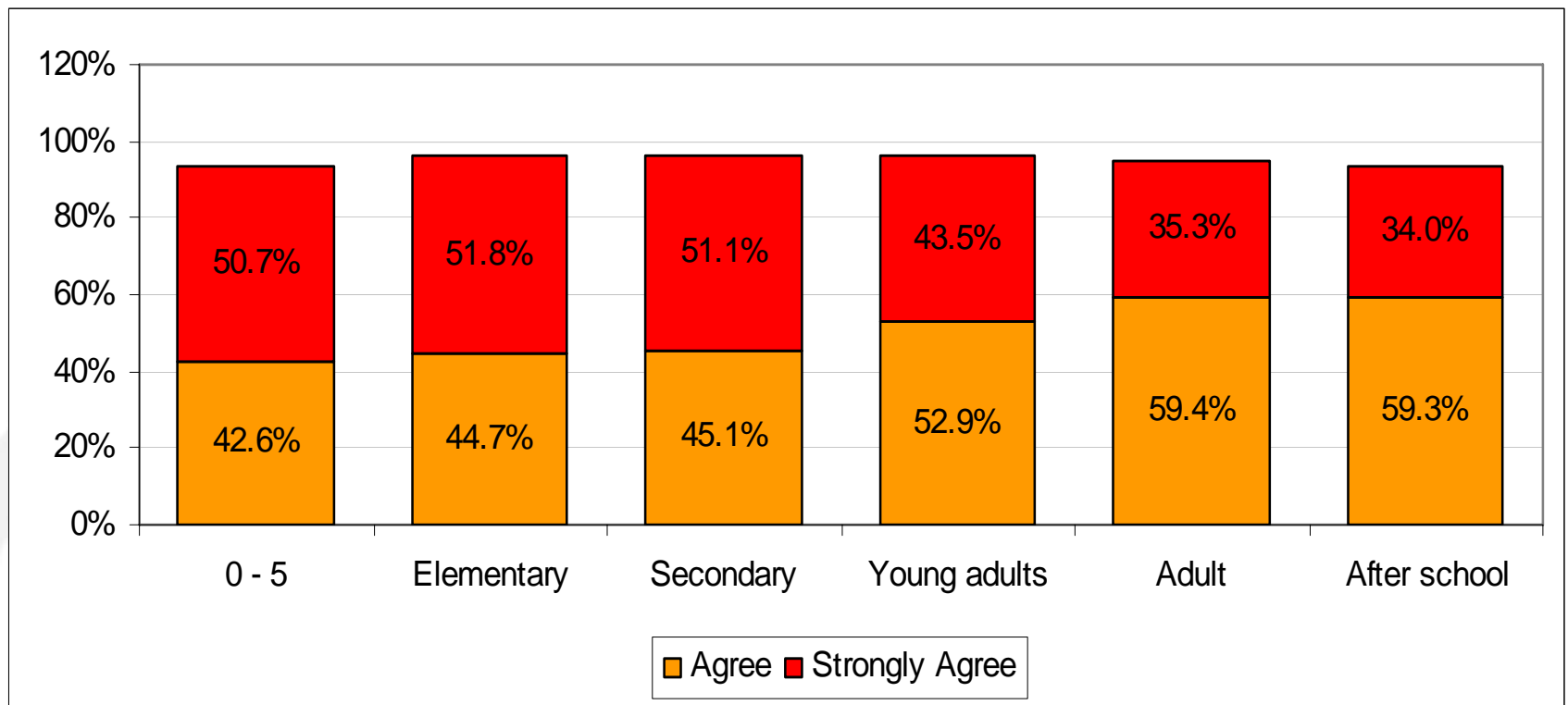
## Presentation overview

- Describe the context for the changes occurring in Ontario's secondary schools
- Describe the changes occurring in Ontario's secondary schools
- Describe the evaluation of the changes occurring in Ontario's secondary schools
- Link the changes occurring in Ontario's secondary schools to our understanding of the change process as it affects education

## Student Success-Learning to 18 - Context

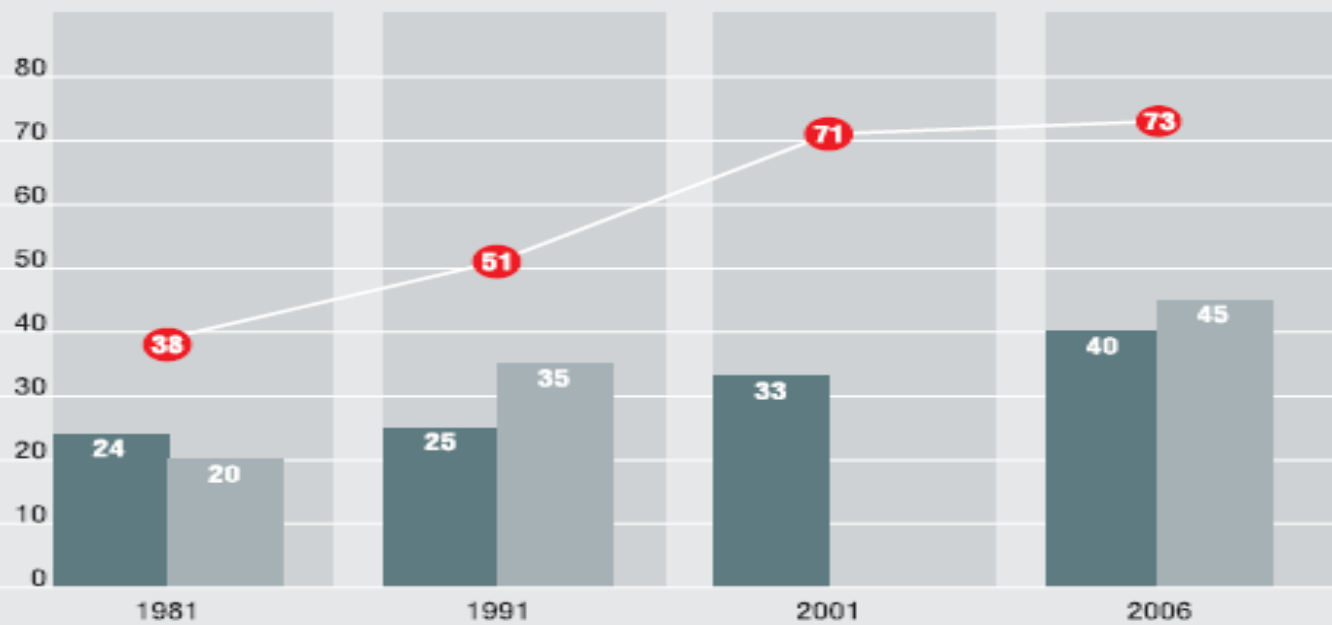
- Student Success-Learning to 18 reflect changes in expectations about the relationship between education and society
- Changed Expectations
  - Government
  - Public

# Learning is critical to success in life



Canadian Council on Learning (2008) Survey of Canadian Attitudes Toward Learning

### Growing Educational Participation and Support for Educational Funding



- % with post-secondary credentials
- % taking adult education courses
- % favouring increased spending on schools (Ontario)

**Sources:** Educational attainments – Statistics Canada – 2006 Census, Catalogue Number 97-560-XCB2006007 (2006).

Adult Education Participation – 1981 and 1991 data from Statistics Canada Adult Education Surveys; 2004 data WALL Survey.

Views on educational spending – OISE Surveys of Educational Issues.

## Changing government expectations

- **1841- Common Schools Act – established common schools**
- **1871 - Compulsory school attendance for all children age 7-12 for at least 4 months of the year**
- **1891 – compulsory attendance extended to age 14**

## Changing government expectations

- 1921 – compulsory schooling extended to age 16
- 1960 – Federal Government introduces Technical Vocational Training Assistance Act, providing \$1.5 billion over 6 years, matched by the provinces – this was a massive, one-time infusion into the construction of facilities
- 1980- Education Act amended to require school boards to provide special education programs for individual students identified as exceptional

## Changing government expectations

- 1999 – new Ontario Secondary School Diploma requirements introduced, including the requirement to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test
- 2005 – Ontario Government introduces the *Learning to 18 Act*, mandating attendance to age 18 or the achievement of the OSSD
- 2006 – Government introduces the *Student Performance Act*, which includes broad provisions for the Minister to intervene if a school board does not meet its obligations “in matters of provincial interest”

# Changing government expectations

- **2009 – Bill 177 *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act* - requires that school boards:**
  - a) **promote student outcomes specified in regulations made under section 11.1;**
  - b) **ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources;**
  - c) **deliver effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils;**
  - d) **develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that,**
  - e) **promote the goals referred to in clauses (a) to (c),**
  - f) **promote the well-being of the boards' pupils, and**
  - g) **encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals;**

## Changing expectations - public

- Evidence shows real economic and social advantages to those who complete secondary school, still greater for those who have some post-secondary
- Increased difficulty in finding employment without a diploma

## **Changing expectations - public**

- **Growing evidence of the knowledge society's requirement for life-long learning, and for the foundational tools of lifelong learning such as literacy and mathematical literacy**
- **Success in secondary school became a high-stakes proposition for parents over the past 15 years**

## Changing expectations – public and government

- Improving outcomes for students, and enabling a much greater percentage of students to achieve a secondary school diploma is not a short-term political goal of a government, but a long-term goal of our society as a whole.
- We are now expected to assist each student to have successful educational outcomes.

## Change is underway

- **2002 - The double-cohort study (Dr. Alan King) identifies that a significant number of secondary school students are not progressing well in the new program**
- **A Work Group on Students at Risk and Expert Panels are convened**
- **The Ministry devotes resources to leadership at the board level to address these issues**

## What's happening five years later?

- Canadian Council on Learning is awarded the contract to conduct a formative evaluation of Student Success/Learning to 18 at the provincial level in late March, 2007
- Evaluation is to have two stages:
  - Stage 1 – spring of 2007
  - Stage 2 – fall and winter of 2007-08 school year

# Student Success/Learning to 18 Evaluation

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Strategy

## CCL's approach to the evaluation

- ✓ **Goals Evaluation: Do we know where we are going?**
- ✓ **Rational Evaluation: Can you get there from here?**
- ✓ **Targeting Evaluation: Are we on track?**
- × **Causal Evaluation: What has produced the changes we observe?**

## A formative evaluation designed to:

- Identify specific initiatives or programs and their stated goals (Stage 1)
- Identify intended elements associated with the initiatives/programs (Stage 1)
- Identify observed elements associated with initiatives/programs (Stage 2)
- Compare intended and observed elements to find gaps (Stage 2)

## Stage 1 - methods

- Interviews with key informants: Ministry, school boards, colleges
- Focus groups with student success leaders
- Analysis of over 200 documents

## Findings - Stage 1

- Investment
- Coherence
- Opportunities
- Innovation
- Professional autonomy and respect
- Visible Champions
- Flexibility
- Dedicated staffing
- Relationships with key organizations
- Accountability and support
- Collaboration, networking, and sharing
- Monitoring and reporting student progress

## Stage 2 - methods

- **Field visits**
  - 53 schools, 43 boards
- **Surveys**
  - Open to all secondary students, staff
- **Analysis of Ministry data**

## Field visits

For each school, the following interviews were conducted with:

- **Principal**
- **School board Student Success Leader**
- **Director of Education**

## Field visits, continued...

At each school, focus groups were conducted with:

- School Student Success Team
- Teachers who were not members of the student success team
- Students who had some involvement with student success

## Field visits, continued...

- A few focus groups were held with parents, and interviews or focus groups with trustees
- Telephone interviews were conducted with community college staff working with secondary schools
- A total of 311 focus groups and interviews were conducted in Stage 2

# Findings – Stage 2

## What has changed in the last four years in Ontario's secondary schools to help students succeed?

- Shift from a *presumed* focus to an *explicit* and highly *intentional* focus on the learner
- Improved communication among different system actors
- Increased flexibility in meeting diploma requirements

## What has changed...

- Increased focus on a caring school culture
- Increased focus on tracking and monitoring individual students, especially with respect to the transition period between elementary and secondary school
- Expanded program choices and flexibility for students

## What have been the main benefits of the changes?

- improved internal communication within schools
- increased student engagement
- improved teaching practices
- measurement and accountability-related benefits, including improvements in student monitoring and tracking as well as in data use.

## Main benefits...

- resource-related benefits including increased number of program options, increased scheduling flexibility, and increased access to human resources—primarily teaching staff and SSTs—to support student success.
- smoother transitions from secondary school to postsecondary education and/or work and between the elementary and secondary levels
- improvements in test results, in graduation rates and decreases in drop-out rates
- changes in values, dispositions or beliefs manifested across individuals and/or at various levels of the educational system.

## Which elements of the SS/L18 Strategy are yielding student success?

- Specific initiatives such as expanded Cooperative Education, Student Success Teachers, Credit Recovery, School College Work Initiatives , Dual Credit programs and Specialist High Skills Majors
- Many respondents said that student success was more than the individual initiatives – “the things with names” – identifying a deeper shift beginning in the school culture

## How have the changes to improve student success been supported?

- Government has provided additional resources – both financial and human – to support the change process and the changes themselves
- Funding was targeted
- the designation of dedicated student success staff in each school and in each board

## Support for changes, continued...

- increased scheduling and funding flexibility
- the provision of professional development opportunities
- improved information sharing about individual students
- increased focus at key transition points of students' educational trajectories

## Support for changes, continued...

- Components of the SS/L18 Strategy have been catalysts or foundations for the development of improved pedagogic practices and alternative methods of assessing student progress
- Renewed focus on existing programs such as cooperative education and youth apprenticeship
- Development of innovative offerings such as the Specialist High Skills Majors

## What barriers to increased student success have been encountered?

Human challenges most frequently reported from the field visits:

- staff perceptions and student dispositions,
- the needs of specific student subpopulations (especially students with persistent or marked behavioural difficulties), and
- inadequate or underdeveloped pedagogy in specific areas of practice

## Barriers, continued...

**Resource challenges identified in the field visits:**

- **insufficient human resources,**
- **limited funding,**
- **lack of (programmatic) flexibility, and**
- **issues related to transportation and/or school location.**

## Barriers, continued...

### Systemic challenges:

- Public perceptions about non –university pathways
- the management of the curriculum expectations and the provision of increased flexibility
- Some challenges related to collection and management of school data

# What strategies and actions would further increase secondary student success?

The three most frequently suggested resource-related improvements were:

- meeting staffing needs,
- increasing or securing existing funding to offer suitable program options as dictated by local needs and conditions, and
- increasing flexibility around program and course delivery.

## **Strategies for further improvement, continued...**

**Systemic improvements drawn from informant statements addressed**

- **the need to continue reinforcing a system-wide culture shift from teaching to learning,**
- **increasing awareness of the value of different educational pathways, and**
- **fostering a climate of planning certainty at all levels of the educational system**

# Is there evidence that graduation rates are increasing and drop-out rates decreasing?

- Ministry reports that graduation rates have been increasing steadily from 68% in 2003-04 to 75% in 2006-07

## **Is there evidence that structures and supports are changing to better provide viable pathways for all students?**

- **Cooperative education, apprenticeship, dual credit and Specialist High Skills Major programs are examples of the efforts to better provide viable pathways**
- **Students generally feel that they good advice and guidance**
- **In contrast, a sizable proportion of teacher survey respondents reported knowing very little about what is available to students after graduation**

## **Is there evidence that learning opportunities are changing to better capture and build on students' strengths and interests?**

- Students and staff agree that Dual Credit programs, Specialist High Skills Majors, expanded cooperative education, apprenticeships, and School-College-Work Initiatives help students by providing them interesting new learning opportunities
- More than half of the students who responded to the survey say that they are often or always interested in what they are learning in class
- the majority of student respondents say they have been able to take courses that they find interesting and challenging

# Is there evidence that structures and supports are changing to better assist students in their transition from elementary to secondary school?

- **School visits identified:**

- Improved communication between secondary schools and elementary schools,
- the development of student profiles, and
- individual timetabling for students identified as “at-risk”

## Transition supports, continued...

- The vast majority of staff respondents to the survey agree that their school is making efforts to welcome its Grade 9 students, to make them feel that they can succeed in secondary school, and that teachers in their school monitor how Grade 9 students are doing.

Is there evidence that monitoring, tracking, reporting and planning are in place and being used by schools and boards in order to drive improvement?

- **Both field visits and survey responses indicated that monitoring and tracking measures are in place in most schools and that these are being used actively to support student success**

## Is there evidence that capacity to implement the SS/L18 Strategy is being built in schools and school boards?

- (survey) all school staff report having taken part in some form of professional development since September 2005
- Ministry PD has focussed on SSTs, principals, vice-principals, and guidance or career counsellors
- direct capacity building for teachers who are not part of the Student Success Team is much less well developed or prevalent

Is there evidence that schools and school boards are aligning resources and practices to the goals of the SS/L18 Strategy?

- school staff report that efforts are being made to align resources and practices to the goals of the SS/L18 Strategy

## Is there evidence that low impact initiatives are being replaced by high impact initiatives ?

- In general, there were more accounts of initiatives or programs being modified than replaced
- One interesting case was a school that was focussing student success resources for Grades 9 and 10 on work completion and failure prevention rather than credit recovery

## Three related conceptualizations of the SS/L18

### Strategy:

- (1) as a place/program (e.g. alternative programs, apprenticeship, cooperative education, Credit Recovery) to which students are referred for assistance;
- (2) as a person (e.g. the SST, a social services worker) to whom a student is referred for help; and
- (3) as a philosophical stance toward students – namely, ensuring the success of all students and the valuing of all destinations and pathways.

## The values underlying the SS/L18 strategy:

- Schools should equip students with the skills they will need as lifelong learners.
- Schools should accord equal respect to post-secondary destinations, including immediate post secondary employment, apprenticeship and other forms of training, college study, and university attendance.
- Schools should provide students with opportunities to explore the connections between what they learn in school and future employment or study.

## Values, continued...

- Schools should credit student accomplishments and build upon those accomplishments to help students overcome barriers to further mastery.
- Schools should eliminate or minimize the difficulties that students face when they make a transition from one level to the next.
- Schools should accommodate the different ways that students learn.
- Schools should actively engage students and enable them to persist in school despite the challenges the individual student may face.

## Recommendations: Resource efficiency, funding and support

- **Increased collaboration among neighbouring schools and school boards to ensure:**
  - the efficient use of available resources,
  - complementarity among program offerings across jurisdictions, and
  - that students have the widest range of opportunities that can be provided
- **Maintain current expenditure levels even in the face of declining enrolment**
- **Provide guidance to school boards on succession planning for SSTs and SSLs**

## Resources, funding and support...

- Increase allocations for support from specially trained professionals to help address the needs of many students identified as “at-risk”
- Bring representatives of relevant agencies and services together to improve collaboration and to suggest mechanisms for facilitating collaboration
- Ensure that there are no financial or other disincentives to ensuring that students stay in school until graduation, or return to complete
- Devote more attention, resources and support to the re-engagement of 16- and 17-year-olds;

## Recommendations: Communications

- **Communicate more effectively with those ensuring the daily implementation of the Strategy**
- **Clarify lingering misconceptions**
- **Provide the tools necessary to alter practices in a way that reflects the central values and goals of the Strategy;**
- **Identify the more effective vehicles for communicating information to diverse target audiences and tailor messages to specific subgroups within secondary schools**

## Communications, continued...

- Consult with key stakeholders to ensure that the set of guiding principles developed for Credit Recovery is adhered to and to ensure that standards and fairness are maintained throughout the province;
- Devote attention to the use of certain language within the context of the SS/L18 Strategy. Such as “16x16”, “failure is not an option”

## Recommendations: Data Use & Curriculum

- **Augment capacity building for data use**
- **Make provision for collaborative discussion about how data might affect practice among staff members**
- **Engage educators in identifying the core objectives that must be mastered in order for a student to succeed in subsequent course work**

## Recommendations: Managing Change

- **School boards should closely monitor the implementation of practices such as Credit Recovery and Credit Rescue to ensure that standards are being maintained;**
- **Schools should plan explicitly for the reintegration of students and carefully monitor the impact of reintegration on the individual student, the student's peers, and on the school environment;**

## Recommendations: Managing change, cont'd....

- Conceptualize the progress of the implementation of the SS/L18 Strategy among secondary schools as stages in a change process ; and
- Success for all students must become the paramount goal of Ontario education
- Remember that success is achieved one student at a time.

# **UNDERSTANDING CHANGE IN EDUCATION**

## The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (Sarason, 1971, 1982)

- Attempts to change schools cannot be undertaken without understanding the legal, traditional, and cultural transactions between school and community. (c.f. Wood, 1990)
- The significance of a particular social structure cannot be fully understood without consideration of alternative structures.
- The structure of a setting is normally antecedent to the participation of any given individual or set of individuals and will endure in their absence.

## The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (Sarason, 1971, 1982), 2

- Attempts to introduce a change into the school involves some existing regularity, behavioral or programmatic that one does not like.
- Regularities exist because they are intended to produce specific outcomes which are discernable in terms of overt behaviors or interactions and justified by statements of value.

## The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (Sarason, 1971, 1982), 3

- The failure to consider or recognize a universe of alternatives is one obstacle to change occurring from within the culture, and make it likely that recognition of this universe of alternatives will await events and forces outside the culture.
- Changing existing regularities involves introducing new regularities capable of producing new intended outcomes. Since regularities are not typically changed, new intended outcomes cannot be realized; "the more things change, the more they remain the same."

# Factors affecting change 1

- No matter how large the change, if the change is wanted by the people who will be involved in and affected by the change, the change can be incorporated with relatively little social disruption.
- Even when changes are rather insignificant, if they are not wanted by those who will be involved in and affected by their implementation, they are likely to be implemented only at great social and personal cost.

## Factors affecting change 2

- When changes are forced upon a group by those whom they perceive to be "outsiders", the changes are likely to meet with overt compliance but be covertly resisted.
- The more proposed changes threaten or appear to threaten the group's customs, traditions, or values, the more likely it is that the group's members will resist the change.
- And, if the changes are implemented, the cost of their implementation will be significant in terms of personal and social disruption.

## Factors affecting change 3

- If they are inclined, groups with highly integrated sets of values are better able to resist changes toward which they are opposed.
- When they are favourably disposed toward a change, such groups can adjust to and incorporate the change with relatively little disruption.

## Factors affecting change 4

- Changes introduced slowly in an environment that is socially and emotionally supportive of its members are less likely to be disruptive.
- Material changes are more easily incorporated than changes in a group's value structure.

## Factors affecting change 5

- the more central changes are to the identities and way of life of group members, the less likely they are to occur.
- changes to the symbolic universe in which people work will be more difficult to bring about than material changes.

## Factors affecting change 6

- Changes in form are more easily accommodated than changes in substance.
- Changes which are perceived to be closely contiguous are more likely to be accepted than are changes which are seen as alternatives.

## Factors affecting change 7

- Changes are more likely to occur in periods of crisis than in periods which are stable and calm.
- changes occurring in one part of the society's social or organizational infrastructure are likely to produce corresponding changes in other aspects of society.

## CCL evaluation team

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<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Research/Student+Success>

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