All children back in school!

Dropout prevention modules for teachers and school teams

All children back in school!

Dropout prevention modules for teachers and school teams

UNICEF Europe & Central Asia Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention

Contents

"A focus on understanding school drop-out mechanisms and educational disadvantage, including possible risk and protective factors, should become a core element of both Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development programmes.

It is essential that all teachers understand their key role in supporting the continuity of children's development and learning: teachers are in an advantaged position to detect school disengagement and the existence of learning difficulties at a very early stage and thus can help take immediate action to address the situation.

They need to be aware that their expectations, attitudes and language may have a significant impact and influence on pupils and families; they need to acknowledge the role which parents and families play in the learning process and be enticed to reap the benefits of parental involvement".

Source: European Commission (2015) *A whole-school approach to tackling early school leaving: Policy messages*

INTRODUCTION

Background and objectives

Education is a fundamental human right. It is the foundation that enables children and adolescents to grow, develop and gain the knowledge, values and skills they need to reach their full potential, gain economic independence and play an active role in their communities and societies.

Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 4 calls for:

- Free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes;
- At least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education;
- Equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university;
- A substantial increase in the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

To achieve this goal, not only must we ensure that children out of school before the pandemic are identified and supported to enrol, but also that each and every child enrols, re-enrols and remains in education throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools, local authorities and community-based services have a critical role to play in the school enrolment and return process and in supporting students to re-engage with learning.

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in school closures in 20 countries in Europe and Central Asia, affecting 53.4 million children of pre-primary to upper secondary age. Education has remained interrupted throughout the 2020-2021 academic year in the region and, as of September 2021, 1,266,000 primary- and secondary-aged children were living in countries where schools were still partially closed. With rapid epidemiological changes at national and local levels, many countries have alternated periods of school opening with full or partial closure nationally or locally. Many countries continue to rely on hybrid and blended learning to complement face-to-face teaching, particularly in secondary education.

Education disruption impacted the learning and mental health of children and young people, as schools could not play their full role as places for academic learning, social and emotional learning, social interaction and social support.

The most marginalized children have been the most impacted: Roma and ethnic minority children, refugee and migrant children, children with disabilities, the poorest children and those living in dysfunctional families. Referrals to basic health and social services have been disrupted, as has the provision of specialized services to children and families, particularly children with disabilities. School meals have been affected, schools could not act as hubs from which parents could receive information on available national and local socio-economic support, and schools were prevented from acting as community hubs for cultural and educational events that contribute to social cohesion.

Ensuring that all young children enter school on time and that all children and adolescents return to school, re-engage with learning and are supported in doing so is critical to mitigate the impact of school disruption and to ensure young people learn the academic, life and socio-emotional skills they need to thrive in life, work and society.

Objectives of the modules

These modules aim to provide school teams, including school directors, teachers and other education professionals working in or with schools, with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools to support the (re)enrolment of all children in schools, particularly those most marginalized, and to prevent and respond to dropout effectively in the coming years.

The modules are relevant to both compulsory and post-compulsory education, particularly upper secondary education. They do not apply to post-secondary education.

By the end of the modules, it is expected that education professionals will have:

- An understanding of education exclusion, dropout factors and dropout prevention approaches;
- The skills to plan for dropout prevention support, including individual student support and whole-school dropout prevention approaches;
- The skills to re-engage students in learning and to support the transition between education levels;
- An understanding of the impact of student wellbeing on dropout and how to support student wellbeing and address discrimination;
- An understanding of how to improve learning support in schools and classrooms, including socio-emotional learning and how to embed learning support in dropout prevention activities;
- The skills to support parental engagement and improve school-home communication;
- An understanding of how to engage with external stakeholders in dropout prevention and collaboration skills;
- The skills to plan and implement a holistic whole-school inclusive approach to dropout prevention.

The modular approach of the materials makes them easily adaptable to different country contexts. The modules have been designed so they can be adapted to a range of training settings:

- Pre-service teacher training (e.g., a module on dropout prevention, or mainstreaming dropout prevention in existing pre-service teacher training);
- In-service teacher training, including:
  - Training workshops;
  - School training (self-facilitated or facilitated by a trainer or a coach/mentor);
  - Online training (this would require significant adaptation of the content and activities).

Training providers can extract both information and activities from each module to tailor their own programme. The modules are, therefore, intended to be adapted to:

- The local context, and
- The type of training delivery mode that will be used in this context.

The materials provided in these modules must be selected according to the focus and length of the training, previous experience in dropout prevention of schools participating in the training, national dropout prevention approaches and the specific needs of participants.

Target audience

These modules are for schools and school stakeholders. They target primarily:

- School directors, teachers and other school staff such as school psychologists, pedagogues and social-pedagogues, other school support staff/specialists, school mediators, and school boards, and
- Education authorities, inspectors and advisors.

The content of the modules can also be useful for NGOs working with schools and marginalized children and adolescents on education exclusion and dropout prevention.

Organization of the modules

The Modules are organized as follows:

- **Module 1**: Dropout factors and school dropout prevention
- **Module 2**: Identifying and supporting students at risk of dropping out
- **Module 3**: Supporting student (re)engagement in school and learning
- **Module 4**: Student wellbeing
- **Module 5**: Learning support
- **Module 6**: Parental engagement
- **Module 7**: Multi-sector, multi-actor and community support for dropout prevention
- **Module 8**: Whole-school planning for dropout prevention

The modules include boxes to introduce specific topics or materials, using the following icons:

! Important   ⚒ Tools   💬 Case studies   🧍🧍 Gender

MODULE 1.

DROPOUT FACTORS AND SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

Module 1: is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: School dropout and dropout factors • Definitions, dropout risk points, and importance of dropout work; • Dropout factors including COVID-19-related risk factors; • Dropout factors and marginalized groups; • Gender-specific dropout risk factors. Unit 2: Whole-school approach to dropout prevention; • Two-pronged approach to dropout prevention; • School domains affected by dropout prevention; • Three-tier approach to dropout prevention and response interventions. Module 1 Assignment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Explain what dropout is and why it is important to address it; • Describe the categories of dropout factors and the main risks under each; • Explain how the pandemic has exacerbated some of the common dropout risk factors; • Describe the specific dropout risk factors of marginalized groups and explain how those have been exacerbated by the pandemic; • Describe the gender-specific dropout risk factors and the gender-differentiated impact of the pandemic on girls and boys; • Identify the main dropout risk factors in their school and how the pandemic has put some groups of children at even more risk of dropping out.	

This module provides information on factors that contribute to the dropout process and outlines the underlying principles of a whole-school approach to dropout prevention.

UNIT 1: SCHOOL DROPOUT AND DROPOUT FACTORS

This section introduces a definition of school dropout, the main factors that contribute to the dropout process, and their consequences, including those factors that have been exacerbated by the pandemic for the most marginalized children.

About school dropout

Definition

Dropping out usually refers to the process of a pupil abandoning his or her schooling before the completion of a cycle of education. Dropout can also refer to the process of a pupil abandoning his or her schooling in between two cycles of compulsory education, such as between primary and lower secondary. Dropout rates can be calculated annually as the proportion of pupils dropping out in the academic year, or for a cohort over time (UNICEF, 2016).

In the European Union and neighbouring or accessing countries, the term 'early school leaving' is also used in the context of dropout. It refers to the Eurostat indicator **Early Leaving from Education and Training** and is defined as the proportion of persons aged 18 to 24 who have completed, at most, lower secondary education and is not involved in further education or training, out of the total population aged 18 to 24.

More information on Early Leaving from Education and Training and available comparable data across the EU and accessing countries can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

The dropout rate and the rate of Early Leaving from Education and Training provide complementary information on the dropout phenomenon due to their differing definitions and calculation methods.

> **!** Students should not be counted as dropping out when they transfer to another school, migrate abroad or die.
>
> For more information and data on out-of-school children, dropout and EMIS, see *Monitoring Education Participation* (UNICEF, 2016).

Dropout risk points

Students are particularly at risk of dropping out when:

- They **enter the school system**, i.e., when entering compulsory education for the first time, or moving to another country and entering a new school system;
- They **transfer** from one school to another (risk of not re-enrolling in their new school);
- They are **expelled** from school (risk of not being accepted in another school);
- They **transition** between education cycles (e.g., between lower and upper secondary);
- They are **withdrawn from school** by their parents (usually because parents plan to move location, due to internal or external migration – yet sometimes travel does not happen and children never re-enrol in education).

The COVID-19 pandemic created new risk points for students:

- They do not re-enrol when schools reopen;
- They do not participate in school distance learning or other forms of education provided during the pandemic.

Schools should have effective mechanisms in place to mitigate dropout for these specific risk points.

Why is it important to tackle dropout and early leaving in schools?

Addressing and reducing dropout is important for several reasons:

- Education is a fundamental human right for children;
- Education is the foundation for children to grow, develop and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to develop their full potential and live as productive members of society;
- Education is particularly valuable for children from marginalized or low-income families as it can act as a social equalizer and also contributes to the provision of social support;
- School dropout has consequences for children and adolescents as well as their families, their communities and society as a whole.

Table 1 Potential consequences of school dropout

Children and adolescents	- Missing developmental milestones and not acquiring the foundational academic and life skills due to lack of stimulation, teaching and comprehensive support; - Social exclusion (e.g., stigmatization, becoming homeless); - Risks for wellbeing (e.g., low self-esteem) and for health (e.g., obesity, depression); - Reduction of economic opportunities and economic exclusion (e.g., low-paid jobs, unemployment); - Reduction of social opportunities (e.g., engaging in community life or political participation); - Higher risk of engaging in criminal activities.
Families	- Conflict between family members about the dropout decision; - Loss of earnings in the long term which can affect the overall family wealth; - Loss of family support capacity in the long term as dropout students might have lower skills and fewer social opportunities; - The children of dropout students will be at risk of reduced wellbeing (health, socio-emotional wellbeing, wealth) and will be more likely to drop out themselves.
Society	- Less cohesive communities; - Higher levels of delinquency and crime; - Lower gender equality; - Lower economic returns for individuals and communities - Higher burden on social welfare, health and justice budgets

Dropout factors

Categories of dropout factors

Not re-enrolling or dropping out from school is usually a process rather than a decision following a single (or exceptional) event.
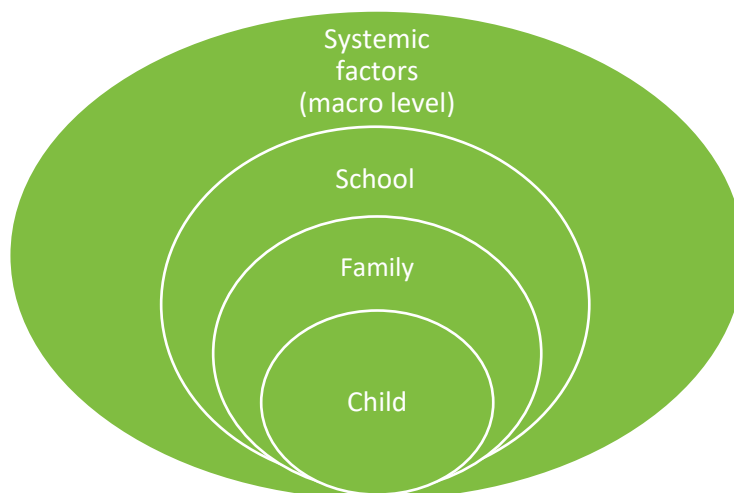
This process is influenced by a range of factors that interact in complex and dynamic ways.

These factors not only relate to individual and family circumstances but also to the school environment and the education and social welfare system at the macro level.

Dropout is often the result of the inability of institutions (structures) and systems to respond to or address individual or family circumstances in a timely and appropriate manner.

For instance, having special educational needs is not the reason why a student drops out from school. Rather, it is because the school and other local services are ill-equipped to adequately support children with special educational needs and to ensure their retention and success in school. Similarly, having missed out on distance schooling is not the reason why a student does not re-enrol in school after a period of closure or hybrid learning. Rather, it is because the education community (the schools, the ministry, the local authorities and local services) have not managed to take action for the student to participate in remote learning and to support the re-enrolment of the student in school, by providing extra learning support during the transition period.

There are four dimensions of dropout risks factors are as follows:

Common factors for dropout in each of the dimensions listed above are presented below.

It is also important to understand that **COVID-19 has exacerbated dropout risk factors** for children of compulsory school age and young people engaged in post-compulsory education.

Figure 1 Dropout factor subcategories

Dimension	Subcategory	Examples of risk factors	Examples of dropout risk factors exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic
Child	Age	Overage compared to class peers owing to grade repetition Older students (more at risk of dropping out than younger students, particularly beyond compulsory education age) Younger children with disabilities (more at risk of not transitioning from pre-primary to primary education)	Younger children missing out on foundational skills during critical early years that can affect their overall development and ability to learn Older students at risk of not coming back to school once having disengaged from learning Students in post-compulsory education at risk of dropout due to economic pressure and poor tracking mechanisms to support those struggling to remain in school
	Sex	Risk factors for boys and girls (see below) Pregnancy, (early) marriage	
	Physical and mental health	Chronic or life-threatening illness Development delay, disability and barriers to development and learning Depression and mental health issues and disorders Low self-esteem Substance abuse HIV status or living with AIDS (particularly for those adolescent men who have sex with men, transgender people, adolescents who inject drugs and sex workers)	
	Location	Distance to and from school Frequent change of place of residence or school, including internal and seasonal migration	
	Ethnicity & language	Discrimination Mother tongue different from the language of instruction	
	Education experience	Expulsion from school Bullied at school Discrimination in school due to sex, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or other factors	Disrupted routine Increased risk of COVID-19-related stigma and discrimination
	Academic engagement	Chronic absenteeism Poor academic achievement	Loss of schooling habits Loss of motivation and learning disengagement

		No early childhood education or pre-primary education experience Repetition	Loss of learning and underachievement Stress due to exams and future opportunities for older students
	Social engagement	Poor school behaviour Limited capacities to form relationships Conflict with the law	Social isolation, limited access to positive and supportive relationships Reduced sense of belonging to the school
	Other life and past experiences	Young carer (early parenthood or caring for relatives) Working children Violence and abuse survivors	Stress, anxiety and uncertainty COVID-19 illness and death in the family or neighbourhood Increased risk of emotional, physical and sexual violence and abuse
Family	Family structure	Single-parent households, grandparent-led households	
	Family demographics	Large-size families Marginalized ethnic and linguistic minorities Families with mental health issues in the household	
	Family norms and practices	History of dropout among parents and siblings Dysfunctional families Child neglect, abuse or exploitation in the family Low education aspirations for children	Increased dysfunctionality Increased risk of domestic violence and child abuse, violence and neglect
	Resources	Very poor, low socio-economic status households Socially vulnerable/excluded families	Loss of livelihoods and increased poverty Increased stress due to uncertainty
	Mobility	Refugee, migrant families Families with high mobility/seasonal work	
School	Structure and organization	Poor school leadership and management Lack of inclusive ethos Poor school climate, academic and social exclusion Lack of availability of subject or TVET streams	
	Resources (financial, human and material)	Deprived school Limited budget and autonomy for budget expenditure Lack of teachers and support staff (psychologists, pedagogues, teaching assistants, etc.)	Limited ability to provide distance learning

	School policies	Weak attendance rules & policies and a weak absentee management system School selection and repetition policies	
	School practices (activities, available support and interactions in the classroom and in the school)	Low education quality Teacher and staff bias, prejudices and discrimination (particularly regarding ethnicity, gender and disability) Lack of inclusive pedagogy Weak academic and learning support for low achievers, lack of language of instruction learning support, lack of development and learning support for students with disabilities or special needs Weak social and emotional support for students, weak wellbeing support Weak relationships between school staff (teachers and support staff) and students Poor school-parent relationships Limited parent involvement/participation from at-risk groups in school activities and school planning Low consideration for student voice and little student participation High incidence of violence or bullying, including gender-based violence, in school	Limited ability to maintain connection between adults and students Schools have also not been able to fully play their role in: • The safeguarding of children and referrals to basic health and social services, • Providing specialized services and support for children, particularly children with disabilities, • Provision of school meals, • Acting as a hub for parents to receive information on available socio-economic support nationally and locally, • Acting as a hub for cultural and educational events that contribute to social cohesion, • Monitoring school attendance so that children and families can access conditional cash transfers and social benefits.
Systemic factors	Legislation, regulations	Administrative hurdles for enrolment (ID cards, birth certificates, resident permits, etc.) Administrative hurdles for stateless children and undocumented migrants Costs and hidden costs of education for families Discriminatory legislation (gender, disability, ethnicity, language, undocumented migrant children) Low political will	
	Education, social and other relevant policies	Limited equity-focus in education/social policies and education/social funding and financing Limited inclusive education and inclusive social policies Limited relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of cross-sector coordination and support mechanisms for children at risk of	

		not enrolling in, or dropping out of, education	
	Social norms	Weak social values around gender equality, social inclusion and non-discrimination Discriminatory gender norms	
	Country situation	Economy Conflict, disasters and crisis.	Limited access to support services due to closure/service reduction

Source: Adapted from Lyche (2010) *and* UNICEF (2017)

> ! Not all children affected by one or more of the above factors will necessarily drop out of school. When identifying risk factors, it is important not to stigmatize or label children and their families and **take into account the protective factors that contribute to young people's resilience,** such as interests, talents, support and social networks, strong family cohesion and support, personal character, emotional maturity, motivation and other strengths.

Dropout factors and marginalized groups

Common dropout factors for marginalized groups

Overall, the pandemic has increased the risk that marginalized groups will not (re)enrol and will dropout. In Europe and Central Asia, children face a range of marginalization factors when coming to education. Among the largest groups of children at high risk of not completing secondary education, we find: (i) Roma and ethnic minority children, (ii) children with disabilities, and (iii) refugee and migrant children.

Common challenges faced by **Roma and ethnic minority children** in accessing and remaining in education include:

Figure 2 Common challenges and dropout factors faced by Roma and ethnic minority children

Dimension	Potential contributing factors to the dropout process	Risk factors exacerbated by the pandemic
Child	• Feeling of being rejected, not accepted or misunderstood by majority of teachers and peers • Limited fluency in the language of instruction • Gaps in education due to seasonal migration or high absenteeism for family, cultural or work-related reasons • Lack of confidence in ability to perform in academic subjects • Late entry in primary school	• Disconnect with teachers and peers due to long-term school disruption • Limited access to online learning and IT devices and limited participation in distance learning • Widening learning gaps compared to peers • Risk of increased malnutrition and stunting • COVID-19 contamination risks due to lack of WASH facilities in houses and settlements • Risk of child and early marriage

Family	• Poverty, economic hardship and lack of means for transportation • Low aspirations of families for the education of their children • Gender norms that might put pressure on: (i) girls to take responsibilities for chores, care of siblings and care of relatives, or societal pressure to marry early; (ii) on boys to contribute to the family income • Lack of knowledge and skills to support children's education • Few positive and academically successful role models for girls and for boys • Language issues and lack of knowledge about the education system	• Increased poverty and food insecurity due to parents' loss of income and livelihoods • Risk of losing social benefits when they are conditional to school attendance due to confusion over school attendance rules and monitoring throughout the pandemic. • Limited parental learning support during remote learning periods
School	• Discrimination in schools, such as being refused enrolment, placement in special classes when students have no special educational needs, discriminatory treatment by teachers, staff and peers, lower opportunities for participation, etc. • School segregation • Lack of teaching and learning materials in mother tongue languages • Lower academic expectations from teachers and staff	• Barriers to engaging with parents and children with limited access to technology • Lack of remote learning materials in students' mother tongue languages
Systemic factors	• Policies that don't support equity and inclusion • Discriminatory legislation and regulation	• Risk of discrimination, particularly where specific restrictions have applied to settlements

With recent increases in population movements, **refugee and migrant children** have become a group significantly at-risk of dropping out across the region. Unaccompanied migrant children and children travelling with their families both face different challenges regarding education inclusion, and it has been reported that children travelling with their families might be more at risk of exclusion as support services focus on unaccompanied children. Among the common barriers to access to education for refugee and migrant children, we find:

Figure 3 Common challenges and dropout factors faced by refugee and migrant children

Dimension	Potential contributing factors to the dropout process	Risk factors exacerbated by the pandemic
Child	- Feelings of being rejected or not accepted by teachers and peers - Acculturation challenges and social pressure to fit in the school culture - Limited fluency in the language of instruction - Gaps in education due to migration - Low self-esteem and lack of confidence, particularly from older students/students from higher grades where academic subjects become more complex - Trauma and adverse childhood experiences - Stress related to parents' administrative situation (undocumented, etc.)	- Limited access to online learning and IT devices due to poverty or location - Pandemic stress added to existing mental health distress - Increased nutrition and stunting - Risks in precarious immigration status due to inability to cross borders due to restrictions - Child labour
Family	- Economic hardship and lack of means for transportation - Parents do not understand the education system - Parents struggle to support their children's learning (different language, education system, survival mode…) - Pressure for young people to find work to support their family during or after migration - Gender norms that might put pressure on boys and girls to dropout - Integration issues in the host community - Legal and administrative processes adding stress and pressure on family dynamics	- Increased poverty and food insecurity - Lack of personal protection equipment jeopardizing school attendance - Inability to comply with safety measures at home (e.g., wash hands with soap)
School	- Limited capacity and preparation for managing culturally and linguistically diverse schools and classrooms - Under preparation of host schools to administer placement tests (including in a language that the child understands) - Little provision of language of instruction as a foreign language classes (lack of materials and trained teachers) - Overcrowded host schools on migration routes - Refusal from school directors to enrol migrant children - Limited ability to engage with migrant families - Discrimination and stigma from schools, staff and peers - Lack of socio-emotional wellbeing support to migrant children	- Limited provision of formal or non-formal education for refugee and migrant children during the pandemic - Limited provision of remote learning materials in students' mother tongue - Limited abilities of school to liaise with migrant communities

Systemic factors	• National legislation not allowing migrant children to be educated in the transit country and national practices aiming to send back irregular migrants to their country of origin • Issues around the absence of documents (ID cards, birth certificates, resident permits, statelessness) and administrative procedures to enrol in school, including mandatory immunization • Long administrative process to recognize prior learning and prior education experience from the home country	• Reduced services for refugees • COVID-19 regulations regarding COVID-19 vaccination for children and adolescents

Children and adolescents with disabilities are particularly at risk of leaving education early. When they enter education late or have repeated classes, they might reach the end of compulsory education without having completed lower secondary education. In some contexts, age might be used as an excuse to push students with disabilities out from school. Students with disabilities also face multiple challenges when transitioning from pre-primary to primary and from primary to secondary education.

Figure 4 Common challenges and dropout factors faced by children with disabilities

Dimension	Potential contributing factors to the dropout process	Risk factors exacerbated by the pandemic
Child	• Feelings of being rejected or not accepted by teachers and peers • Lack of confidence and self-esteem • School bullying • Late entry in primary school	• Routine disruption • Mental health distress • Withdrawal
Family	• Cost of assistive technology and accessibility software • Cost of health services, social services and other community-based support services • Lack of trust that the system will be able to meet the child's needs	• Lack of (assistive) technology at home
School	• Inaccessible school premises (e.g., science laboratories, computer rooms and libraries located on top floors without elevators) and limited assistive technology and accessibility software • Low level of inclusive pedagogy and capacities for individualization of learning (in secondary education in particular) • In secondary, increased focus on curriculum and exams • Limited or out-of-date subject-specific adapted materials	• Limited provision of appropriate in-class, hybrid and remote learning for children with disabilities • Lack of support/guidance to parents regarding use of online learning platforms and materials • Lack of assistive technology in schools • Limited implementation and follow-up of IEP

	• Limited availability of specialist teachers or support services, particularly in secondary education • Low academic expectations for children with disabilities • Limited capacity for the implementation and progress monitoring of IEPs • Constraints around the adaptation of school assessment and exams • Poor transition support from schools and external agencies from one level of education to the next • Insufficient coordination with families and external support services, including in key decisions regarding the child's educational placement/support plan	• Limited provision of regular support services and (physical) therapies treatments
Systemic factors	• Policies little supportive of equity and inclusion (limited funds and support services to support education for all) • Discriminatory legislation and regulation • Poor identification and support services for children with disabilities and their families • Poor data systems for inclusive education • Social norms around disability	• Social welfare budget cuts affecting services, care and financial support to schools and families

Gender-specific dropout risk factors

Factors influencing boys' and girls' education

Gender should be taken into account when analysing the reasons for a student dropping out and developing solutions to prevent them from doing so or bringing them back to school.

Gender overlaps with other education exclusion and forms of discrimination, particularly age, location, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability and sexual orientation. This is called *intersectionality*. Boys and girls face different and multiple barriers to access, remain in and complete education. Some girls from particular ethnic groups might be more at risk of early marriage than others. Boys from rural areas might be more at risk of dropout to pursue financial opportunities, particularly when living in very poor families. Boys and girls might be more exposed to dropout risks at a particular age, and the dropout factors for boys and girls will change during their education. Gender and other factors interplay differently in different contexts.

Figure 5 Intersectionality: how gender overlaps with other education exclusion factors
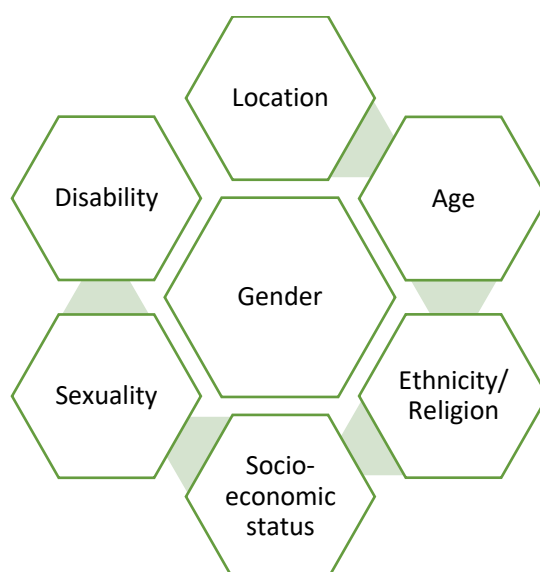
Boys and girls are socialized differently and internalize social and gender norms that affect their school interactions, learning and that influence dropout differently.

- For instance, girls might not complete lower or upper secondary because it is expected that they will take care of younger siblings, sick relatives or marry early.
- Boys might dropout where they are expected to work and contribute to the family income.

Definitions

Gender is a socio-cultural construct which shapes the roles of men and women in a given society at a given time. Gender is based on the biological difference between men and women (e.g., child-bearing, breastfeeding, etc.) upon which norms and social values are developed. These norms organize the social relationships between men and women and the social roles of men and women in society.

Intersectionality refers to the way in which multiple forms of discrimination overlap and interact with one another to shape how different individuals and groups experience discrimination.

Gender socialization: Boys and girls are socialized from birth in environments that shape their beliefs about gender norms. They internalize gender norms which then influence the way boys and girls interact with others.

School-related gender-based violence is defined as *"acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics."* (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016)

Gender and gender norms influence the opportunities that boys and girls have access to.

Table 2 Factors influencing boys' and girls' education

	Boys	Girls
Biology		Teenage pregnancy Menstruations
Academic expectations	Lower expectations for boys at school (e.g., for learning, for behaviour) Data from PISA 2015 in 10 Europe and Central Asia countries show that boys achieve lower results than girls in reading, science and maths – in maths, boys have higher results than girls only in Kosovo (UN resolution 1244) Harsher treatment of boys in school and at home	Higher expectations for girls in some subjects Higher expectations for girls' behaviour
Pressure to conform to gender norms	Income generation or peer pressure deriding academic achievement Influence of negative role models on boys and lack of positive role models in schools and communities	Social expectations of marriage and reproduction Early marriage Responsibilities for house chores Responsibilities for caring for younger siblings
Socio-emotional	Sensitiveness of boys to negative teachers' attitude Low academic failure resilience	Low self-esteem Lack of confidence and anxiety over homework and tests
Autonomy	Boys question the lack of application and relevance of school-based learning (in secondary in particular) and the economic value of education	Parental fears for girls studying away from the community (which limits access to secondary and Vocational Education & Training (VET) education)
School-related gender-based violence	More likely to be punished (including corporal punishment where it exists) and to face sexual orientation discrimination, such as homophobia	More likely than boys to experience psychological bullying, cyber-bullying and sexual violence and harassment
Economic opportunities	Boys' desire to start career early, to earn own money, and determined to success Better employment prospects than girls in the formal and informal sectors	Lower economic opportunities, and often in under-performing sectors (care, hairdressing) or sectors bringing lower economic returns (social sectors) Lower access to technology

Source: Harrington (2005) UNGEI and the Commonwealth Education Hub (2016), Borgna and Struffolino (2017), UNESCO and UN Women (2016)

> 💬 **Teenage pregnancy in Europe and Central Asia**
>
> In Europe and Central Asia, the adolescent birth rate is highest in Tajikistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Kyrgyzstan, and lowest in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNFPA, 2013). In the European Union, Romania and Bulgaria have the highest teenage pregnancy rates. Over the period 2008-2011, the abortion rate was highest in the region in Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Georgia and Serbia for women under 20 years old (UNFPA, 2013). Abortion, like pregnancy, can negatively impact the education of girls when girls do not have access to appropriate medical or psychological support. Adolescent birth rates are significantly higher among the Roma communities in the Balkans and Eastern Europe (UNFPA, 2013), which can also affect girls' dropout, particularly when they are already facing many other barriers to retention.

Gender-differentiated impact of the pandemic on girls and boys

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected boys and girls differently and has exacerbated some of the gender-specific dropout risk factors.

Table 3 Challenges for girls' and boys' education during the pandemic

Challenges for girls' education	Challenges for boys' education
- Caring responsibilities preventing school/remote learning attendance - COVID-19 contraction risks while looking after sick relatives - Reinforcement of unequal gender roles at home - Limited media/IT literacy - Lower access to internet/IT devices in the home & the school due to gender norms - Limited social and support networks - Higher prevalence of anxiety and depression among girls - Sexual and reproductive health concerns due to services disruption - Child, early and forced marriage - Increased gender-based violence against women and girls, including domestic violence	- Disengagement from learning - Dropout due to pressure to contribute to family income - Increased child labour risk - Increased risky behaviours for adolescent boys - Increased prevalence of mental health disorders, such as schizophrenia, among boys - Risk of reinforcement of negative gender norms

Additional resources

School dropout risk factors

- Lyche, C. S., *Taking on the Completion Challenge. A Literature Review on Policies to Prevent Dropout and Early School Leaving*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 53, OECD Publishing, 2010.
- UNICEF, *Improving Education Participation. Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout*, UNICEF Series on

Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Volume 2. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2017.

- UNFPA, *Adolescent pregnancy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia,* United Nations Population Fund, Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, n.d.
- World Bank Group, *Learners with Disabilities & COVID-19 School Closures*, Findings from a Global Survey Conducted by the World Bank's Inclusive Education Initiative (IEI), 2021.

European Union publications

- European Commission, *Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation*, 2020.
- European Commission, Early School Leaving web page, n.d.

Cost of dropout

- Brunello. G., and De Paola, M.*, The costs of early school leaving in Europe. Analytical Report*, No. 17 European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE), 2013.
- Varly, P., Iosifescu, C-S., Fartusnic, C., Andrei, T., Herteliu C., *Cost of non-investment in education in Romania*, UNICEF Romania, 2014.
- Anspal, S., Järve, J., Kallaste, E., Kraut, L., Räis, M-L., and Seppo, I., *The cost of School Failure in Estonia*, Centar Eesti Rakendusuuringute Keskus, 2011.

Reflect

1. What is the school dropout rate in your country? What are the variations by level of education? By grade? By gender? By location? By ethnicity?

2. Does your country calculate an Early Leaving from Education and Training rate? If so, how does it compare to other countries in the region and to the European Union average for both males and females?

3. Who are the most marginalized and vulnerable students in your school and community? To what extent has the pandemic exacerbated their marginalization and vulnerability?

4. What gender norms are adolescent boys and girls expected to conform to in your country? How different are these gender norms across rural and urban areas? Ethnic groups? Socio-economic statuses? How do these gender norms affect education opportunities and participation?

The complexity of school dropout and school dropout factors are best addressed through a comprehensive whole-school approach, which is briefly outlined in Unit 2 below and further developed in the other Modules.

UNIT 2: WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO DROPOUT PREVENTION

This section introduces the main principles of a whole-school approach to dropout prevention and presents the three-tier model to dropout prevention, which can help schools organize the support they provide to their students on all education-related aspects, from attendance to learning and wellbeing.
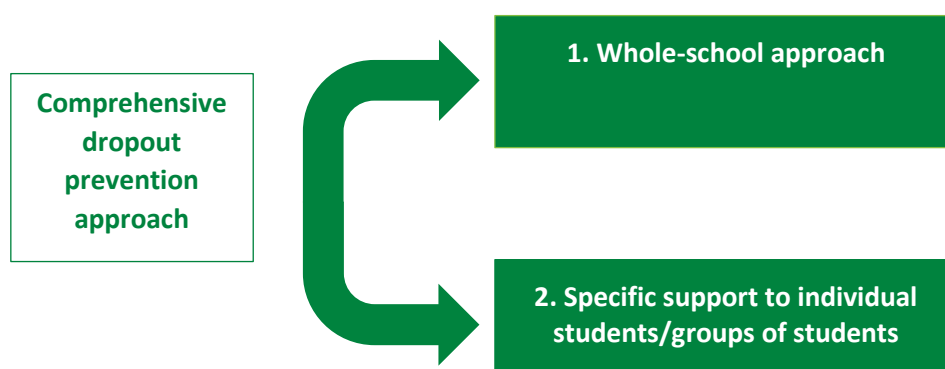
This section is complemented by information and activities from Module 8 on school planning for dropout prevention.

Two-pronged strategy to dropout prevention

Dropout prevention is not an add-on. It is part of the overall school effort to support students' holistic development and ensure they participate, learn, grow and develop.

Effective dropout prevention approaches at the school level adopt a two-pronged strategy:

1. A whole-school approach, and
2. Specific support to individual cases of students at risk of dropping out

1. A whole-school approach implies that:

Dropout prevention is an ongoing process embedded in and contributing to the school's overall efforts to improve education quality and inclusiveness for all children. It is not a "project" or a stand-alone initiative limited in time and scope and detached from the regular school operations.

Dropout prevention spans the whole-school environment and operations: school policies and practices, staff capacity and professional development, teaching, socio-emotional wellbeing support, evidence-based strategies and practices, and monitoring and data collection to ensure processes and activities related to dropout prevention make a positive difference.

A wide range of stakeholders in the school and outside the school participate in dropout prevention activities, i.e., not only teachers and school management but also other school staff such as pedagogues and psychologists, parents, students, communities and relevant external agencies, local services and civil society.
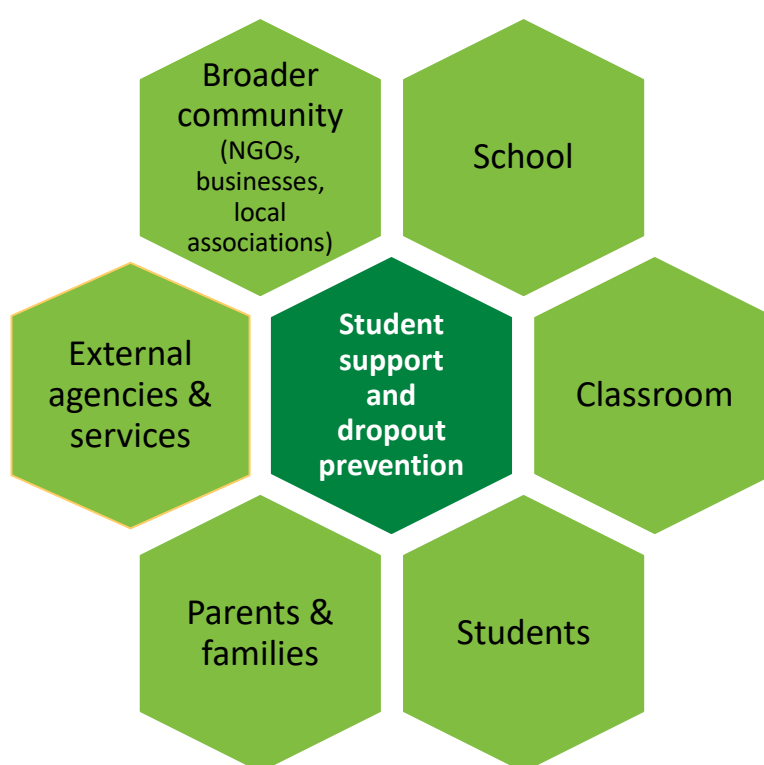
2. Specific support to individual/groups of students refers to the processes and interventions that are put in place to prevent or respond to dropout when a risk has been identified.

Effective dropout prevention requires schools to implement both strategies as they are each critical for dropout prevention and for the access, participation, learning, wellbeing and success of all students in school.

School domains impacted by dropout prevention work

A whole-school approach to inclusive dropout prevention support spans several interlinked areas. Dropout prevention is most effective when it is embedded in all areas, i.e., the school, the classroom, and the interactions with and role of students, parents and families, external agencies and broader community groups.

Below is a framework summarizing the role that each area and/or stakeholder can play in dropout prevention. Understanding the linkages between different areas and the scope for intervention in each area is key for education professionals and schools to develop a holistic approach to dropout prevention.

Source: Adapted from Lavrentsova and Valkov (2017)

More specifically, each domain relates to dropout and dropout prevention as follows:

Areas	Description
School	Related to school management work and the organization, structure, resources and practices of the school: (i) school ethos and policies, (ii) leadership, (iii) governance, (iv) management, (v) human resources and capacity, (vi) school environment and climate, (vii) school practices regarding learning, wellbeing, absenteeism, inclusion, etc.
Classroom	Related to teacher work, classroom organization and teaching and learning practices: (i) curriculum, (ii) teaching and learning practices, including blended and distance learning, (iii) learning support, (iv) skills development.

Students	Related to (i) sense of belonging to the school, (ii) wellbeing, (iii) socio-emotional skills development, (iv) individual and group support, and (v) involvement of students in dropout prevention.
Parents	Related to (i) school strategies to engage parents in school, (ii) school-home communication strategies, (iii) strategies to support parents engage in the learning of their children. (iv) strategies to engage parents in dropout prevention.
External agencies & services	Related to multi-agency coordination, including (i) referral procedures to external support, (ii) joint interventions for dropout prevention.
Broader community	Related to: (i) partnership development, (ii) community participation strategies for dropout prevention.

Three-tier approach to student support and dropout prevention

While every student requires some level of support throughout their school education, some encounter greater barriers and need more support than others. This principle also applies in the aftermath of the pandemic. While all students have experienced some level of education disruption, with rippled effects on their learning and wellbeing, some have faced greater barriers, have been more emotionally impacted, and have required more support to return to school and complete their education.

The challenge for schools is therefore to address the basic needs of all students to participate in and complete education while also responding to the specific needs or barriers of those who are most at risk of learning disengagement and dropping out (see also Module 3, 4 and 5).
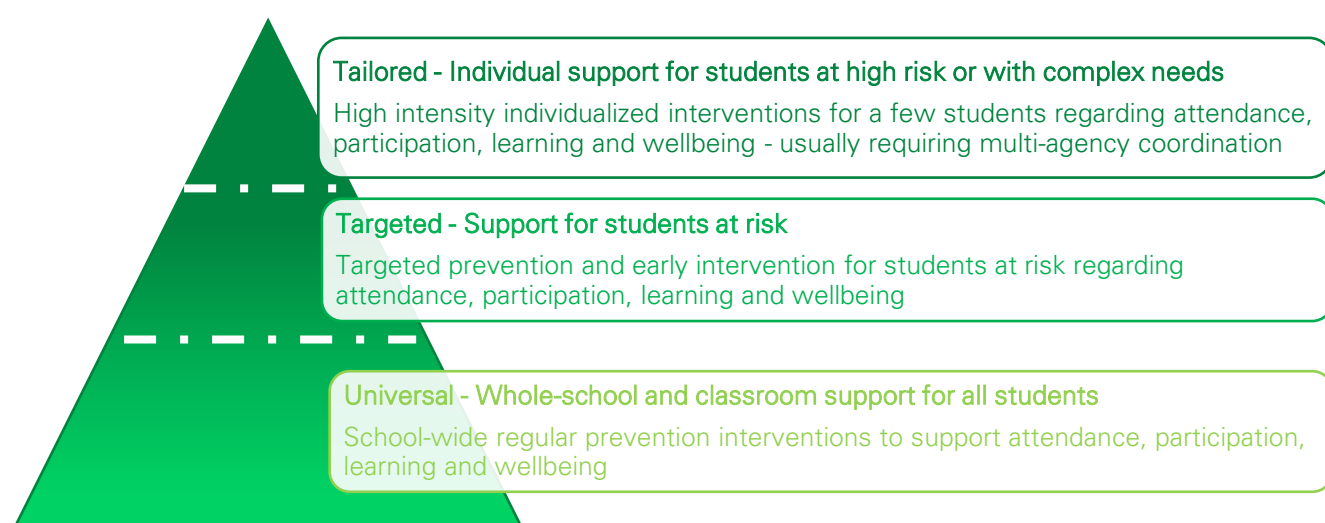
To this end, a simple model for conceptualizing school-based student support and dropout interventions is a **three-tier approach**[1] which categorizes interventions by **level of intensity** for specific groups:

- **Universal** interventions, for all students and benefiting the whole-school community,
- **Targeted** interventions, for students at risk requiring additional support, and
- **Tailored** interventions, for individuals at very high risk of dropping out requiring highly intensive and individualized support.

Universal interventions support the basic attendance, behaviour, academic and socio-emotional wellbeing needs of all students to support their participation in and completion of education and require a low level of resources (time, funds and human resources), as interventions are mainstreamed. This allows for the allocation of more resources to fewer students requiring additional or individualized interventions for participating in and completing their education.

---

[1] This is loosely based on Response-to-Intervention, a multi-tier approach developed in the USA for the early identification and support of students with learning and behaviour needs (see http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti for more information). Variations of this model have since been developed and used across the world in all sectors, particularly social assistance and services and education.

Figure 6 Three-tier approach to dropout prevention

Source: Adapted from UNICEF (2017) and Eire Department of Education (2021)

The three-tier approach embodies the principles of a two-pronged whole-school approach to dropout prevention, as schools address the needs of all students (universal interventions), while providing additional support to at-risk or the most vulnerable students (targeted/tailored interventions). Adopting a three-tier approach to student support and dropout prevention is a cornerstone of inclusive education.

Dropout prevention in compulsory and non-compulsory education settings

The principles of a whole-school approach to dropout and early school leaving prevention are similar in both compulsory and non-compulsory education. The following might differ according to context: the legal requirements, the environment, the data and tracking systems, the external partners/services and the type of interventions that schools put in place to support students to remain in education even beyond compulsory school age.

Most countries in Europe and Central Asia will have some policies in place to encourage and support students to complete upper secondary education, even when it is not compulsory, or engage in training before entering the job market. Reducing early leaving, which was a key target for the EU by 2020, remains a priority in the discussions for the finalization of the Education and Training Agenda for 2030. The Council of the European Union's conclusions on equity and inclusion in education and training in order to promote educational success for all (2021) promote the reduction of early learning as a key strategy for equity and inclusion in education. In addition, the new EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020-2030 includes the following education objectives:

- Cut gap in participation in early childhood education and care by at least half - to ensure that by 2030 at least 70 per cent of Roma children participate in pre-school;
- Reduce the gap in upper secondary completion by at least one third - to ensure that by 2030 the majority of Roma youth complete at least upper secondary education;
- Cut gap in NEET rate by at least half - to ensure that by 2030 fewer than one in three Roma youth are not in education, employment or training.

Below are common legal variables that are changing between compulsory and non-compulsory education, and between students that are below and above 18 years old:

- **Parental legal obligations and responsibilities**: in many countries, parents have a legal obligation to enrol children in compulsory education or to ensure school attendance, and failure to do so might result in legal action. This course of action usually does not apply when children are not of compulsory education age.
- **Student legal responsibilities**: in some countries, school truancy is recognized as a criminal offense that might trigger student legal responsibility above a certain age, particularly those who are still under a compulsory education obligation.
- **School legal obligations**: in some countries, school legal obligations may vary depending on students' age and level of education. For instance:
  - **Referral to external services** might be different in the case of a student under 18 years old (i.e., a child) and of a student beyond 18 years old, even if s/he is still engaged in compulsory education.
  - **Expulsion** rules also often tend to be different for compulsory education school-age children and others. For the former group, expulsion might not be possible, for the latter group, it might be allowed, with no obligation for other education institutions to accept them following a school expulsion.
  - **Enrolment rules** usually differ between compulsory and non-compulsory education institutions, with schools having more latitude to refuse the enrolment of students in non-compulsory education.
  - **Tracking and transition support** obligations might differ. In compulsory education, schools might be under an obligation to track and flag children when they change school or when they transition from one level of education to another, which might not be the case when young people are beyond compulsory school age.
- **Access to and availability of financial aid**: depending on the country, access to financial aid might stop or be reduced when children enrolled in education reach 18 years old or when students complete compulsory education.

MODULE 1 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers and teaching assistants. For better results, you might also consider including students, parents, external services and community stakeholders in this exercise. This situation analysis will be built upon by adding information from the assignments of the other modules.

Conduct a situation analysis to better understand the dropout phenomenon in your school.

Step 1: Who are the students dropping out in your school (profile)? Use all available data from previous years to: (i) profile dropout students (age, sex, ethnicity, etc.), (ii) identify dropout trends for specific groups.

Step 2: Conduct a SWOT analysis to identify school environment barriers and the school and school staff practices that might contribute to dropout, and that might mitigate dropout.

	Helpful to dropout prevention/reduction	**Harmful** to dropout prevention/reduction
Internal (school level)	**Strengths** (School factors that are likely to have a positive effect on – or be an enabler to – reducing dropout.)	**Weaknesses** (School factors that are likely to have a negative effect on – or be a barrier to – reducing dropout.)
External (environment)	**Opportunities** (External factors that are likely to have a positive effect on reducing dropout in your school.)	**Threats** (External factors and conditions that are likely to have a negative effect reducing dropout in your school.)

Step 3: Map the main legislation and regulations related to dropout prevention in your country and identify the specific responsibilities of schools and other stakeholders in preventing and responding to dropout. *(This will be different for compulsory and non-compulsory education and you might want to focus on the level of education of your school only).*

Step 4: Brainstorm what has worked/not worked in dropout prevention in your school in the past. How do you know what has worked/not worked? How robust is the evidence or data you used to assess what has worked/not worked? What lessons has your school learned about dropout prevention?

MODULE 2.

IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

Module 2 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: About Early Warning Systems for dropout prevention • Introduction to Early Warning Systems • Selection of dropout risk indicators • School responsibilities for identifying students at risk of dropping out Unit 2: Planning support for students at risk of dropping out • Student needs assessment • Case management • Planning students' support interventions • Data protection Module 2 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Describe the steps of a simple Early Warning System for dropout prevention; • Identify key indicators for identifying students at risk of dropping out; • Identify roles and responsibilities for collecting data and drawing a list of students at risk of dropping out in the school; • Describe the purpose of and possible approaches to a student needs assessment; • Explain case management; • Describe the content of a student dropout prevention plan; • Identify a few strategies to ensure student data protection.	

The previous module explored the wide-ranging and overlapping factors that can contribute to the dropout process. It is critical to understand these factors in order to provide comprehensive and targeted dropout prevention support in addressing those underlying issues.

This module provides basic principles for the identification and support of students at risk of dropping out. Specific support interventions are investigated further in the other modules.

UNIT 1: IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT FROM SCHOOL

This section explains how to develop a school-based Early Warning System for dropout prevention. Early Warning Systems are part of the Universal Interventions (Tier 1 intervention, see Module 1 Unit 2) that can be adopted by schools as part of a whole-school approach to dropout prevention.

Module 1 explains that dropout risk factors can be numerous, complex and overlapping, but not deterministic. This means that students, depending on their background, personality, environment, and support networks will respond differently to hardship and setbacks. The challenge is to identify students at risk of dropping out so as to provide timely and holistic support. Risk factors can be indicative but, used alone, are insufficient. Therefore, schools are encouraged to combine their knowledge of students' situations with **common predictors of dropout** to inform their dropout prevention work.

Introduction to Early Warning Systems (EWS)

An EWS is a tool that aims to identify students at risk of dropping out from school, based on the presence of predictors or 'red flags': specific factors that contribute to dropout. It is a system (i.e., a sequence of procedures that have been thought through and that are recognized and shared by all concerned staff) that enables schools and education authorities to identify students with specific needs and support them in a timely and appropriate way.

Some schools might already have systems in place to identify students at risk of dropping out, which might need to be updated to accommodate the education disruption due to COVID-19, others might need to devise one in the context of school returns after the pandemic.

An EWS comprises of five simple steps to identify students at risk of not returning to school and supporting their (re)enrolment.

Figure 7 Five steps of an Early Warning System for dropout prevention
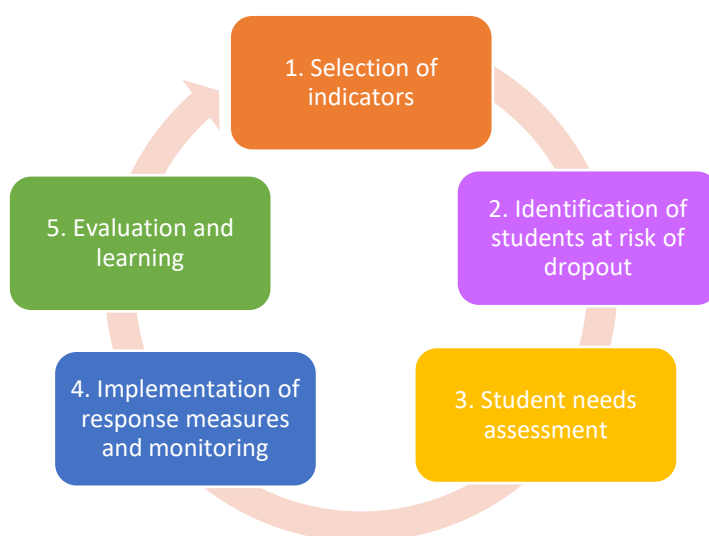
Source: UNICEF, Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping Out, Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, 2018.

Selection of dropout predictors

To select dropout risk indicators, or predictors, schools can:

- Identify and prioritize the main dropout risk factors based on contextual evidence;
- Formulate an indicator for each predictor of dropout and identify how the data will be collected;
- Consider allocating different weights to different indicators to make the Early Warning System sufficiently sensitive to dropout risks;
- Agree on thresholds upon which students will be identified as 'at risk' or 'at high risk' of dropping out.

To establish a list of students at risk of dropping out, schools are encouraged to use existing data from their EMIS/SMIS systems and complement this with data they collect manually.

Research shows that the main predictors of dropout are: (i) Absenteeism, (ii) Behaviour, (iii) Academic performance, to which we can add (iv) Socio-economic status, (v) Disability, (vi) Age or repetition, (vii) Language, (viii) Specific family circumstances, and (ix) Low parental engagement.

Below are examples of indicators that could be used to identify students at risk of dropping out.

Table 4 Predictors and indicators of dropout risk prior to and during COVID-19

Predictor	Example of indicator prior to COVID-19	Example of indicator in the COVID-19 context
Absenteeism	Unjustified absences above two days/month	Attending 70 per cent or less online classes Student has not re-enrolled or returned to school in the new academic year Student has not been located
Behaviour	Number of suspensions, number of referrals to school senior management for discipline	Participating in 50 per cent or fewer check-in calls with teachers or peers Demonstrated signs of stress and anxiety
Academic performance	Achievement below mark X in language/maths	Submitting 70 per cent or fewer assignments Assignments are of poor quality (below mark X in language/maths)
Socio-economic status	Recipient of/eligible for social benefits, parents' employment status	Parental loss of livelihood No or limited access to IT devices/Internet at home
Special alerts to identify a specific issue or additional risk, such as:		

Disability or chronic illness	Insufficient school staff/resources for the child to fully participate in school	Limited access to assistive technology Underlying medical conditions affecting COVID-19 risk
Age or repetition	Two years above normal grade age; repeated 2 years	
Language	Medium of instruction is not the mother tongue language	Limited access to distance materials in mother tongue language Limited access to distance learning due to language limitations
Personal circumstances	Migrant or refugee background,[2] young offender, child protection concerns, working children, pregnancy/parenthood, marriage, previous dropout history, dropout history in the family, high family mobility.	
Sense of belonging to the school	Perceived level of acceptance by teachers and peers (self-reported)	Level of perception to questions such as 'Most teachers in the school are interested in me' or 'There at least one adult in the school I have been in regular contact with'
Low family engagement	Parents missed last parent meeting; parents refused to meet school staff	Parents nonresponsive to school's outreach effort during the pandemic Limited ability of parents to support learning at home

Schools are invited to fine-tune the list of indicators of their EWS based on practice and their own context. When the selected indicators lead to most of the students in the school being identified as at risk of dropping out, there is a need to review and finetune the indicators selected so as to identify those who are the most at risk of dropping out.

Framework for assessing remote learning attendance and absenteeism

Attendance Works proposes to add the following aspects to traditional attendance monitoring so as to reflect the specificities of remote learning following the pandemic:

- **Contact** – Has the school been able to contact the student?
- **Connectivity** – Has the student access to technology and the Internet?
- **Relationship** – Has the student reported a positive relationship with at least one adult in the school? Has the student participated in group relationship-building activities led by teachers or peers?
- **Participation** – Has the student participated in learning opportunities?

---

[2] Sometimes, unaccompanied migrant or refugee children receive more support through host countries than migrant or refugee children with their families. Both family circumstances must therefore be taken into consideration.

Possible indicators

per cent of families with updated contact information

per cent of families located

per cent of students unreachable

per cent of students/families with technology (computers, software and the internet)

per cent of students reporting positive relationships with at least one adult in the school

per cent of students participating in group relationship-building activities led by teachers or peers

per cent of peers participating in learning opportunities at least 95 per cent of the time

per cent of students missing 10 per cent of school time/classes or more

Implications for schools

Strategies to locate students – phone calls, social media, home visits, working with neighbours and peers, NGOs, mediators, etc., to identify preferred ways of communication throughout distance learning.

Strategies to assess the connectivity of students – through surveys, discussions, etc., to identify alternative means of teaching and learning where connectivity is limited, and ways of disseminating learning materials and submitting assignments.

Strategies to assess students' connectedness with the school – through survey or discussion, and through attendance monitoring of teacher and peer-led relationship-building activities and support groups.

Strategies to assess participation in learning opportunities, whether synchronous (in-person or online) or asynchronous – through attendance checks in in-person/online classes, built-in software tracking systems/platform analytics to assess log-ins times and completion of online learning materials, and monitoring of assignment submissions (online or otherwise). Schools might need support from IT experts or platform providers to understand how best to collect, analyse and use available analytics to assess participation in distance learning. For asynchronous non-online learning, learning journals and assignment submissions can be used as proxies. Students and parents may take pictures of students studying and/or assignments.

Source: Adapted from Attendance Works

✂ **Steps to assess attendance in distance learning**

1. Define the learning opportunity for the term/semester – students might be expected to participate in a mix of in-person, synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

2. Track attendance and/or participation for each learning opportunity – different tools will be used for synchronous (in-person or online) and asynchronous activities.

3. Calculate attendance and/or participation rates.

4. Calculate the absence rate for each student.

5. Analyse patterns.

Table 5 below gives an example of dropout predictors used in Serbia to identify students at risk of dropping out.

School responsibilities for identifying students at risk of dropout

To identify students, schools can:

- Establish how data will be collected and recorded for each indicator (how and by whom);
- Draw up lists of students at risk and/or at high risk of dropping out;
- Keep the necessary data on children who have not come back to school; and
- Report cases of children who have not returned to school to education authorities through the appropriate channels and in accordance with data privacy regulations.

Schools can adopt various approaches to manage the task of identifying students at risk of dropping out:

- Responsibility of the school management;
- Responsibility of a school team (e.g., school dropout team or school inclusion team);
- Shared responsibility between individuals (e.g., homeroom teachers might screen students for some indicators while school management provides information on others);
- Role of school support staff such as school psychologists and pedagogues in flagging dropout risks; and
- A combination of the above.

In secondary schools, data from several teachers on the attendance, behaviour and academic performance indicators might need to be aggregated. Homeroom teachers or the school management might facilitate data collection and aggregation.

Examples of how schools in various countries have created EWS can be found in the Additional Resources below.

> **!** Use information collected in Module 1 Assignment to inform the selection of your Early Warning System indicator.

Additional resources

Definitions, data and EWS

- Attendance Works, *Monitoring Attendance in the 2021-22 school year*, 2020.
- UNICEF, *Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping Out*, Geneva, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), 2018.
- UNICEF, *Improving Education Participation: Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout*, UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Vol 2. Geneva, UNICEF ECARO, 2017.
- UNICEF, *All children returning to school and learning. Considerations for monitoring access and learning participation during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic*, 2020.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo and UNICEF, *Equity in Education for All: Manual for School Prevention and Response Teams Towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in Compulsory Education*, 2014.
- UNICEF and University of Cambridge, *Piloting an Early Warning System in Schools in Kazakhstan*, 2019.

Key European Union publications on early school leaving:

- European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper Reducing early school leaving. Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving*, Brussels, European Commission, 2010.
- European Commission, *Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions, Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda*, Brussels, European Commission, 2011.
- European Commission Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving*, Brussels, European Commission, November 2013
- European Commission, *A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving: Policy messages,* Education & Training 2020, Schools Policy: Education and Culture Directorate General, 2015.
- For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en

Other useful dropout prevention resources:

- School Education Gateway https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm
- Montenegro Bureau for Educational Services, *Manual for professionals (teachers, professional associates, principals, Roma and Egyptian assistants) and all those who*

are interested in prevention of dropping out of schools in Montenegro, Podgorica, Ministry of Education, 2013.

- UNICEF Kyrgyzstan, _Children out of school in Kyrgyzstan. Guidelines for working with children who do not attend school_, 2016. (In Russian)

- Jovanović et al., _How to be a caring school? A study on the Effects of Prevention and Intervention Measures for Preventing the Dropout of Students from the Education System of the Republic of Serbia_, Belgrade, UNICEF, Centre for Education Policy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2016.

Table 5 Description of Risk Intensity in the Instrument for Identification of Students at Dropout Risk in Serbia

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Socio-economic status	The student lives without elementary living conditions: in unhygienic settlements, without electricity and water. Both parents are unemployed or one of the parents is employed in a poorly paid job.	The student comes from a region where there is electricity and water. Both parents are unemployed or one of the parents is employed in a poorly paid job (under the poverty line)[3]	The student whose family is on the line of poverty and/or receiving assistance from the wider family or a family member.	Students of average socio-economic status.	Students of higher socio-economic status.
Absenteeism	The student was not present at 30 per cent or more of the total number of school classes.	The student was not present at 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the total number of school classes.	The student was not present at 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the total number of school classes.	The student was not present at 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the total number of school classes.	The student was not present at fewer than 5 per cent of the total number of school classes.
Academic achievement	The student has lowest mark in five or more subjects (in any classification period).	The student has lowest mark in three or four subjects (in any classification period).	The student has lowest mark in one or two subjects.	The student has passed the majority of subjects (mark 2)	The student has a similar or higher achievement in relation to the school average.
Behaviour	Some of the behavioural problems are so severe that they interfere with the normal functioning of the student within the school and extracurricular contexts: 1) resistance to the authorities (e.g., conflict with teachers); 2) peer violence; 3) antisocial behaviour (refusing to socialize with peers); 4) addiction (alcoholism, drug addiction); 5) delinquency.	Problems in behaviour from these five categories are expressed, but the student is successful in certain segments of their behaviour (socializing, achievement, attendance and behaviour in class, etc.).	Behavioural problems are present, but they are of low intensity and do not interfere with the normal functioning of the child in and outside the school.	Some behavioural problems used to be present, but they are not any more.	The student has never had behavioural problems.

---

3 According to the data of the Statistic Office of the Republic of Serbia, from 2012, the relative line of poverty per household is 13 680 RSD (≈123 EUR, currency rate from 2012) for a one-member family; for a four member family with two young students aged 14 the relative line of poverty per household is 28 728 RSD (≈261 EUR, currency rate from 2012) and 24.6 per cent of households were at risk of poverty at that time (The Survey on Income and Living Conditions – SILC, 2013).

Compliance with requirements/use of social assistance4	The student is eligible to benefit from social assistance, but the family does not receive aid for any reason.	The student is eligible to benefit from social assistance, and is currently a recipient of aid.	The student is from a family eligible to benefit from social assistance and is a user of social assistance or lives at the poverty line.	The student has benefited from social assistance in the past, but no longer does so due to decreased need.	The student has never had the need to benefit from social assistance.
Peer Acceptance	The acceptance of the student in the school is not satisfactory and two out of the following three statements are correct: 1) does not have a friend; 2) is the target of bullying; 3) social interaction is within a very small and closed group (e.g., ghettoization, group of two Roma students, etc.)	The acceptance of the student in the school is not satisfactory and one of the following three statements is correct: 1) does not have a friend; 2) is the target of bullying; 3) social interaction is within a very small and closed group (e.g., ghettoization, group of two Roma students, etc.)	The student is more or less accepted in the school, but some of the problems from the previous two categories are present.	The student's acceptance in the school is satisfactory, but there are some problems.	The student is accepted in the school and none of the stated problems are present.
Other risk factors	There are one or more other risk factors such as abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, repeating grades, exile, incomplete families, has experienced trauma and the like, and the effect on the student is significant and visible.	Expresses some of the risk factors, such as abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, exile, incomplete families, has experienced trauma and the like. Its effect is moderate, but there is a possibility that is could influence the interruption of schooling.	The effects of these risk factors exist but are minimal.	Risk factors were active at some point in the student's life, but are currently not present.	The risk factors for dropping out have never existed in the student's life.

Source: Jovanović et al., *How to be a caring school? A study on the Effects of Prevention and Intervention Measures for Preventing the Dropout of Students from the Education System of the Republic of Serbia*, Belgrade: UNICEF, Centre for Education Policy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2016.

---

4 Small reminder (Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette of RS, no. 24/2011) Who acquires the conditions to become a user of the system of social protection by Serbian law? Minor without (or at risk of losing) parental care; minor whose parents argue over ways to perform parental rights; minor with disabilities (physical, intellectual, speech-language, socio-emotional); a minor who is facing difficulties due to the abuse of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicants; minor at risk of abuse, neglect and domestic violence; adult person with disabilities (physical, intellectual, sensory, communication difficulties); an adult who is at risk of abuse, neglect and domestic violence; adult person who faces difficulties due to disturbed relations in the family or addiction to alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants. Who gains the right to financial support? Individuals who do not receive a monthly income higher than 6,050 dinars.

UNIT 2: PLANNING SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

Once students at risk of dropping out have been identified, the next step is to organize support interventions to ensure they remain in education. To do so, schools need to understand the specific needs and barriers to education and learning of each student to be able to devise appropriate measures. This requires some level of planning and coordination. To do so, a case management system can be established, and schools can use a simple student plan to organize and coordinate their support for the student.

Student needs assessment

Once students at risk of dropping out are identified, **information regarding the reasons for disengagement or dropout risk** are necessary for school staff to provide relevant support interventions. This can be done more or less formally, depending on staff time, through:

- Examination of the student's school file;
- Discussions with the student and their families;
- Discussions with other relevant stakeholders (teachers, including teachers from previous years, school staff and external staff involved in learning support with the student, sports coaches, social services, mediators, NGOs, local authorities, etc.);
- Use of needs assessment forms; and
- Additional psychometric tests to gain a deeper understanding of students' wellbeing, sense of belonging to the school, and overall education and school experience.

> **!** On some occasions, needs assessment may lead to the **disclosure or suspicion of neglect, abuse or violence**. In such cases, referrals are to be made to the appropriate agencies. See Module 7 for more information on referrals.

Dropout risks and reasons for absences and learning disengagement can be complex and perceived differently by different stakeholders. Gathering and triangulating information from several sources is therefore critical to understanding these different perspectives. When working with families, consider the different perceptions of fathers and mothers.

Figure 8 Perspectives of various stakeholders on dropout risk factors
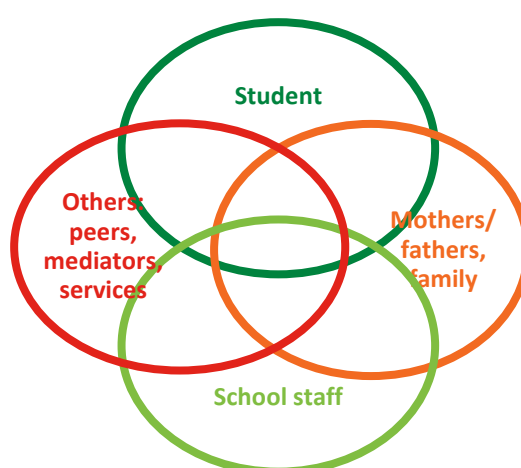
Informal discussions with students and families and needs assessments are best kept simple. They typically look for answers to the following questions:

> 1. What are the barriers to school attendance and learning?
>
> 2. What can be done to help the student re-engage in learning and return to/remain in school?

Examples of information that could be collected during a needs assessment include:

Table 6 Type of information to gather during a needs assessment

Dimensions	Coverage
1. Household characteristics	Household composition Care responsibilities in the household (who has responsibility over the student, who is looking after the student, who is looking after the other children of the household)
2. Main barriers to learning and school attendance (i.e., reasons for absenteeism)	See Module 1 – dropout risk factors
3. Major issues faced by, and strengths of, the family, such as:	• Housing, employment, finances • Discrimination and social relationships • Family relationships • Parenting skills • Caring responsibilities • Significant events that impact the family • Providing a supportive environment for the child to study • Impact of COVID-19
4. Major issues faced by, and strengths of, the child, such as:	• Physical and mental health • Disability and/or special educational needs • Impact of COVID-19 and education disruption • Family and social relationships • Education and life aspirations • Caring responsibilities

	• Negative school experience • Discrimination • Significant events that have impacted the student, including trauma and adverse childhood experience • Areas of interest, talents
5. Ways forward to retain the student in school, including:	• Actions to be taken by the family • Actions to be taken by the student • Actions to be taken by the school • Actions to be taken by specific institutions to support the child (and family when relevant) to stay in school, e.g., social services, municipality, mediators, NGOs, etc.) • Actions to be taken by other stakeholders (broader support network), e.g., family relatives, classmates, community members, businesses, etc.

Source: Adapted from UNICEF Bulgaria and Ministry of Education and Science (2018)

> **!** Students might not be able to articulate their wishes, needs, intents and the actions they wish to undertake due to language issues, low self-esteem or a feeling of not having power to influence things. Schools might consider engaging with community-based organizations (e.g., Roma organizations, migrant and refugee children organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities) or with school psychologists or specialist teachers to support with translation and communication.
>
> When the needs assessment process appears overwhelming for students, it is critical to prioritize the key questions and ask them informally or over several short sessions, if this is more appropriate for the student. School staff need to develop strategies to learn about students' challenges through non-invasive questioning techniques.

Case management

Case management is typically used by social workers to organize and coordinate multi-agency support for children and families with multiple needs. The approach can also be used by schools when coordinating prevention and response interventions for students at risk of dropping out involving several school staff and possibly parents and external stakeholders.

- *Case*: the person or the child in need of support
- *Management*: organized procedures and mechanisms

In dropout prevention, **case management aims to**:

- Coordinate, record and monitor activities undertaken by the school to prevent and respond to the dropout risk of a given student;
- Identify and mobilize the necessary resources inside and outside the school to support the student;
- Bring together professionals from all sectors, parents/caregivers and informal networks to support the child holistically when necessary.

A case management process involves:

- A case manager;
- A support network, i.e., several people who play a supporting role in the life of the child, such as a school dropout prevention team member, an inclusive education team or IEP team, teachers, parents/family members, mediators, student friends, other members of the community as relevant).

The role of the Case managers typically involves:

- Being the focal point for the family and all professionals working with the student;
- Liaising with the student and the family to assess needs and explore solutions;
- Organizing meetings with all parties concerned to identify dropout interventions;
- Developing (alone or with the help of a school team) a Student Dropout Prevention Plan;
- Monitoring the progress of activities;
- Calling meetings with all parties concerned to review key indicators, review the effectiveness of dropout prevention measures, adapt activities and plan next steps.

> **!** While the case manager coordinates activities for a case, <u>s/he is not</u> the sole person responsible for decision-making, monitoring and progress reviews. These must be undertaken with other members of the school, such as the school dropout team or other teachers, and/or the community and, when relevant, jointly with the child and the parents.

Planning student support interventions

Student plans

Students Dropout Prevention Plans are useful tools to record and coordinate actions taken by the school to return a child to school and prevent dropout. A simple plan would include information on:

- The student's **dropout risk factors**, based on the needs assessment, and provide information on key predictors/indicators of dropout, such as attendance, behaviour, learning, etc.;
- **Protective factors** and strengths which could help the student to remain at school, such as interests, talents, social networks, emotional maturity, motivation and other strengths;
- **Goals** for the plan, e.g., reducing absenteeism or tardiness; Improving marks in maths, increasing participation in online learning, etc;
- **Actions to be taken, when and by whom:** interventions that will be implemented by the school, parents, the student and external school stakeholders whenever relevant, e.g., mediator, municipality representative, education authorities, etc.
- **Progress monitoring**.

An example of Student Dropout Plan can be found below (Figure 9)

Individual Student Dropout Prevention Plans work best when parents and students are involved in their development and have contributed their own solutions and committed to implementing specific activities to reduce the dropout risk. Actively involving students in planning for their return to school/preventing dropout will help build a sense of belonging and connection. Usually one focal point (the case manager) is in charge of drawing up the plan.

The relationship between a dropout prevention plan and an IEP will vary from country to country. To avoid multiple plans and parallel systems at school levels, in some countries where IEPs have a broad remit, dropout prevention work is included under the IEP of the student. In others, dropout prevention activities might complement interventions planned in the IEP. At the school level, where time and resources are limited, it is important to avoid duplication and maximize synergies between dropout prevention and other student support processes.

> ! The pandemic has put a lot of pressure on schools and increased teachers' workloads. Filling out forms can be time consuming for teachers. Schools are invited to find the strategies that work for them and their teams, so as to keep the administrative burden to a minimum.

Figure 9 Example of student dropout prevention plan

Student Dropout Prevention Plan – General Information		
Pupil's name		
Date of birth		
Pupil's class		
Name of manager/coordinator of the student support		
		Data/Information
Dropout signs	□ Absenteeism	
	□ Poor behaviour…	
	□ Poor learning achievement	
	□ Other *(specify)*	
		Information
Dropout risk factors *(according to parents, the student and the school – perspectives may vary and must be reflected here)*	*Open list* *or* *build-in list from the Early Warning System when the school has one* (examples of factors are provided in Module 1)	
	(insert lines as necessary)	
Strengths of the student *(protective factors, interests, talents, etc.)*		

Measures					
What? Description of the intervention measures	For what? Expected results	By when? Deadline for implementation	Who? Responsible person for implementation	Comments (on implementation, resources needed, etc.)	Review implement ation by (date)

Referral	
Has the student been referred to external services/professionals	Yes/No……………………………Date: Details:

Case closure	
Date	
Comment	

Wrap-around approaches

Type of interventions

To be holistic, support interventions might cover different aspects of student and family life, as well as different aspects of student's school experience. Supporting interventions from external stakeholders might also be included. Interventions that are addressing multiple issues are often referred to as 'wrap-around the child' interventions.

Examples of dropout interventions:
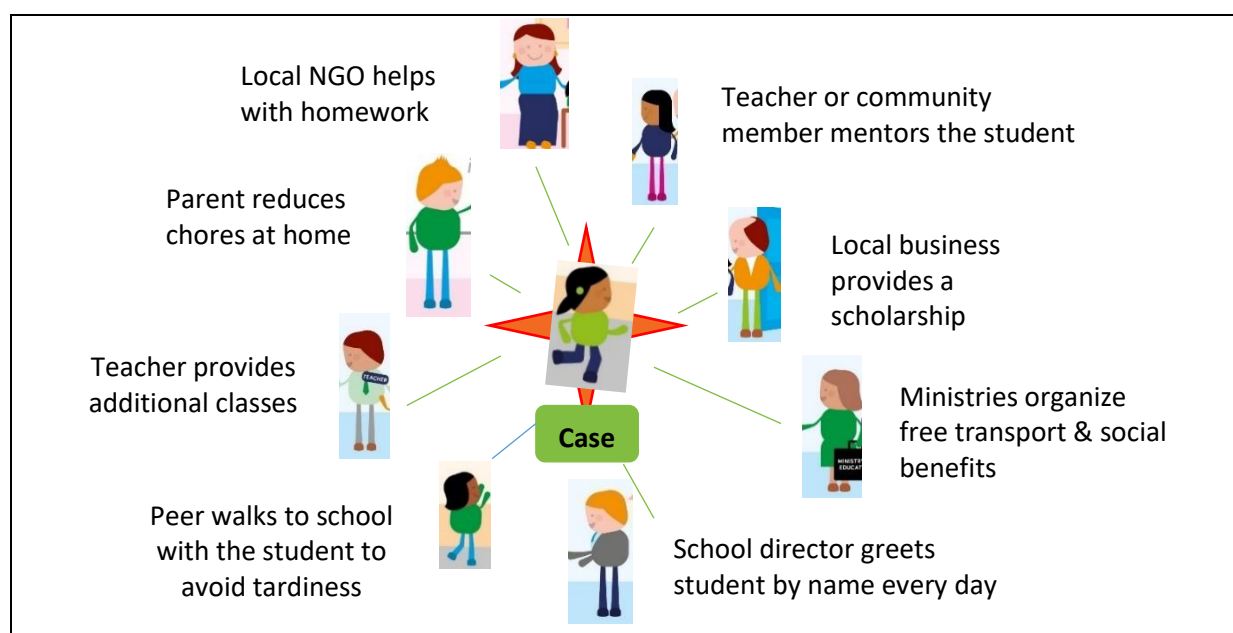
- Socio-economic support;
- Parental engagement;
- Attendance and tardiness support;
- Learning support;
- Negative attitudes, fears and motivation support;
- Socio-emotional wellbeing support;
- Behavioural support;

A range of supporting interventions are presented throughout this toolkit, particularly in Modules 3 to 7.

Responsibilities for implementation

Dropout prevention interventions can be implemented by many different stakeholders depending on needs: school management, teachers, families, social workers and other community members, such as mediators, sports coaches, mentors, etc.

Below is an example of formal and informal networks involved in the implementation of a Student Dropout Prevention Plan.

> **Effectiveness criteria for dropout prevention and response interventions**
>
> Overall, experience shows that dropout interventions are most effective when they are:
>
> - **Holistic,** covering different aspects of student and family life;
> - **Timely,** implemented as early as possible;
> - **Individual,** based on the particular needs of a boy or girl or their family;
> - **Applied consistently** by all parties concerned;
> - **Delivered over a long period of time;**
> - **Participatory and empowering,** i.e., interventions are jointly decided with the student/family and that build on the strengths of the family and the talents and potential of the student;
> - **Coordinated,** across school staff and agencies;
> - **Monitored and evaluated,** to review what is working best, what is not working and inform the school dropout intervention practices.

Data protection

An Early Warning System, and any approach aiming to identify students at risk of dropping out, collects **sensitive data** on students, particularly the most vulnerable students. This can include data on disability, migration or refugee status, ethnicity, conflict with the law, and other sensitive family and personal circumstances. Such data is personal and private, sensitive, and not aimed to be shared with a wide range of stakeholders.

Leakages or the sharing of such data can potentially harm children and their families when the data or information reaches: (i) neighbours, family relatives, friends, student peers, or, (ii) other service providers/institutions for which the family did not give consent for data sharing. This is particularly the case for information on health and mental health, domestic violence, child violence and abuse, substance abuse, jail sentences, etc.

Sometimes, information which does not seem sensitive, such as an address, can put a child or family at risk in complicated divorce or domestic violence cases, for instance, or when children and families are irregular migrants.

While some school staff might be able to access sensitive data to be able to support students, schools should take all necessary measures for keeping sensitive data safe and private.

This includes:

- Limit the level of access to student files to only those few people who are directly working with the student;
- Restrict access to confidential information to authorized staff in the school, such as the school director or the school psychologist;
- Avoid disclosing sensitive information and/or the name of the child when cases of students are discussed in a team meeting;
- Forbid information to be shared to other parents and/or students;
- Ensure that information stored or shared electronically is password protected.

Additional resources

Needs assessment tools

This is an example of a simple questionnaire that could be used and/or adapted by schools to identify and discuss students' engagement, sense of belonging and socio-emotional needs.

Once tailored to the need of the school and to the age of the child, questions can be clustered under themes, such as child characteristics, family support, emotional wellbeing, attitude towards school, attitude towards learning. Results can then be analysed. Clusters for which children demonstrate extreme answers (e.g., when children strongly disagree with Q2, 3,4 and 5, or when children strongly agree with Q11, 14, 42 and 43) will alert the school team. Teachers or school psychologists can further discuss with the child on that basis and identify support mechanisms to address the needs of students. *This tool might need to be adapted to the language and age of the child, through translation, use of emojis and administration of the questionnaire by a member of the school, who can mediate and explain questions where needed.*

N	Statements	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
1	I get on well with my family (parents, siblings)				
2	I feel safe and protected at home				
3	My parents/carers think that my education is important				
4	My parents/carers want me to do well in school				
5	My parents/carers support me with my schoolwork				
6	I have enough time to do my homework at home				
7	Doing my homework at home is difficult				
8	I feel tired when I am at school				
9	I feel hungry when I am at school				
10	I am often unhappy and tearful				
11	I worry a lot				
12	I get very angry and I lose my temper				
13	I like coming to school				
14	I get a lot of headaches, stomach aches or sickness				
15	I am intelligent				
16	I am good at learning new things quickly in school				

17	School is easy for me				
18	I have one or several favourite subjects				
19	I am confident in my ability to succeed in school				
20	I am interested in learning new things at school and outside				
21	I work hard at school				
22	I find it difficult to concentrate in class				
23	I am a responsible student				
24	I complete my schoolwork regularly				
25	I would like teachers to help me more with my learning				
26	I participate a lot in class				
27	My teachers treat me like any other student in the class				
28	I attend extracurricular activities at school				
29	My lessons/classes are interesting				
30	I like my teachers.				
31	My teachers care about me.				
32	I like my classes/lessons.				
33	Doing well in school is important for my future career goals				
34	I want to do well in school				
35	I want to continue school as long as possible				
36	I am self-motivated to do my schoolwork				
37	I am organized about my schoolwork				
38	I spend a lot of time on my schoolwork				
39	I put a lot of effort in my schoolwork				
40	I need more help with my schoolwork				
41	I have one good friend or more in school				
42	I am nervous in new situations and I easily lose confidence				
43	Other children or young people often pick on me or bully me				
44	I have one good friend or more outside of school				
45	There is one adult I can talk to about my problems at school				

Source: Adapted from (i) McCoach, B. and Siegle, D. (2003) The School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised. Educational and Psychological Measurement, Vol. 63 No. 3, June 2003 414-429; and (ii) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (www.sdqinfo.com).

School support plans

- UNICEF Kazakhstan, *Prevention of school dropouts: School Support Plans*, co-authored by UNICEF and Nazerbayev University, Kazakhstan, 2020.

1. What needs assessment tools are available in your school, if any? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

2. Review how your school organizes the support for students at risk of dropping out. Identify strengths and weaknesses.

3. To what extent would developing a case management system in your school more effectively help you support students at risk of dropping out?

MODULE 2 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 4 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers and teaching assistants. You might also consider including district or regional education officials in this exercise. This dropout EWS can be used as the foundation upon which the response interventions presented in the remaining modules can be articulated.

Develop a simple dropout EWS for your school.

Step 1: Selection of indicators

1. Identify up to seven indicators that could be used to identify students at risk of dropping out in your school.

2. How can you rephrase these indicators so that they can be easily measured? For instance, if you have identified 'absenteeism' as an indicator, specify the number of hours/days of absence after which the student is considered as being at risk of dropping out, or the number of online classes or distance assignments not submitted, after which the student is considered as being at risk of dropping out.

3. Review your list of indicators and allocate a coefficient to the most significant indicators to ensure those students most at risk of dropping are being correctly identified.

Step 2. Organizing the identification of students at risk of dropping out in your school:

1. Identify who should be responsible in your school for (i) collecting and aggregating data on the EWS indicators, (ii) conducting student needs assessments, (iii) planning dropout prevention interventions for students at risk, (iv) undertaking case management (coordinating dropout prevention support interventions for students at risk of dropping out).

2. Draft the assessment tools your school would use to identify the specific needs of students at risk of dropping.

Step 3. Identify students at risk of dropping out in your school

1. Based on the system you have developed (indicators, responsibilities and process), establish a list of students in your class/school that have not returned to school or are at risk of dropping out.

2. Using a few children identified under 1. above as examples, experiment with the student dropout prevention plan format proposed in this module. What adjustments need to be made to the template for it to be fully relevant to your context and school?

3. Outline the measures and mechanisms your school must undertake to ensure that all data (paper and electronic) handled under dropout prevention activities will be protected and stored appropriately to avoid leaks.

MODULE 3.

SUPPORTING STUDENT (RE)ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING

Module 3 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: Welcome back strategies • Universal interventions • Targeted interventions Unit 2: Supporting education transitions • Barriers to smooth education transitions • A framework for school transitions • Examples of interventions to support education transitions • Education transition plans Module 3 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Explain the five intervention principles following events that may have caused trauma • Describe universal and targeted welcome back strategies that can be implemented by the school management and teachers • Identify the barriers to school education transitions • Describe examples of interventions to support education transitions • Explain the role of education transition plans • Devise a three-tier model for supporting student reengagement and transition to higher levels of education	

This module focuses on back-to-school and welcome strategies. Those can apply to the school return process throughout the pandemic, to the reintegration of students previously out of school or absent for long periods of time, and to students at risk of dropping out who are transitioning from one level of education to another.

UNIT 1 'WELCOME BACK' STRATEGIES

This unit presents welcome back strategies for students who have missed learning due to absence from school, due, for instance, to illness, seasonal migration, or the pandemic.

Welcome back strategies can be implemented by teachers, school management and other school staff. They aim to smooth students' return to school. They are useful in the pandemic context, but also beyond this. They can be implemented:

- When a child comes back to school after a long absence due to illness, seasonal migration or other reason;
- After a period of school closure or of distance learning;
- When students return back to school on a full-time basis after a period of hybrid learning;
- When students return to education after having dropped out for a period of time.

Some of these strategies can also be useful for children who have never been enrolled, although these children might need additional tailored support to remain in and succeed at school.

'Welcome back' strategies in the context of dropout prevention can be universal, i.e., for a whole class, or targeted interventions for specific groups.

> Hobfoll et al. (2007) have identified five intervention principles following events that may have caused trauma for individuals and communities:
>
> 1. **Promote a sense of safety** – so that children and adults feel safe upon their return to school.
>
> 2. **Promote a sense of calm** – so that emotions are normalized and children gradually feel relaxed and can self-regulate.
>
> **!** 3. **Promote a sense of self and collective efficacy** – so that children, staff and schools believe they can manage and take actions that will generate positive outcomes, and feel that they are part of a group that will generate and experience positive outcomes.
>
> 4. **Promote connectedness** – so that children and staff have the sense that they belong, are part of a social network and have supportive relationships.
>
> 5. **Promote hope** – so that children and staff have a sense that the situation will improve.

Universal interventions

Referring to the three-tier approach, universal interventions are those activities conducted throughout the school for all students. They are embedded in a whole-school approach to providing inclusive quality education and to smoothing the return to full-time in-person teaching for all students.

Universal welcome back strategies comprise of:

- Activities that help students (i) to reconnect with the school, (ii) to feel safe, (iii) to re-establish interactions between students, and (iv) to re-establish relationships between teachers and students;
- Activities that respond to students' anxieties and other socio-emotional needs.

Learning and wellbeing-specific interventions, which complement generic welcome back strategies, are presented in Module 4 and 5.

What school management can do:

- Share safety and COVID-19 mitigation rules ahead of time with students and parents in different formats and languages;
- Involve students in developing and mediating safety measures;
- Greeting students at the gate in the morning to make them feel welcome;
- Visiting each class individually to welcome back students;
- Communicate to students and parents what learning and wellbeing support exists in the school and community and how to access it;
- Communicate school COVID-19 mitigation measures;
- Survey students on their needs, expectations and ideas for improving the school environment and school climate; and
- Involve students in decision-making processes about school priorities, school improvement and improving teaching, skills development and wellbeing support.

What teachers can do:

- Organize a phone call, a one-to-one meeting or a home visit before the start of the academic year, particularly for the most marginalized or those who missed out in distance learning;
- Involve students in decorating the school/classroom to celebrate returning to school and making the learning environment more inviting;
- Create routines to ensure predictability and create a sense of psychological safety. These can include morning or entering-the-class routines, including greetings, checking-in, and centring/focusing routines, routines for transitioning between learning activities or classes, and end of class/day routines, including checking-out routines aimed at sharing feelings, worries and achievements;
- Make students feel valued and respected through discussions on how to improve their teaching and learning experience and making it more inclusive;
- Value all students' contributions and take an interest in what students have experienced and learned during school closure;
- Celebrate all achievements that occurred during school closure or hybrid learning;
- Provide a space for students to discuss their feelings and emotions in the classroom (see also Module 4);
- Share their own experiences of school closure and what they have learned from them with students;
- Encourage students to reconnect, bond and build friendships. This can be done through (i) morning rituals for students to come together as a group, (ii) recalling shared experiences, activities and fun classroom moments before and throughout the pandemic to strengthen students' sense of belonging, (iii) opportunities for peer support activities;

- Reassure students that the school and teachers will make extra effort to support them in their learning;
- Involve students in decisions about and participation in learning activities and maximizing opportunities for collaborative work;
- Give students responsibilities such as specific jobs or tasks to increase their self-efficacy;
- Using techniques to increase concentration, such as short learning intervals or drawing and physical activity in primary, and relaxation techniques, mindfulness, stretching and varied teaching methodologies in secondary;
- Assessing and discussing learning needs with students and implementing differentiated learning support strategies for different groups of students (See Module 5).

> **!** To be able to support students, teachers need to be aware of, name and acknowledge their own feelings and emotions. School management has a role to play to support teachers in doing so by providing safe spaces for discussion and ensuring that the varied perspectives of staff are listened to and respected.

Targeted interventions for specific groups

Additional welcome back strategies might need to be tailored for particular groups of children, such as children with disabilities, and children who did not participate in distance or hybrid learning and have been disconnected from school, learning and their peers for a long period of time.

Beyond the pandemic, welcome back strategies can be mainstreamed in classroom practices for students who have been absent from school due to illness, seasonal migration, or other reasons.

What school management can do:

- Organize a community meeting before the beginning of the academic year to meet students who could not attend distance learning and their parents;
- Work with mediators, community organizations and translators when necessary to facilitate contact and discussion with students ahead of the return to school when teachers have been unable to maintain regular contact with students due to lack of IT equipment or connectivity. This might be particularly useful with Roma and refugee communities.
- Provide as much information as possible on the school website, including videos presenting the school, the school activities and the school staff. Ensure that a range of communication methods, channels and media are used to reach the hardest-to-reach families. Mediators and community members can contribute content in ethnic minority languages;
- Involve parents and students in devising strategies to support students once they are back in school;
- Work with external health and social services and professionals, including NGOs.

What teachers can do:

- Help students catch up with their learning and homework through short targeted one-on-one or small group tutoring sessions (see also Module 5);
- Organize a peer-tutoring or a peer-mentoring system;
- Share lesson notes and homework electronically or via an e-learning platform;
- Develop a student support plan (or update the IEP) in collaboration with parents to identify the barriers to school return, and the needs and strengths of students with complex needs.

✂ **Strategies to support the return to school for (but not limited to) students with disabilities and special educational needs**

- Organize a virtual tour of the school to school returnees showing changes in classroom and school layout;
- Share photos/videos about new teachers and new school staff ahead of school return;
- Share new rules with students and parents ahead of time and explain what remains the same;
- Share new timetables and planned school and classroom activities ahead of time;
- Clarify and share expectations of students when returning to school;
- Allow time for the students to re-familiarize themselves with the school space, staff and peers;
- Enable students to spend time with known peers and staff (before moving to the next class for instance);
- Avoid testing directly after school return;
- Review learning from the previous year;
- Rebuild skills for learning;
- Use outdoor spaces;
- Create quiet and safe spaces for students to withdraw to;
- Include handwashing in the timetable; and
- Provide sensory equipment and activities.

Source: Adapted from The Autism Education Trust, UK.
https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/back-to-school/ (last accessed 15 July 2021)

! Schools and teachers will have gained valuable learning from implementing welcome back strategies after school closures due to the pandemic. Many of these strategies will be useful for regular dropout prevention work.

Tailored interventions

Tailored interventions for students at very high risk of dropping out and in need of highly intensive and individualized support will include some of the targeted strategies outlined

above and additional interventions from external agencies, depending on the child's situation. This might include additional support from school auxiliary staff, such as psychologists, special teachers or teaching assistants, and from social, health or judiciary services. All interventions will be tailored to the specific needs of the student and his/her family and cannot, therefore, be summarized in generic terms.

Additional resources

Back to school resources

- Back to school 2021 from Tes: https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/back-to-school#activities-and-transition
- UNICEF *Guidance for School Administrators to Communicate With Students, Parents/Caregivers And Teachers*, UNICEF ECARO, 2021.
- UNICEF, *Practical Tips for School Administrators to Help Guide the Reopening of Schools as Safely as Possible*, UNICEF ECARO, 2021.
- UNICEF, *Building Resilient Education Systems beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Second Set of Considerations for school reopening*, UNICEF ECARO, 2021.

Resources for back to school for children with disabilities

- The Autism Education Trust UK, https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/
- National Centre for Learning Disabilities, *Promising Practices to Accelerate Learning for Students With Disabilities During COVID-19 and Beyond*, 2021.
- UNICEF East-Asia and Pacific Region, *Ensuring an Inclusive Return to School for Children With Disabilities*, 2020.
- World Bank Group, *Learners with Disabilities & COVID-19 School Closures: Findings from a Global Survey Conducted by the World Bank's Inclusive Education Initiative*, 2021.

Reflect

1. What strategies have you put in place in your class/school during the pandemic to welcome students back to school?

2. What strategies have you put in place in your class/school to welcome students back after long periods of absenteeism?

3. What strategies from 1. and 2. above have worked well? Why? What strategies have not worked that well? Why?

UNIT 2: SUPPORTING EDUCATION TRANSITIONS

Welcome back strategies can also be used to support students at risk of dropping out throughout education transitions. Education transitions are critical in dropout prevention as so many dropouts occur when students are progressing to the next education level. This unit explains the role of supporting education transitions in dropout prevention work.

Barriers to smooth education transitions

Transition between education cycles should be considered as a process over time rather than a one-off event. Both students and parents might have concerns over transitioning

from one level of education to another, whether from preschool to Grade 1, primary to lower secondary, or lower secondary to upper secondary.

Some students might feel more anxious than excited when undertaking an education transition. They might experience a loss of attachment to friends and familiar teachers, worry about uncertainty, absence of predictability and feel that they are losing control. Some of these factors have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Crowded transport to school and appropriateness of school COVID-19 mitigation measures also need to be considered as additional factors of concern for some parents and students when they transition to a new school.

Additional barriers might be faced by students who transition to non-compulsory levels, such as upper secondary or post-secondary, including financial barriers and unavailability of places in a given institution or education pathway. Most countries in the region have some policies in place to support transition beyond compulsory education, which, if they do not provide a legal basis for action, can be used as frameworks for accountability mechanisms.

Table 7 Examples of barriers to smooth education transitions

	Primary	Secondary
Students	- Anxiety over new location - Fear of leaving home/parents - Difficulties in adapting to new routines - Difficulties in adapting to new pace of learning - Difficulties in adapting to new teaching methods - Difficulties in adapting to the school setting when has never been enrolled, or has little history of attending school (relationships with peers and teachers, learning) - Low motivation for studying after a long education disruption - Feeling of inadequacy for overage students	- Anxiety over new location/getting lost - Anxiety over transport to school (travelling long distance on one's own, concerns of COVID-19 contamination in public transports) - Fear of bullying and ostracization - Low self-confidence in academic or social abilities - Concerns about chosen education pathway or stream (in VET in particular) - Difficulties in adapting to new routine - Difficulties in adapting to new teaching methods - Difficulties in adapting to workload and studying pace - Low motivation for studying after a long education disruption

| Parents/ families | • Uncertainty around choice of school
• Difficulties in leaving child in school
• Concerns over child not being adequately cared for
• Concerns over appropriateness of support for students with disabilities and special educational needs
• Fear of bullying and discrimination
• Difficulties in filling in school forms and other administrative issues related to education transition
• Uncertainty about expectations from parents
• Feeling that education is irrelevant
• Concerns over COVID-19 mitigation measures in transportation and schools | • Difficulties in filling in school forms and other administrative issues related to education transition (school registration, school transportation, etc.)
• Low level of information to make a choice about a school or a pathway/stream (general education vs VET, VET streams, etc.)
• Lack of understanding of the school system/education streams
• Feeling of inadequacy when talking to teachers who are considered as subject 'experts'
• Concerns regarding appropriateness of support for students with disabilities and special educational needs
• Preference for children engaging in income-generating activities rather than education
• Fear for safety or 'honour' of girls
• Concerns over appropriateness of sex education classes among certain ethnic minorities, migrant or refugee groups
• Concerns over COVID-19 mitigation measures in transportation and schools |

> ! At the time of transition, parental value of education and the level of parents' educational aspirations for their children are critical factors in helping students continue to their next educational level. Parents will have different concerns, attitudes and levels of involvement in supporting the transition of their children depending on their age and grade. Entry or transition to Grade 1 is an important milestone for parents who might need to be reassured and guided on how to support their children to adapt to new environments and routines. In secondary education, choices have to be made on pathways, streams and types of qualifications.

A framework for school transitions

There are five main areas to consider in successful transitions between education cycles for students.

Figure 10 A framework for school transitions

Administrative	Social and personal	Pedagogic and curricular	Learning	Support provision
General management of the transition process	Support to students and parents • Forging links between	Improving curriculum continuity between education levels	Supporting learning: • Provision of learning support	Ensuring that support provision is not disrupted (and introducing new

• Coordination between schools (U*) • Transfer of data/information (U) • Information dissemination to and coordination with parents/students (U) • Support to parents/students to fill in forms, etc. (U/T*)	students/parents and their new school prior to and immediately after transfer (open days, taster days, induction programmes) (U/T) • Career guidance (U)	and establishing a shared understanding of how pupils are taught and learn: • teacher discussions between education levels (U) • discussion on how to adapt curricula and pedagogy to overage students and students formerly out of school (U)	activities either side of the transition year (U/T) • Reinforcing links between education/curricula and livelihoods/access to work from the start (U)	support staff gradually): • Special educational needs support (T) • Support from specialists in and outside of the school (e.g., specialist teachers, psychologist, social workers, etc.) (T)

U=Universal intervention; T=Targeted or tailored intervention

Source: Adapted from http://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/working-together-for-a-smooth-transition/145260

These can be used as a framework to improve transition practices in your school (see also Module 7) as well as to improve the support interventions provided to students at risk of dropping out before and after their transition between education levels.

Using the three-tier approach, schools will implement some interventions to ease education transitions for all children, such as those marked U (universal) in the table above, and some targeted to students who require more support, such as those marked T (targeted/tailored).

Examples of interventions to support education transitions

Below is a list with concrete examples of interventions that support education transitions, including during the pandemic. In some instances, schools will be liaising with local authorities or external services to enhance their support to students.

Figure 11 Examples of interventions to support education transitions

School transition support during the pandemic	Schools	Local authorities and services
Conduct an induction meeting for new cohorts and for their parents: Presentation of the school (buildings, ethos, values) and of the staff. Presentation of the pandemic-related rules and of what is expected of teachers, staff, parents and students during the pandemic. Presentation of school routines, education and extracurricular activity opportunities. Presentation of how the school will address learning gaps due to the pandemic.	✓	

Presentation of available wellbeing support for students and parents. Presentation of students' achievements. *When face-to-face meetings are not possible, upload school information on websites or Facebook pages, with videos of the school facilities, presentations from teachers, staff, mediators and pedagogical assistants, and include welcome messages from students.*		
Community meetings and home visits to encourage timely enrolment in Grade 1.	✓	✓
Give students an opportunity to discuss their concerns in groups. This can be done before the end of the school year before the transition and at the beginning of the new school year. Address their negative thoughts and respond to their concerns and questions.	✓	
Reassure students who have missed out on learning during the pandemic or who feel that they do not have the academic skills to succeed in their new grade/education stream.	✓	
Set up a buddy system whereby students in higher grades are paired with new students to show them around the school and support them in the first months of school.	✓	
Offer after-class programmes for children who are quiet, isolated or withdrawn and who find it difficult to find friends in their new school.	✓	
Give time for students with disabilities or special educational needs to get acquainted with their new school surroundings. Create quiet and safe spaces for students to withdraw to when they start feeling overwhelmed.	✓	
Ensure that support provision for former out-of-school students, students with disabilities or special educational needs and students with socio-economic needs continues smoothly before and after the school transition, such as: • Holistic support for former out-of-school children from external agencies and local services and NGOs; • Special educational needs support (e.g., IEP and support from special education teachers); and • Support from specialists in and outside of the school (e.g., psychologists).	✓	✓

> **!** Giving opportunities to students with poor behaviour or a 'negative reputation' to take a fresh start after an education transition is important in dropout prevention, even when students stay in the same school. Transition is an opportunity for a new start, for taking new responsibilities and for creating new habits.

Education transition plans

Students with disabilities or special educational needs and students at very high risk of dropout might benefit from education transition plans. Transition plans tend to be used at various points of a child or young person's life: when entering school for the first time, for education transitions and for the transition to adult and/or working life.

Increasingly, however, transition plans are not limited to students with specific needs but are used to increase transition to upper secondary education (See the box on Denmark below). The pandemic has made the transition process more challenging for some students, particularly those with underlying health issues, those who have not benefited from distance learning, and those transitioning from non-formal to formal education systems. These new and emerging challenges are to be considered by education institutions when supporting students to pursue their education to the next level.

> ### Definition
>
> Transition plans are based on the "strengths and needs of the student in relation to a transition phase." (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2005).

Transition plans for education transitions can include:

- Identifying programming and support services that the student will need in the new environment/school;
- Supporting students to be knowledgeable about and be able to explain their own strengths and needs (self-advocacy);
- Exploring career interests and focusing on the establishment of a career portfolio, i.e., a collection of materials evidencing qualifications, skills, experience and personal qualities; and
- Supporting students in the selection of subjects relative to strengths, needs, graduation requirements and life option plans (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2005).

Transition plans should be developed with the schools concerned, the parents and the student.

> Denmark included support to transition between education cycles in its National Reform Programme of 2008. An inter-ministerial committee was mandated to identify cost-effective measures to increase the number of young people completing upper secondary education. Among transition support strategies, the introduction of individualized action plans and mentoring schemes proved successful, helping professionals across two education cycles to support young people in a consistent manner.
>
> Source: Blades (2012), cited in UNICEF (2017)

Additional resources

- Resources from the National Council for Special Education website, https://www.sess.ie/resources/transitions
- Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years through to Adult Life*, 2005.
- Resources from the Victoria State Education website, https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transition-year-6-7/resources
- Resources from Mentally Healthy Schools and Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/transitions/
- UNICEF, *Improving Education Participation: Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout*, UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Vol 2. Geneva, UNICEF ECARO, 2017.

Reflect

1. What are the main challenges faced by new cohorts of students in your school (when entering Grade 1, the first grade of lower secondary, or the first grade of upper secondary education)?

2. What are the main concerns of students and parents before transitioning to the next level of education (such as Grade 1, the first grade of lower secondary, or the first grade of upper secondary education)?

MODULE 3 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers and teaching assistants. You might also consider including district or regional education officials, students, parents and representatives of other schools (feeding and target schools) in this exercise. Tailored interventions often require the intervention of social or health services too.

Devise a three-tier model for supporting student (re)engagement and transition to the next education cycle in your class/school.

Step 1: Develop welcome back strategies.

1. What welcome back strategies could your school management and teachers implement (i) for all students (ii) for groups of students who have missed out on distance or hybrid learning, (iii) for students with disabilities or special educational needs, (iv) for students at very high risk of dropping out? Make a separate list for what school management and teachers could do.

2. Which of these strategies could you or your school maintain beyond the pandemic for students to feel more welcome in school and class, after the summer holiday for instance?

Step 2: Develop education transition strategies.

1. How do you support new cohorts of students in your school? (e.g., Grade 1, first grade of lower secondary, first grade of upper secondary)?

2. How do you prepare cohorts of students about to transition into the next level of education in your school (e.g., students who are about to transition to lower or upper secondary)?

3. Using the five areas for education transition support interventions (administrative, social and personal, pedagogic and curricular, learning and support provision):

   a. What is your school good at? How do you know?

   b. What could your school improve?

4. List between three to five targeted interventions that you could introduce in your class/school to support the education transition of students most at risk of dropping out?

MODULE 4.

STUDENT WELLBEING

Module 4 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: Student wellbeing and dropout • Definitions • Children's and adolescents' needs • Socio-emotional wellbeing and dropout • Impact of the pandemic on student wellbeing Unit 2: Addressing student wellbeing holistically • Whole-school approach to student wellbeing • Wellbeing support and the three-tier model Module 4 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Explain key concepts related to student wellbeing • Apply Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs to student wellbeing and dropout • Explain basic facts about the adolescent brain • Explain the link between student socio-emotional wellbeing and dropout • Identify the key areas of student wellbeing impacted by the pandemic • Describe a whole-school approach to student wellbeing • Describe student wellbeing support interventions using the three-tier model • Explain the importance of school connectedness in dropout prevention • Identify key interventions to strengthen school connectedness • Apply knowledge about behaviour and human interactions in behaviour conversations • Describe the role of peer support in dropout prevention • Identify how to create a sense of belonging in online or remote learning • Explain the main teacher bias • Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination • Assess and review your school approach to student wellbeing	

This module explores student wellbeing and how it relates to the dropout process. It provides information and tools to strengthen students' sense of belonging in school and it exposes the issue of discrimination, which is a significant contributing factor to school dropout in the region, particularly for children from marginalized ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities.

UNIT 1: STUDENT WELLBEING AND DROPOUT

This unit provides definitions and concepts that are core to understanding wellbeing and the impact of wellbeing on the dropout process.

Definitions

Three terms are often used interchangeably when referring to wellbeing: wellbeing, mental health and socio-emotional wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a complex, multi-dimensional concept that has many definitions. It includes a level of satisfaction about one's quality of life that spans both material and non-material conditions of life. Most definitions encompass several dimensions:

- Physical wellbeing
- Social wellbeing
- Emotional wellbeing
- Psychological wellbeing
- Cognitive wellbeing

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is "a state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life."[5] Beyond the absence of a mental disorder, mental health is "the ability to think, learn, and understand one's emotions and the reactions of others. Mental health is a state of balance, both within and with the environment. Physical, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and other interrelated factors participate in producing this balance."[6]

Socio-emotional wellbeing refers "to the way a person thinks and feels about themselves and others. It includes being able to adapt and deal with daily challenges (resilience and coping skills) while leading a fulfilling life" (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012).

Applied to the school context, student wellbeing is about how students feel and function personally, academically and at school. Wellbeing is present when students have the capabilities they need to realize their potential, feel good and fulfilled, deal with stresses of life, and "have a sense of purpose and belonging to the wider society" (Irish Department of Education, 2021; OECD, 2017).

Student socio-emotional health or wellbeing includes "the child's experience, expression, and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others and encompasses both intra- and interpersonal processes." (California Department of Education, 2018).

Students' emotional health and wellbeing

Being mentally and emotionally healthy means that we believe in ourselves and know our own worth. We set ourselves goals that we can achieve and can find support to do this.

---

[5] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response
[6] https://www.who.int/westernpacific/health-topics/mental-health

We are aware of our emotions and what we are feeling and can understand why. We can cope with our changing emotions and we can speak about and manage our feelings.

We understand what others may be feeling and know how to deal with their feelings. We also understand when to let go and not overreact. We know how to make friendships and relationships and how to cope with changes in them.

We understand that everyone can be anxious, worried or sad sometimes. We know how to cope with, and bounce back from, changes or problems and can talk about them to someone we trust.

Source: Department of Education Northern Ireland (n.d.)

Children's and adolescents' needs

The concept of human needs is complex and debated in the literature. **Human needs are often described as drivers and motives behind people's behaviour.**

Some explain that human needs exist objectively, others that they cannot be dissociated from values and human perspectives. Human needs can be defined as "something that is *necessary* for something else to occur" (Ife, 2012). In the social sphere, human needs and rights are closely related, the need being the precondition for the right to be realized. For instance, a child needs shelter, food and healthcare in order to realize their right to survival.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a simple framework that contains five dimensions, including:

- Four basic needs: physiological, safety, social (love & belonging) and esteem; and,
- One growth need: actualization, which can be understood as fulfilment.

Figure 12 Human needs according to Maslow

Self-actualization needs	**realizing personal potential**, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences
Esteem needs	achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, **self-respect, respect from others**
Social needs	**love and belonging** such as friendship, intimacy, affection and love - from work group, family, friends.
Safety needs	**protection** from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear
Physiological needs	air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep

Adapted from: McLeod (updated 2018)

The five dimensions of needs from Maslow are useful, yet it is important to understand that humans, and children and adolescents in particular, have multiple needs across the different dimensions at the same time and that these needs require constant fulfilment. The notion of a *hierarchy* of needs, therefore, is no longer regarded as valid.

Needs influence how we behave, in order that our needs are satisfied. Understanding the underlying needs of students is, therefore, critical to understanding behaviour.

When their needs are not met, students might feel tense, anxious and worried and this will affect their attitude and behaviour in school and towards learning and school. For instance:

Unmet needs	Possible impact
Learner feels hungry or tired	*learning is unimportant to him/her*
Learner feels afraid at home or school	*learner is anxious, hostile or withdrawn*
Learner does not feel part of the group at home and school	*learner is hostile to others, learner seeks attention, disturbs the class*
Learner focuses on failures and does not feel valued	*learner is afraid of risks and failures, feels powerless, unable to cope with school*
Learner does not have opportunities to develop their skills, voice their opinion	*learner feels bored or restless, finds school and life meaningless*

Source: Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment of Northern Ireland (2014)

When schools are not aware of the needs of students, they cannot support them, leading students to feel that their needs are ignored, and contributing to disengagement.

Adolescent brain

Significant changes happen during adolescence, some of which is driven by brain development.

Dahl and Suleiman (2017) explain the following facts about adolescent brains:

- Early adolescence (9-14 years of age) is a period of rapid change in physical growth, learning (particularly social, emotional and motivational learning), and puberty. **Hormonal changes** affect the brain, particularly areas **processing emotions, risks, rewards, and social relationships** that relate to exploring one's independence.
- While these changes can lead to '**negative spirals**' and lifelong bad habits, they also provide an opportunity for '**positive spirals**' and establishing healthy patterns of behaviour and social and emotional learning in the long term.
- **Adults (parents, teachers and other school staff) have a critical role to play in supporting positive trajectories**, through providing healthy learning opportunities for adolescents to be taking on guided responsibilities (https://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescent-brain)
- Changes in the brain provides **opportunities for learning**, particularly in the following two areas:
  - **Social relationships** (due to an increased interest in engaging in social roles with peers and potential romantic partners); and
  - **Learning about oneself and finding one's place in social hierarchies** (desire for acceptance, belonging, admiration and respect, as well as increased

sensitivity to feelings of rejection, disrespect, embarrassment, and humiliation)

Other significant developments take place during adolescence, including developments related to **gender socialization** and gender identity that might impact how boys and girls process emotions, build relationships and manage attitude to risks.

Conflict with authority and teachers plays a role in the dropout process for some students. Teachers and school staff understanding the impact of adolescence is critical if students are to be provided with holistic support to grow and develop, particularly those who are disadvantaged, those at risk of dropping out and those who might display inappropriate behaviour in a school setting.
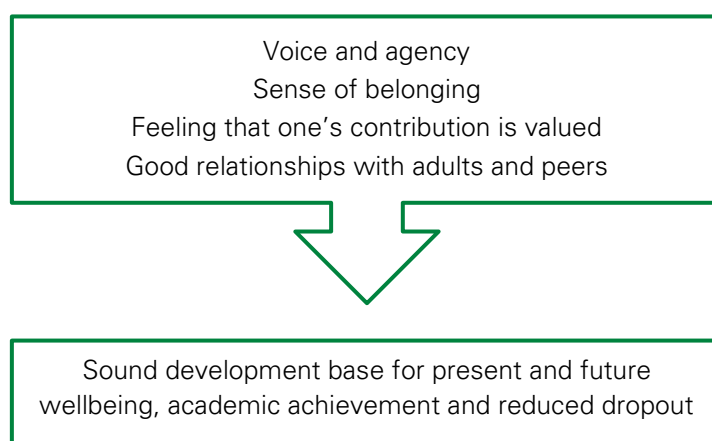
Socio-emotional wellbeing and dropout

Several studies indicate the impact that socio-emotional wellbeing and mental health can have on dropout, and the role of **school relationships**, **student engagement and participation** and a **student's sense of belonging/connectedness** in dropout reduction. In particular, the following have been shown to be important:

- Low self-esteem, depression, attention deficit disorder and substance abuse and addiction, for instance, can be a significant factor in the dropout process (Lavrentsova and Valkov, 2017);
- Students with 'caring' teachers, expressed in student perceptions of the degree to which teachers are interested in them, listen to them, praise their effort and do not 'put them down', are at lower risk of dropping out (Rumberger, 1995);
- Students are more likely to remain in school and succeed when at least one adult in the school is paying individual attention to them on academic and non-academic matters (Great Schools Partnership, n.d.);
- When feeling cared for by school staff, students have a higher level of wellbeing. Note that attachment to teachers appears even more important than attachments to peers (McLaughlin, 2015);
- Student's active participation in school or ability to connect to school is linked to reduced dropout risks (Finn, 1993; McLaughlin, 2015); and
- There is a strong causal link between identification with and belonging to the school and participation in school and achievement, even when accounting for socio-economic status (Appleton et al., 2008).

The school sense of belonging is about feeling accepted, liked, connected and supported holistically as individuals by teachers, other school staff and peers in the school, and feelings of belonging to the school community. Sometimes, the expression **school connectedness** is used, which includes the feeling of belonging to the school and students' overall satisfaction with their school experience (McLaughlin, 2015).

Figure 13 Wellbeing, connectedness and dropout

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Voice and agency                       │
│                   Sense of belonging                      │
│        Feeling that one's contribution is valued          │
│        Good relationships with adults and peers           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Sound development base for present and future      │
│       wellbeing, academic achievement and reduced dropout │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Source: Adapted from McLaughlin, 2015

Impact of the pandemic on student wellbeing

The pandemic has had a long-lasting impact on student wellbeing, including:

- **Physical wellbeing**: lack of exercise: for some leading to obesity risks, for others hunger; increased risk of domestic abuse;
- **Social wellbeing**: limited social interactions, feelings of loneliness, broken down relationships;
- **Emotional wellbeing**: low self-confidence, low motivation; sadness;
- **Psychological wellbeing**: stress and anxiety; uncertainty about the future; lack of concentration; loss of hope;
- **Cognitive wellbeing**: loss of academic and study skills; loss of self-care skills.

Some students will have been more affected by the pandemic than others, depending on personal and family circumstances, and individual resilience and the capacity to adapt. For some students, the changes brought about by COVID-19 have been very challenging and have increased stress levels, particularly the disruption of routines or the increase in child abuse and domestic violence. For others, particularly those from families facing multiple marginalization factors and with complex needs, anxiety levels might have significantly risen.

Anxiety and stress

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, uncertainty, worry or fear. It can be mild or severe and impacts how we think and behave and affects our ability to concentrate, relax and connect with others.

Stress is a biological response to threat and danger. When exposed to danger or threat, the brain releases hormones that enable the body to prepare for a 'fight or flight' response. This enables our bodies to take in more oxygen and pump blood more quickly in the muscles so that we can run faster or fight better. We also become more alert and our senses sharpen.

Stress generally occurs when there is a **mismatch between perceived demands and perceived ability to cope**. It manifests itself differently for different people. It can affect us physically (sweaty hands, racing heart, stomach ache, diarrhoea) and can lead to loss of sleep or appetite, irritation, low mood and poor concentration.

Threats are not only physical. **Most people will have experienced stress in an educational or professional context**. In an education context, realizing that we are late for school, questions from a teacher, talking in front of the class, a meeting with the school director and tests and exams can trigger a stress response. Although stress is natural and healthy, it can also become a problem.

Because children and adolescents have less experience of stressors, they may be less able to process new events and are less likely to have available strategies to deal with stress. They are also busy with school, friends, screens and social media, which might impact their ability to relax.

Additional resources

Adolescent brain

- UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, *The Adolescent Brain: A second window of opportunity, A Compendium*, Florence, 2017.
- UNICEF's webpage on the adolescent brain

Wellbeing assessment tools

- Evidence-Based Practice Unit, UCL, Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, *Child Outcomes Research Consortium In partnership with Wellbeing Measurement Framework for Primary Schools*, 2021.
- Mentally Healthy Schools UK, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, 2020.

Impact of the pandemic on student socio-emotional wellbeing

- Jokić and Ristić Dedić, Nacionalno Praćenje Učinaka Pandemije Bolesti Covid-19 Na Sustav Odgoja I Obrazovanja U Republici Hrvatskoj, 2021
- Blanden, J., Crawford C., Fumagalli L., Rabe B*., School closures and children's emotional and behavioural difficulties*, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex. March 2021.
- OECD, *Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID-19 crisis*, Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021.
- Bowyer-Crane et al., *The impact of Covid-19 on School Starters: Interim briefing 1 Parent and school concerns about children starting school*, Education Endowment Foundation. April 2021.

Reflect

1. Reflecting on Maslow's work on needs, which of your needs have been most affected by the pandemic?
2. Remember your teenager years. How did you process emotions, deal with risks and rewards and engaged in social relationships?
3. Which adults around you at that time helped you understand healthy habits and acted as role models?

UNIT 2: ADDRESSING STUDENT WELLBEING HOLISTICALLY

By enhancing student wellbeing, the school contributes to building protective factors that will counterbalance dropout risks. Holistic wellbeing support will span children's needs described in unit 1 holistically, starting with the most basic needs.

Whole-school approach to student wellbeing

Improving student socio-emotional wellbeing is part and parcel of a whole-school approach to dropout prevention, and has implications for a range of areas in a school:

- School leadership and management;
- The school ethos;
- Student participation in the school;
- Partnerships with parents and external stakeholders (community, professionals from other sectors); and
- Wellbeing support activities and interventions in the school, the classroom and at the individual level.

Table 8 Elements of a whole-school approach to improving student wellbeing

School improvement areas	Elements to address
Leadership	• School vision includes and addresses student wellbeing (and staff!) • School wellbeing data collection to inform support activities • School communication and messaging on wellbeing • School policies, plans and structures for promoting wellbeing • Professional development on wellbeing • Monitoring and review of school capacity to improve wellbeing
Ethos	• Inclusion and diversity • School connectedness • Role of staff, students and parents in building a wellbeing-sensitive school ethos • Promotion of positive, caring and respectful student–peer, student–teacher, teacher–parent and teacher–teacher relationships
Student participation	• Student decision-making power over matters that affect them • Student engagement in strengths-based approaches to enhance their own wellbeing • Student participation in developing strategies to enhance wellbeing (including safety and reducing risk behaviour and bullying) • Student participation in dropout prevention activities/wellbeing improvement (peer interventions)
Partnerships	• Family engagement to build a collective understanding of student wellbeing • Culturally sensitive and inclusive partnership development with parents and families • Links with community organizations, services and agencies to assist schools in the early identification of needs and collaboratively plan targeted support for students and families

Support activities	• Teaching socio-emotional skills • Develop wellbeing support strategies (using the three-tier approach) for students (and staff!) • Involve school staff, students and families in the promotion and recognition of positive behaviour

Source: Adapted from Education Council (2018) and UNICEF (2017)

Possible support activities to promote and respond to students' wellbeing needs, particularly students at risk of dropping out, are presented in the next section.

Wellbeing support and the three-tier model

The pandemic has highlighted the prominent role of schools in supporting student wellbeing. While some interventions can take place school and classroom wide and benefit all students, others need to address the wellbeing needs of particular groups of students.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of activities promoting and responding to wellbeing needs using the three-tier approach to dropout prevention.

Figure 14 Three-tier interventions for promoting the wellbeing of students at risk of dropping out

Tier 1: Universal Whole-school and classroom support for all students	**School-wide wellbeing promotion, prevention, support to socio-emotional learning and skills development** • Positive and inclusive school climate; inclusive school and classroom practices that address rights, stigma and discrimination • Effective anti-bullying and violence prevention strategies • Student participation in school governance/school life • Positive student-student relationships and peer-to-peer support • Positive adult-student relationships in the school • Socio-emotional learning embedded in school activities/teaching • Extracurricular activities • Comprehensive sex education programmes, addressing social and psychological aspects of sexuality • Provide school-based mental health and counselling services • School psychologist interventions in classrooms to discuss mental health and sharing information on available support • Teachers greeting, praising, caring and listening to students • Parental and community involvement (See also Modules 6 and 7)
Tier 2 – Targeted Support for specific groups of students	**Targeted interventions at the school or classroom level to address the needs of specific groups of children** • Socio-economic support to disadvantaged students

	• Targeted support for improved wellbeing for students at risk of dropping out (and other groups of students who might benefit)
	• Identify students with mental health needs (e.g., anxiety) and promote a culture of seeking help among groups that are help-seeking avoidant
	• Identifying and referring students with protection risks (e.g., child marriage, abuse and violence)
	• Additional opportunities for skills building through extracurricular activities in school and out of school, linking with other community/private sector stakeholders to follow up with interested students
	• Psychological support in school: drop-in sessions during and after school hours, small group psychological support
	• Teachers paying extra attention to greeting, praising, caring and listening to students
	• Individual positive relationship building with students
	• Mentoring (by an adult or by a peer)
	• Working with parents
Tier 3 – Tailored Individual support for students at high risk of dropping out or with complex needs	**Tailored interventions at school and beyond to address the complex needs of a few students** In addition to Tier 2 interventions, consider: • Individual support from school psychologists/pedagogues/counsellors • Liaising with external support services, including health and social services • Close work with parents • Student support plan, in collaboration with external agencies

Some students might need to be identified and referred for assessment to school support services or external services. More on referral procedures can be found in Module 7.

To be gender responsive, wellbeing support must take into account gender specificities and tendencies more prevalent in one gender than another. The WHO reports that adolescent boys and girls adopt different cognitive-behavioural roles in life, with girls more frequently developing emotions related to 'internalizing problems' such as sadness and anxiety, whereas boys' emotions are more related to 'externalizing problems', such as aggressiveness and dominance. This can lead to boys adopting behaviours that are more aggressive and antisocial while girls' behaviour tends to be more focused on anxiety and depression and adaptation (WHO, 2011a).

Skills programmes can be adapted to the needs of boys and girls at risk of dropping out. In some cases, boys might benefit from goal setting, organization, communication and conflict-management skills, and girls from assertiveness and negotiation skills, depending on situations.

Extracurricular activities can contribute to dropout prevention. For boys, they can be an alternative to potentially antisocial behaviour or activities that promote positive and respectful relationships. For girls, they might serve another purpose depending on cases (e.g., integration, sense of achievement, raising aspirations, etc.). Schools should also take into consideration different preferences for boys and girls when proposing extracurricular activities.

Seeking psychological help might be more prominent among girls than boys. Promoting a help-seeking culture in school, particularly among adolescent boys, and destigmatizing psychological help, or in cultures with attached stigma to mental health support is important. WHO also recommends interventions that prevent 'internalizing disorders' among girls, such as depression, and externalizing disorders among boys, such as aggression (WHO, 2011b).

Mentoring is a common dropout prevention strategy. It is effective for boys and for girls. School staff might, however, consider how and by whom mentoring could happen depending on whether it applies to a boy or a girl. Boys and girls at risk of dropping out might lack positive role models and, in some cases, a male role model might be more appropriate for a boy and a female role model might be more appropriate for a girl. The content of the mentoring programme should also be gender responsive. In some cases, mentoring programmes for boys will focus more on goal setting and aspirations while for girls the emphasis might be on improving self-confidence. Where there is little transport, some families might be more reluctant to let girls stay after class for a mentoring session, hence influencing how the mentoring programme should be implemented.

Examples of wellbeing support activities throughout the pandemic (see also Module 5)

- Checking on student wellbeing regularly through observation, discussion with students and parents;
- School psychologists addressing students at the beginning and throughout the year, on mental health and wellbeing, including developmentally-appropriate awareness-raising activities on mental health issues and activities enabling students to express their emotions and fears (e.g., drawing, questionnaires, small group discussions) and manage stress and uncertainty;
- Providing parents and families with information on available psychosocial community-based professional services in a non-stigmatizing manner;
- Engaging parent-teacher associations, school boards and other school stakeholders on wellbeing and mental health issues; and
- Providing 'drop-in sessions' on site and online with the school psychologist during and after school hours, including during periods of distance learning.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing results from a large-scale systematic review (Foresight, 2008) and is widely used in the UK throughout education, the workplace, and disseminated through the National Health Service to promote the mental wellbeing of the nation.

Connect – Feeling close to others contributes to our wellbeing and builds our sense of belonging. Building connections at school and outside enriches our lives and helps us in receiving emotional support and feeling valued.

Be active – Regular physical activity is good for our physical health but also for our mental wellbeing. It makes us feel good. Evidence suggests it is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety. It can be intense or slow paced.

Take notice – When we 'take notice' of the world around us and our feelings, we broaden our awareness and enhance our enjoyment of the present moment. Using our five senses helps us savour the moment. By being curious of the world and ourselves, we appreciate more what matters to us.

Keep learning – Learning new skills and getting better at something can improve our mental wellbeing by boosting our confidence, giving us a sense of purpose and supporting social connections. Taking on a responsibility or a new challenge will keep us interested and motivated. Setting goals might be particularly motivational for teenagers and young adults.

Giving – Acts of kindness can improve wellbeing by creating positive feelings, including a sense of purpose and self-worth. Evidence shows that there is a link between helping others and feeling happy.

More on the Five Ways to Wellbeing: https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/social-health/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health-and-wellbeing/five-ways-to-wellbeing/5-ways-to-wellbeing.pdf

Additional resources

Wellbeing

- Irish Department of Education, *Supporting the Wellbeing of School Communities as Schools Reopen: Guidance for Schools* Dublin: Irish Department of Education, 2021.
- WHO and UNICEF, *Helping adolescents thrive toolkit: strategies to promote and protect adolescent mental health and reduce self-harm and other risk behaviours*, 2021.
- School Audit tool: https://www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/school-audit-tool#/

Gender, youth, wellbeing and mental health

- WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Evidence for gender responsive actions to promote well-being. Young people's health as a whole-of-society response*, 2011.
- WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Evidence for gender responsive actions to promote mental health. Young people's health as a whole-of-society response*, 2011.
- UK Department of Education, *Mental health and behaviour in schools*, 2018.

UNIT 3: ENHANCING SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

Research shows that a sense of belonging with the school is a protective factor regarding dropout. Building a sense of belonging, and school connectedness more generally, is a process involving several factors, including the overall learning environment and school climate, and encouraging student voice and agency, constructive adult relationships and adult support, and peer networks and support in school.

Student voice, agency and participation in decision making

The Convention on the Rights of the Child says that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

In a school setting, this means sharing opinions on the school ethos, the learning environment, teaching matters, and participating in decision-making instances and processes such as the school self-evaluation process, school development planning, and other matters of school life.

In the context of dropout prevention and increasing school connectedness, student participation in decision making is about encouraging and ensuring the participation of students at risk of dropping out in the life and governance of the school. This can be done through removing the barriers to participation and reasonably accommodating all students so that they can participate in decision making, and actively supporting participation in decision making of the most disadvantaged students.

Student voice, agency and participation in decision making are children's rights, which need to be met alongside all their other rights. They contribute to social needs (love and belonging) and esteem needs (see Module 3, Unit 1). Addressing those two levels of need enables students to satisfy their fulfilment need (self-actualization) and, therefore, actively contributes to their wellbeing.

Belonging and social needs are about loving and being loved, being sure of unconditional acceptance of another person, and being accepted for what we are and not what we do. Esteem needs are linked to achievement, peer recognition, the feeling of being useful to oneself and others, and the feeling of being competent and important.

To encourage the participation of students at risk of dropping out in school life and governance, schools can:

- Collect information on students' views, through surveys, focus groups, informal conversations and student-led consultation;
- Communicate to students about how schools are taking their views into consideration;
- Involve disadvantaged students in decision-making bodies;
- Encourage the participation of disadvantaged students and students at risk of dropping out in student councils;
- Organize a school-level consultation on barriers to participation for marginalized or vulnerable students and how to remove them;
- Giving responsibilities to students at risk of dropping out, such as leading a peer-group activity, a school club or a school project and selecting them as mentors or tutors for younger students;
- Ensure that marginalized students and those at risk of dropping out participate in sports activities, events and extracurricular activities;
- Ensure that marginalized students and those at risk of dropping out participate school projects, such as (i) entrepreneurship projects or creative projects that engage young people in a meaningful way and encourage recognition for what they produce or achieve, and (ii) projects linking the school to the local community, the workplace or the wider world, to increase engagement and motivation in learning.

To note that the student needs of voice, agency and participation in decision making necessitates a recognition that disadvantaged parents need this too. Schools with an ethos and policies and practices relating to the participation of marginalized families will be better equipped to avoid tokenism and ensure diversity and representativeness when supporting meaningful school-wide student participation.

Tips for improving students' voice and agency in context of the pandemic:

- Involving students at risk of not returning to school in decisions about school reopening and teaching modalities;
- Involving students at risk of not returning to school in decisions about how to support their wellbeing throughout distance education periods and upon school return;
- Prioritizing the needs of students with disabilities, marginalized students and students at risk of dropping out;
- Involving students in identifying their own responsibilities in helping to keep the school environment safe;
- Communicating to students at risk about how they can support their own wellbeing, using frameworks such as the Five Ways to Wellbeing (see box above in this unit) or messages about how to address our most basic needs, including sleeping well, eating healthily, exercising and taking time for rest and relaxation.

Source: Adapted from https://educationnorthwest.org/northwest-matters/three-ways-improve-teacher-student-relationships-and-reduce-discipline-disparities

Constructive and positive teacher-student relationships

Children do not learn academically if they are not cared for. In other words, their achievement is linked to wellbeing. It is often the students that we know the least who need the positive relationships with adults most in a school.

Supportive environments for positive teacher-student relationships

Below are some generic principles of supportive environments (adapted from UNICEF (2017), McLaughlin (2015) and Bergin and Bergin (2009). While these principles benefit all students, they are particularly important for students at risk of dropping out or who have disengaged with school and learning.

Environments where students are listened to – this involves students being able to express themselves in safe environments where their agency is fostered by engaging them in decision-making and listening to their views.

Environments where students are respected – for who they are as individuals, with their background and needs, and are supported both academically and for non-academic matters.

Environments where mutual respect is at the core of relationships between adults and young people, where communication is open, with feedback loops between students and adults.

Environments where school discipline is non-coercive and based on conflict resolution and mediation strategies, and where difficult relationships are addressed so that they can be repaired.

Environments that promote high expectations from all students and that are supporting the autonomy of students, through providing choices and responding to students' interest and voice.

Environments that provide a range of opportunities for promoting teacher-student relationships, including (i) socialization opportunities such as trips and non-academic events, (ii) informal communication opportunities, such as shared meals or extracurricular activities, and (iii) mentoring schemes, a proven an effective strategy to prevent student disengagement from education while also strengthening the relationships between teachers and students.

Interaction with staff. When boys lack positive role models, opportunities for positive interactions with male staff might be a useful strategy.

Developing, maintaining and nurturing such environments can be challenging on a daily basis, particularly when students are demonstrating strong emotions or challenging behaviour. The sections below investigate how we experience situations and social interactions and provide a simple framework for open communication between adults and students when addressing behaviour issues.

Understanding interactions and behaviour

We are all experiencing events and conversations differently. These experiences trigger thoughts which trigger feelings, which trigger behaviours. These behaviours, in turn, trigger reactions from others. This creates a spiral (see below) which can be either positive or negative.

Figure 15 The spiral of action-reaction

5. Reactions

Reactions can in turn become experiences that further drive thoughts and feelings

4. Behaviour

Behaviour (action) provokes reactions from others

3. Feelings

Emotions drive behaviour (action)

2. Thoughts

Thoughts process the experience and drive feelings

1. Experiences/Situations

Result from events, conversations, incidents and perceptions
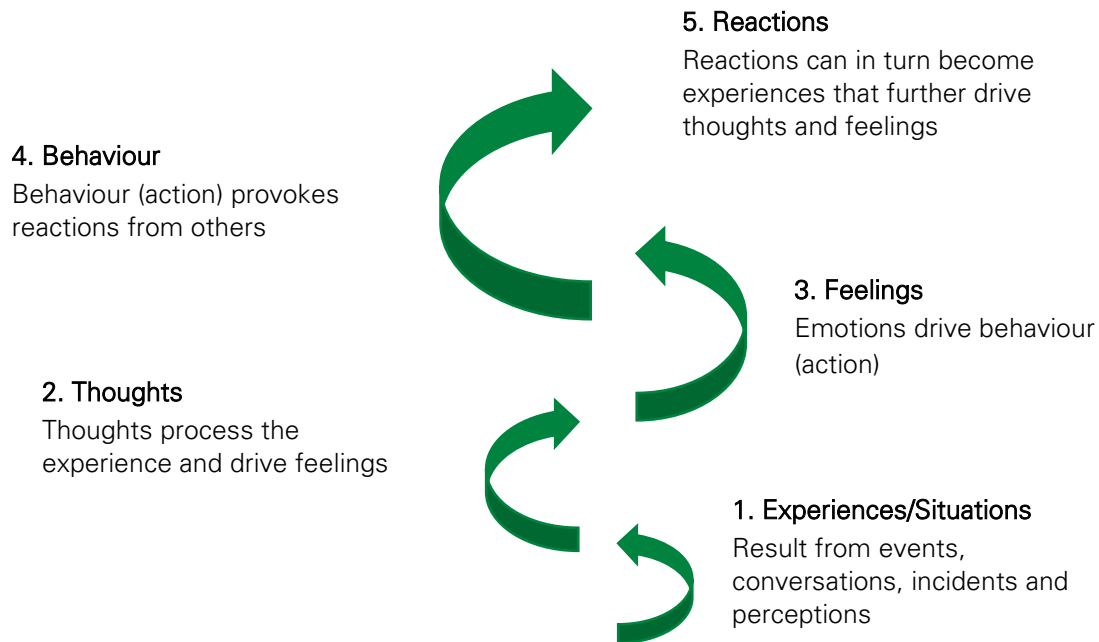
Source: Scottish Government (2008)

Below is a simple example of how the spiral works in practice. Observe how one step leads to the next.

Figure 16 Example of a negative spiral

5. Reactions

Teacher does not ask questions to the student during class

Student withdraws for the rest of the class and does not submit next homework

4. Behaviour

Teacher makes a negative remark to the student, such as: "you really do not care, do you?"

3. Feelings

Teacher feels annoyed and disappointed.

2. Thoughts

Teacher thinks 'This is the third time this month'

1. Experiences

Student does not submit homework

In contrast, below is an example of how the spiral could be broken.

Figure 17 Example of a positive spiral

5. Reactions

Teacher verifies if the student has understood the content; teacher co-develops a plan for submitting homework with student

Student feels supported and continues to engage in class

4. Behaviour

Teacher discusses with student the barriers and challenges for submitting homework

3. Feelings

Teacher feels curious and compassionate

2. Thoughts

Teacher thinks, without judgement, "X did not do submit the homework"

1. Experiences

Student does not submit homework

Open conversations about student behaviour

When we understand that interactions are based on thoughts and feelings as described in the spiral above, we can see how conflictual situations can quickly escalate. Yet, by changing the way we perceive the situation and react to challenging behaviour, we can play a role in helping students understand how the action-reaction pattern works, and help them become more aware of how their emotions control them.

Below is a simple step-by-step process to support teachers and students talk through an episode of inappropriate behaviour. The basis of open communication is to understand what the student was trying to communicate when using a specific behaviour, so as to be able to address this need through alternative means.

Figure 18 Talking through an episode of inappropriate behaviour: a step-by-step process

Steps	Examples of questions
1. Looking for the student's intent	• What do/did you want (with this behaviour)? • Why is [obtaining that what you wanted] important to you?
2. Understanding the behaviour	• What actions did you choose to get what you wanted?
3. Evaluation of students' level of satisfaction regarding the results of the discussed behaviour	• Has it worked? • Did you get the results you wanted? • Is it satisfactory (for you? Me? The class?) • Are you happy with the results? • Will using behaviour X/action X give you reasonable chances to get what you want? • How do you feel in this situation?
4. Looking for better solutions (for the student and the teacher)	• Are you ready to do something different? • How could you get what you want differently? • Do you want us to look together for ideas and solutions that are more satisfactory for both you and me/the class? • How can I help you to achieve X? • How would you feel if you were doing things differently? • What difference would that make to you? me? the class?

Source: Adapted from Bélair (2009)

Students who feel supported by important adults in their lives are likely to be more engaged in school and learning.

> ! Understanding our own emotional triggers and noticing how our own thinking and emotions affect the way we behave in particular situations is a useful skill to develop to respond to challenging behaviour in a calm and supportive way.

In addition to adult support and positive relationships, a key part of school connectedness is peer networks and support.

Peer support

Enabling peer connections and peer support mechanisms is a key part of increasing a sense of belonging and connectedness with the school. Schools can use a range of strategies to support relationship building and bonding among students and to increase student connections in and outside school hours and in school and online.

In the context of school dropout, students can play a significant role in shaping a dropout-responsive school ethos and in devising or contributing to dropout prevention and response activities. Peer support activities that have proven effective in the context of dropout prevention include:

Peer mentoring – A student mentors another student. Students at risk of dropping out can be either mentored by other students or mentor other students (see the example on the USA and the UK below).

Peer tutoring – A student tutors another student in certain subjects. This can be done in the same class (a student with good grades tutoring a student with lower grades), or across classes (e.g., a student from a higher grade tutoring a student from a lower grade – in this setting, students at risk of dropping out can be either tutors, or tutees). For more information on peer tutoring, see Module 3, Unit 2 and Annex 1 of Module 3.

Buddy schemes – A student is responsible for guiding another student who has arrived in a new school (e.g., a student from Grade 11 supports a student from Grade 10; a student familiar with the school supports a student who just arrived in the school).

Fundraising – Students organize fundraising activities to support social activities in the school.

Team building – Schools can provide spaces for students to build positive relationships that are inclusive, gender-responsive and that contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging of students to the school, particularly students at risk of dropping out. This can be done through whole-school activities, days out, and by providing genuine opportunities for students themselves to organize team-building activities (See the example of Serbia below).

Many peer support activities contribute to both dropout prevention and improvement of the socio-emotional skills of the students involved. Mentoring, for instance, will reinforce the relationship skills of both the mentors and the mentees, while helping the mentee to improve his/her own self-management skills.

> ! When engaging students in peer-to-peer support, it is important not to label students 'at risk of dropping out' or 'lagging behind' and not to disclose confidential information on students' individual situations.

Peer support for dropout prevention in Serbia

During a pilot project, UNICEF Serbia supported peer support as one of the three core strategies for dropout prevention (alongside remedial teaching and parent involvement). Students were trained and supported to play an active role in dropout prevention in their schools. A range of peer-support interventions were conducted. A peer mediation and mentoring team was established in each school, to support the participation of less active peers in extracurricular activities, particularly students at risk of dropping out, and to discuss with classmates and students in the school issues around motivation for school and learning, the importance of education, substance abuse and dropout risks. Peer-support activities for learning were organized, including peer tutoring, particularly around the transition between Grade 4 and Grade 5, where older students supported those from Grade 4 to prepare for Grade 5 teaching. Classroom seating arrangements were modified to encourage peer support in learning and improve the sense of belonging of at-risk students.

More information on the project can be found in Jovanović et al., How to be a caring school? A study on the Effects of Prevention and Intervention Measures for Preventing the Dropout of Students from the Education System of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade: UNICEF, Centre for Education Policy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2016.

Peer tutoring and school disengagement: Experience from the USA and the United Kingdom

Based on a successful experience from the USA (which Coca-Cola originally funded), the United Kingdom has implemented the Valued Youth project in several regions. The programme was intended to help secondary school students at risk of disengaging from school or underperforming, to become tutors for primary school children in need of learning support. Tutors were selected by school staff and received training and support from a youth charity. They were placed in primary schools for four hours a week on average and attended a weekly meeting with the coordinator in their own school. The original US model built in a reward system where tutors were paid the minimum wage. In the United Kingdom the scheme favoured rewarding tutors through events and vouchers for books and school supplies. An evaluation of the United Kingdom programme showed improvements for tutors in terms of improved attitudes toward learning and increased self-confidence and communication skills. In the USA, a robust evaluation with control groups showed that the project had a direct impact on dropout reduction for tutors.

Source : Trickey et al. (2005) ; Lehr et al. (2004), from UNICEF (2017)

Creating a sense of belonging in online or remote learning

Creating a sense of belonging through online or distance learning modalities is about ensuring that students feel included, valued, and accepted (**engagement**), that they feel they are contributing to the group and learning activity (**learning**), and that they feel encouraged

and supported by teachers and peers (**support**). While these principles apply to all students, they are even more important for students at risk of dropping out. Teachers' individual attention to particular students and groups of students is critical.

Strategies include:

Engagement:

- **Collaborate with older students, mediators, NGOs, or community members to contact students who are not attending** school or distance learning for longer periods of time. Try to locate the students and find ways to show that you care for them.

- **Start an online class with an icebreaker**, providing prompts to students that will help them get to know each other and find what they have in common. Use question prompts such as "early riser or night owls", "favourite book/film", "favourite fiction/real character", "favourite time of year", "favourite celebration", etc. Make it fun! Questions are to be adapted to students' age, and students can be in charge of organizing the icebreaker too (in pairs, individually, etc.).

- **Start an online class with a group check-in,** asking students to type in their mood of the day in the chat, or what they are looking forward to from the class.

- **Ask students** what distance/online activities make them best feel that they belong.

- **Organize daily/weekly virtual morning meetings**, to give students a sense of routine and structure to their day/week.

- **Record videos and audio messages** for students to share information, birthday wishes, etc. Invite students to record and share clips too. Use text messages or mail where connectivity is low. Record comments and feedback on assignments to maintain the connection through image/voice.

- **Bring your class to virtual exhibitions.** Visit museums or other art, culture and educational venues that offer a free virtual tour. This will enable students to shar a common experience. Make it fun and organize group discussions after the visit for students to share stories, views and learning from the experience.

- **Build a virtual hub for your class**, to create a sense of identity. Students can post on the page too. Encourage students to share collective memories, pictures and stories of time spent together.

- **Acknowledge the challenges of online and distance learning** and explain how these are affecting you personally. Ask students to share their own challenges and brainstorm solutions with peers.

- **Value students' participation and achievements**, and celebrate achievements and success.

Learning:

- **Break down the top-down teaching dynamic**, see the role of the teacher as the one of a facilitator helping students on their learning process. Online and distance learning favours students' autonomy. Teachers can acknowledge that by facilitating the process of learning rather than providing content.

- **Encourage collaborative learning,** using online Apps function but also through offline joint and collaborative tasks.

- **Provide opportunities for students to contribute to class projects and assignments,** so as to create a sense of meaningful contribution (purpose) to the group and the group's goals.

- **Assess student competences rather than knowledge**, by making progress towards mastery visible. Encourage self-assessment for students to take charge of their learning.
- **Provide valuable and supportive feedback.** Think about how best to provide feedback to students during online and distance learning. Negative feedback could further affect a student's sense of belonging. Brainstorm how to ensure feedback is delivered in a way that is supportive and adds value.

Support

- **Schedule individual check-in time with students** and ensure conversations are not only about learning and behaviour but also personal life. Prioritize students at risk. When time is lacking, organize small groups check-in events, prioritizing the most marginalized students or those with the most complex needs or needs for most intensive support. Ask students how best to support their participation in learning and social activities.
- **Open door hours.** Dedicate one hour per week for students to join a call/video call and ask any question they might have.
- **Encourage students to share virtual notes of appreciation.** This can be done in groups, using "What I like about [name] is…" or "What I appreciated about [name] this week is…" technique, or ask students to write (or draw) messages of appreciation. Use the post or home delivery to reach out students without connectivity.
- **Ask students what support they need,** from you, other teachers and their peers. Support can be linked to a learning task, a project, or be social support.
- **Brainstorm and share strategies to remain connected with teachers, the school and peer**. Ask what works best for the students and show that you are taking their needs and suggestions into account, particularly those of the most marginalized and at risk of dropping out.
- **Set-up small group work,** including student-led study groups for students to discuss learning tasks, study and support each other. Establish group work rules, ensuring respectful and supportive relationships between peers.
- **Be explicit about the strategies and activities you are putting in place** for student remote support so that students understand that they are cared for.

> ! Engage parents where appropriate to devise strategies that would increase their children's sense of belonging.
>
> Seek advice from parents on best times to organize check-in calls, best communication channels, etc.
>
> Identify what are the best ways of including children with disabilities in class activities remotely and of supporting their meaningful participation.
>
> Discuss with parents and students how best to demonstrate that teachers care for them and that their participation is valued.
>
> Ensure that you adhere to school or national safeguarding guidelines and policies at all times.

Additional resources

Student voice, agency and participation in decision-making

- Information on the levels of child participation (UNICEF)
- UNICEF, *Useful tools for engaging young people in participatory monitoring and evaluation*, Geneva, UNICEF CEECIS, 2005.
- Plan International, *Guidelines for Consulting with Children with Disabilities*, 2016.
- East Sussex County Council, *Children's participation toolkit for social workers and early help practitioners*, January 2018.
- World Bank Group, *Learners with Disabilities & COVID-19 School Closures: Findings from a Global Survey Conducted by the World Bank's Inclusive Education Initiative*, 2021
- Dickins and Williams, *Listening as a way of life: listening to young disabled children*, UK's National Children's Bureau and Council for Disabled Children, 2017.
- STAR Tool: Setting, Triggers, Action, Response, a tool to understand behaviour in the context of disability.

School connectedness and sense of belonging

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth* Atlanta, GA, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2009.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *School connectedness webpage*
- InclusionED, *Foster School connectedness using the WISE model*

Reflect

Part 1

1. Individually, take the list of your students this year (or of one of your classes). Quickly rate how well you feel you know them on a scale of 1–3 (1 = not very well, 2 = pretty well and 3 = very well). For this exercise, knowing means knowing their taste, what they like outside of school, their passions, what they are afraid of, etc.

2. What 1, 2 and 3 do you have in your list? Does this surprise you?

3. Who are the students that you do not know very well? What do they have in common? Are these students at risk of dropping out or marginalized in any way?

Part 2

Think about a situation that stressed you or that you were unhappy about recently in your classroom, such as something that a student said or did that you found inappropriate. Use the Spiral Template and the guiding questions below to analyse it

1. Describe the situation in one sentence (i.e., the fact, such as what a student did or said).

2. What did you think about the situation?

3. How did these thoughts make you feel? Describe your main feeling about the situation.

4. What did you do? Describe your behaviour/actions/response to the situation.

UNIT 4 ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is one of the factors affecting the dropout process. Discrimination, and children's experience of discrimination, can stem from multiple interrelated factors, including ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, and socio-economic background (more information on intersectionality can be found in Module 1, Unit 1). Subtle biases, such as gender biases and cognitive biases, also affect perceptions and relationships between teachers and students and among students. Both discrimination and subtle biases can gradually affect students' wellbeing and directly or indirectly contribute to school disengagement.

We are all human, teachers, school staff and students are no exception, and as such can project stereotypes or prejudice, consciously or unconsciously, against peers, students or their families.

Stereotypes and prejudice often lead to discrimination, which can result in bullying and significantly affect the wellbeing of students, lead to mental health issues and lead or contribute to dropout.

By becoming more aware of our own biases, we can better relate, engage and communicate with others, in a truly inclusive and supportive environment.

Understanding teacher bias

"Teachers need to be aware that their expectations, attitudes and language may have a significant impact and influence on pupils and families." (European Commission (2015)

Bias is an inclination *for* or *against* something or someone. There are many different types of biases.

We all have **unconscious biases** which are based on how our brain perceives, filters and categorizes information, which impacts the way we see things and make judgement. As humans we have evolved to categorize people and prefer people 'like us'. This is also influenced by our upbringing, culture and personal experiences.

When we have an unconscious bias about a person or a group of people, it results in very subtle micro behaviours, such as paying less or more attention to what a student is saying or smiling less or more.

Strong teacher bias can lead to favouritism, neglect or prejudice towards students. This can be translated into lower expectations for some students or providing fewer opportunities for learning and relating to others. Being aware of one's biases is important, as they might hinder student's development, success and achievements.

Teacher bias, *against*, or *in favour* of a group, might include:

- **Gender bias** – bias in favour or against girls and boys.
- **Racial or ethnic bias** – bias in favour or against a particular race or ethnic group.

- **Disadvantage bias** – bias in favour or against the more or the less disadvantaged students.
- **Student with Special Educational Needs and disability bias** – bias in favour or against SEN students.
- **Agreeableness bias** – bias in favour or against students perceived as more sociable and well-behaved.

Biases subtly influence teacher behaviour, impact the way they are interacting with students, the way they involve students in learning activities, the way they grade assignments and assess students, and the way they talk about them with parents and other staff.

Cognitive biases are repeated patterns of error in thinking based on our beliefs and experiences that occur when we process and interpret information and that affect our judgement and decisions.

Common cognitive biases include:

- **Affinity bias** – tendency to warm to people like us, who share the same qualities as us.
- **Halo effect** – when one positive aspect we perceive about an individual makes us think that everything about is person is good as a result.
- **Horn effect** – when our perception of another person is unduly influenced by a single negative trait.
- **Confirmation bias** – tendency to seek information that confirms pre-existing beliefs.

💬 **The Pygmalion effect**

The Rosenthal Experiment, first carried out in the 1960s, shows how teacher expectations can affect student performance. Rosenthal had primary school students sit a General Ability Test at the beginning of the academic year, and told teachers that the students would be segregated according to the rate at which they were expected to learn. In reality, while the students had indeed been tested, the segregated groups of high learning potential and low learning potential were chosen completely at random. Students' IQs were again tested at the end of the year. The results showed that performance improved much more in the 'high potential' group as compared to the 'low potential' group, irrespective of the base IQ. What is more, the difference was much greater the younger the child.

! Becoming aware and acknowledging our own biases and how these might interfere in our relationships with students or even hinder student success is the first step.

Understanding stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination

Stereotypes and prejudices can lead to discrimination. As for biases, we might not always be aware of when we stereotype people.

Stereotypes are the belief that most members of a group share some identical characteristics (e.g., women are more nurturing than men; policemen are racist).

Stereotypes can be *explicit* or *implicit*:

- Explicit stereotypes are conscious thoughts which can be shared verbally (e.g., girls like pink).
- Implicit stereotypes are unconscious or involuntary associations, attributing specific characteristics to members of a particular social group (e.g., while believing that men and women are equal, a person can automatically associate engineering with men).

Prejudices are preconceived negative attitudes about members of a particular group, usually oversimplified and not based on fact or experience (e.g., holding your bag more tightly when walking in the street if a person with a particular skin colour is walking behind you; getting really annoyed when a woman is parking her car badly in front of you).

Discrimination is an unjust, unfair, or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, often on the grounds of ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, etc. Discrimination can take the form of physical or verbal aggression and negative attitudes or be systemic and enforced through legislation and other processes (e.g., students from ethnic minorities being called names by peers or teachers in school; refusing to enrol a student based on ethnic background; legislation explicitly prohibiting illegal migrant or stateless children to enrol in school).

Stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination sit at different levels: stereotypes are cognitive (thoughts), prejudices are emotions (feelings), and discrimination is a behaviour (action). This is in line with the principles presented in Unit 3 (the spiral).

Figure 19 From stereotypes to discrimination

Stereotypes
Cognitive
'I think group X are... (stupid, brave...)

Prejudice
Emotion
'Group X makes me feel... (scared, superior...)

Discrimination
Behaviour
In front of group X, I behave (unfairly, aggressively...)
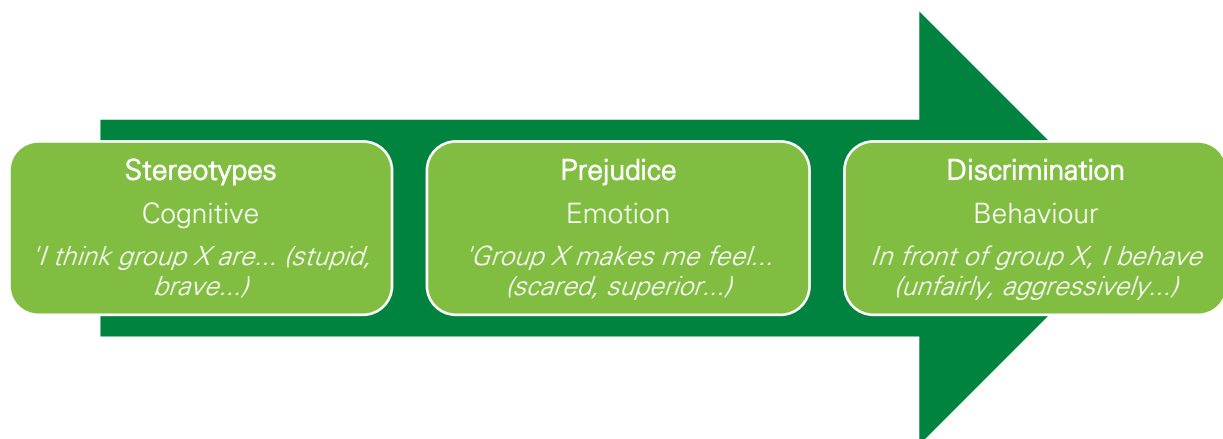
Source: Adapted from: Involve Parents-Improve Schools Project (n.d).

Being self-aware means exploring, naming and understanding our beliefs, emotions and motivations to reach a deeper understanding of our own personality.

Self-awareness can help to identify our own implicit stereotypes and prejudices by making us understand our attitudes, emotions and responses to different people in different

circumstances. It therefore creates an opportunity to change our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards others and ourselves.

Discrimination and bullying prevention

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying takes many forms, including cyber-bullying, and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on the grounds of race, religion, gender, special educational needs or disabilities (UK Department of Education, 2017).

Schools have a duty to ensure that no group is discriminated against and that they are challenging any inequality and stereotypes that students encounter. They have a duty to ensure that no one is bullied on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, disability, socio-economic background or other personal or social characteristics.

From a whole-school approach perspective, discrimination and bullying prevention are to be addressed at the level of the school, the staff and students. Effective bullying prevention goes beyond teacher training and teaching about bullying in class and requires a shift in school climate and the creation of an ethos of good behaviour based on respect.

In addition to policies, procedures and teacher training, socio-emotional learning plays a big part in discrimination and bullying prevention by supporting students to develop key skills such as:

- Managing emotions
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others
- Perspective taking
- Assertiveness
- Communication and negotiation
- Building relationships
- Team building

Those skills are part of socio-emotional learning (see Module 5). They can help students in a range of situations: (i) when they are bullied, by helping them becoming more assertive, manage their emotions and build positive friendships, which are key protective factors from bullying, (ii) when they are perpetrators of bullying, by helping them shift perspectives, and (iii) when they witness bullying (bystanders), by making more likely to overcome bystander apathy and intervene.

These skills are important considering the current education disruption. Some children might be bullied and discriminated against due to COVID-19-related stigma attached to specific groups, including Roma and migrant children. Empathy, respect of others and perspective taking are particularly relevant to this context.

Bullying requires support interventions that address the socio-emotional needs of both the bully and the bullied.

It is not the purpose of this course to investigate bullying prevention in detail.

Additional resources:

Bullying prevention

- US Government, *Stop Bullying*
- UK Government, *Preventing Bullying Guidance*
- UK Government, *School strategies for preventing bullying*
- Downes P.; Cefai, C., *How to Prevent and Tackle Bullying and School Violence: Evidence and Practices for Strategies for Inclusive and Safe Schools*, NESET II report, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.
- European Commission, *Peer support and youth participation in bullying prevention* – toolkit of resources.

Reflect

Part 1

1. Notice how you interact differently in the classroom with boys and girls, students from different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds, and students with disabilities. What subtle or micro behaviour can you identify that might reveal an unconscious or cognitive bias?

2. Have you ever noticed marking an assignment or test slightly higher because you like a student or feel connected to a particular student?

Part 2 Subtle Prejudice: Comfort in Social Situations Questionnaire

1. Fill in the questionnaire individually and rate each situation from 1 'very comfortable' to 5 'very uncomfortable'. At the end, add up all points per section.

Subtle prejudice: comfort in social situations

This is the handout for Activity 4. Instructions: Read the following statements and rate what you think your comfort level would be in each situation using the scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Simply be honest with yourself and do not over-think the situations.

	1 Very comfortable	2 Comfortable	3 Neutral	4 Not very comfortable	5 Very uncomfortable
Section A					
You find out that a new teacher in your school is Roma					
You realize you are the only person of your ethnic background when you visit a community					
A black person sits down next to you on a crowded bus					
Your new doctor studied medicine in Albania					
You go to a training in a school where all staff are Turkish					
Section B					

You find out your colleagues' husband is choosing to be a stay-at-home dad					
You greet a parent at the school gate but can't determine the person's gender					
The new Minister of Education is a woman					
A primary school-aged boy always brings his princess Barbie in your class					
The new school psychologist is a man					
Section C					
You don't know whether to open a door for someone in a wheelchair					
You watch someone who does not have a visible disability park in a disability car park spot					
You walk by a person who seems agitated and who is talking alone loudly on the pavement					
Your colleague has stopped working following depression					
You have a student with autism in your classroom					
Section D					
There is a 30-year age difference between you and the novice teachers in the school					
You arrive in a new school. The school director is 62 and will retire at the end of the year					
Your older colleagues often ask you for help with computers					
Your new 80-year-old next door neighbour can never remember your name					
A student of yours left school after Grade 9 to have a child					
Section E					
You see a grandmother begging in the street					
You conduct a home visit for a student at risk of dropping out: she lives in a one-room apartment with her parents and five siblings					
You are sitting next to a person without shoes in winter on the bus					
Your neighbours have both lost their jobs and are living on benefits					
You meet a single mother without a job struggling to feed her three children					

Results: Compute your total for each section by adding up the numbers from your responses. Higher numbers indicate greater discomfort with social situations in that section.

_____ Section A: Ethnicity   _____ Section B: Gender   _____ Section C: Disability

_____ Section D: Age   _____ Section E: Poverty

Adapted from http://breakingprejudice.org/teaching/group-activities/subtle-prejudice-activity/

2. On which section did you score the lowest? Highest? Do you feel surprised, disappointed, or satisfied by your results? Why?

3. How do you think the answers for each section would be different for dominant group members compared to minority group members or a member of the opposite gender?

4. Think about your school colleagues and how they might have completed the questionnaire. Do you think their responses would be similar to or different from yours? Why?

5. What have you learned about yourself and how could you apply this new knowledge to the way they are interacting with parents in their school, particularly the most disadvantaged parents and parents of students at risk of dropping out?

MODULE 4 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers and teaching assistants. You might also consider including district or regional education officials, students, parents, local authorities and external health and social services in this exercise.

Improving student wellbeing in your school.

Step 1: Map the structures (wellbeing support teams/staff) and activities in place in your school to support student wellbeing. Map these across the five areas listed in Table 2 above: Leadership, Ethos, Student Participation, Partnership and Support Activities. Answer the following questions:

1. What are your school's key strengths in student socio-emotional wellbeing support?

2. What are the gaps in student socio-emotional wellbeing support?

3. What are the main areas for improvement in your school regarding student socio-emotional wellbeing support?

4. What are the top three areas for improvement that need to be addressed in your school?

Use all information provided in this Module to inform your review and make it as comprehensive as possible

Step 2: Reflecting on Step 1 mapping and assessment, devise or review your whole-school approach to student wellbeing, using the questions below as guidance.

1. Identify what you/your school needs to (i) stop doing, (ii) do more of (iii) do less of (iv) start doing.

2. Develop a three-tier model for your student wellbeing interventions. Ensure you are devising interventions particularly for students at risk of dropping out. Ensure that your interventions are ambitious, yet realistic. Review the content and tips from this module to ensure that your approach is holistic.

3. Have you included peer support strategies in your model? If not, how could you add peer support to contribute to dropout prevention?

4. Identify responsibilities and resources needed to implement your three-tier model.

5. Identify who could help you implement your interventions (human resources and funding sources).

6. How will you monitor your whole-school approach to wellbeing?

MODULE 5.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Module 5 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: Socio-emotional learning • Socio-emotional skills framework • Embedding socio-emotional learning in class • Socio-emotional learning throughout the pandemic Unit 2: Inclusive skills-based teaching and learning • Strengthening autonomy and skills to work independently • Increasing and maintaining motivation • Inclusive teaching and learning strategies Unit 3: Learning support for dropout prevention • Types of learning interventions • Remedial teaching, extra-classes and study hours Module 5 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Describe key skills for socio-emotional learning • Explain how to embed socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning • Identify activities that can support socio-emotional learning throughout the pandemic • Describe the skills necessary for learning autonomy and independent study • Explain a simple model to maintain student motivation in learning • Describe how linking school and work can increase learning motivation • Describe a few inclusive teaching and learning strategies, including universal design for learning, gender-responsive teaching and culturally-responsive teaching • Describe the learning support intervention that impacts most student learning • Identify targeted learning support interventions to prevent dropout • Explain the effectiveness principles of remedial and extra teaching • Assess, review and plan for learning support in your school.	

This Module explores two complementary aspects of learning support:

• Socio-emotional learning, and skills and motivation for learning; and
• Learning support strategies to help students catch up in academic subjects.

UNIT 1: SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Socio-emotional learning is important for all students, and particularly critical for students at risk of dropping out. Supporting socio-emotional learning is a key part of a holistic approach to student wellbeing and to dropout prevention.

Socio-emotional learning *"is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."* (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/).

Socio-emotional learning has become increasingly important in education in recent years, following a strong focus on socio-emotional learning programmes in the USA. These programmes have a curriculum articulated around clear goals, benchmarks and standards and comprises tools for screening and progress monitoring.

With the pandemic the need to support students to deal with change and adversity, to manage emotions and uncertainty and to study autonomously and remotely has placed socio-emotional skills at the core of education debates.

Research from the USA shows that socio-emotional learning has a positive impact on socio-emotional skills development, academic performance, relationships with peers, attendance, and connection with schools. It also contributes to reducing distress and anxiety and bullying. There is evidence that marginalized students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds have fewer socio-emotional skills and that socio-emotional learning in school can support their mental wellbeing as well as learning achievement (EEF, 2020).

Research from the UK also shows the positive impact of social and emotional skills development programmes, on both students' social and emotional competencies and learning and education outcomes (Clarke et al., 2015). The study confirms the effectiveness of both universal and targeted interventions for students at risk.

Socio-emotional skills framework

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is one of many socio-emotional skills frameworks currently used internationally. Grounded in Social and Emotional Learning, the CASEL framework focuses on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence:

Table 9 Socio-emotional skills framework (CASEL)

Competence	Description
Self-awareness (intrapersonal)	The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behaviour. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset." • Identifying emotions • Accurate self-perception • Recognizing strengths • Self-confidence

	• Self-efficacy
Self-management (intrapersonal)	The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals. • Impulse control • Stress management • Self-discipline • Self-motivation • Goal-setting • Organizational skills
Social awareness (interpersonal)	The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from other backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. • Perspective taking • Empathy • Appreciating diversity • Respect for others
Relationship skills (interpersonal)	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed. • Communication • Social engagement • Relationship building • Teamwork
Responsible decision-making (cognitive)	The ability to make constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of the consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the wellbeing of oneself and others. • Identifying problems • Analysing situations • Solving problems • Evaluating • Reflecting • Ethical responsibility

Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), https://casel.org/

There are two other useful frameworks on socio-emotional skills and life skills competences:

- **The OECD framework**, based on the study on social and emotional skills by Chernyshenko et al.,2018. See Social and Emotional Skills: Well-being, connectedness and success.
- **The European framework** based on the work of Sala et al., 2020: The LifeComp: European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence

Embedding socio-emotional learning in class

Students at risk of dropping out are often in greater need than their peers of improving their socio-emotional competences to help them develop coping strategies, resilience, and motivation to learn.

Embedding socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning might be challenging for teachers and schools, particularly due to:

- Lack of a national skill development framework or national skill development frameworks that only partially address the range of socio-emotional skills;
- Confusion over concepts and terminology related to socio-emotional skills;
- Lack of clear guidelines on how teachers should embed socio-emotional learning in the curriculum, in different subjects and for different age groups, particularly lower and upper secondary students;
- The perceived tension between teaching curriculum subject content and teaching socio-emotional skills;
- Socio-emotional skills tend not to be marked, which deter teachers and students from spending time on their development;
- Teachers feel that it is not their role to teach socio-emotional learning, particularly in secondary education;
- Socio-emotional learning might be poorly modelled by teachers who have not had support in this area;
- Socio-emotional skills are understood differently in different cultures – talking about emotions and displaying particular behaviours might not have always been valued;
- Assessing and measuring socio-emotional skills is complex and teachers and schools lack the tools to do so.

Below are a few principles for overcoming those challenges and embedding socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning:

Making socio-emotional learning visible. This involves naming socio-emotional learning as a core set of skills to be developed by students throughout their education journey and teaching socio-emotional skills explicitly.

To do so, the first step is adopting a framework for the school or the classroom, based on national guidance or internationally recognized frameworks. It is important that the framework includes broad skills domains, specific skills, and explicit behaviours that will demonstrate the skills. The framework (skills and behaviours) should be tailored to appropriate age groups and shared broadly with students and parents.

A shared framework with target behaviours will enable (i) teachers, school staff, students and parents to have a shared language and understanding about socio-emotional skills and why they are important; (ii) the development of class and school activities to support socio-emotional skills acquisition; (iii) the development of scales and self-assessment tools to identify goals and measure progress.

Integrate socio-emotional learning in whole-school activities. This is about embedding socio-emotional learning in a whole-school approach to wellbeing, focusing on school ethos improvement, school leadership practices and a shared vision about the wellbeing, including

socio-emotional learning, for students and staff, support and opportunities for staff to develop their own socio-emotional skills, school climate improvement (reducing bullying, promoting positive relationships etc.) and inviting parents to reinforce socio-emotional skills at home.

Integrate socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning activities. This can be done in two main complementary ways:

1. **Teach socio-emotional learning through subject teaching.**

   - Embedding socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning can be done through (i) teaching and practicing specific behaviours, (ii) providing feedback and praise on skills demonstrated by students, (iii) modelling socio-emotional skills for students, and (iv) including classroom practices to discuss socio-emotional skills, identify own goals for improvement and assessing progress.

   - Some subjects are particularly conducive to learning specific socio-emotional skills. Identify the curriculum entry points for developing socio-emotional learning throughout the year.

   - In maths, for instance, self-efficacy (i.e., the belief in one's ability to succeed in achieving a goal) is an important skill to master for students who find this subject challenging. Other important skills for this subject are analytical skills, evaluation skills and problem-solving skills.

   - In social studies, socio-emotional skills linked to perspective taking, appreciating diversity, empathy, respect for others, communication and social engagement will be promoted.

   - In language, analysis and critical thinking skills, perspective taking, and communication will be core.

2. **Teach socio-emotional learning as a subject.**

This involves preparing socio-emotional learning lesson plans and finding a dedicated time in the timetable. In secondary schools, homeroom teachers might use class time planned for discussing students' issues to teach socio-emotional learning. Subject teachers might also dedicate some of their subject time to address socio-emotional learning, on a monthly basis, for instance. Socio-emotional learning can also be offered as an extracurricular activity.

Schools can use a range of existing resources to structure their teaching. Varying teaching methodologies and providing active learning practices such as group work, role play or journaling will be important.

Measure progress. Like any other programme or strategy integrated in school or class, socio-emotional learning requires monitoring and evaluation at the level of individual students and of the class or school.

At class or school levels, indicators on attendance and dropout can be used as proxy indicators. Surveys on school ethos, the learning environment and school climate can also be implemented to measure progress, combined with focus group discussions with students and teacher perceptions.

In secondary school, measuring students' progress can be done informally through a participatory approach, whereby students are involved in developing self-assessment questionnaires and scales for measuring socio-emotional skills and target behaviours. Goal setting and progress reviews can be done using the tools developed by students, combined

with teacher observations. Alternatively, schools can use existing measurement tools, including instruments that have been tested for validity.

💬 The Carr Manor Community School (lower secondary) in England implements weekly check-in circles. Children from different grades are mixed together and meet three times a week: (i) on Monday morning for a check-in session, (ii) on Wednesday afternoon for a socio-emotional learning session, and (iii) on Friday afternoon to discuss their achievements and challenges from the week and review goals and targets.

Source: https://carrmanor.org.uk/coaching/?__cf_chl_managed_tk__=pmd_92DTNWae1nYocQAw EZV8BfEuMKJFx0ecxVNFnCh_xbo-1633511713-0-gqNtZGzNAvujcnBszRA9

💬 Growth mindset

Professor Carol Dweck of Stanford University in the United States has spent several decades researching motivation, success, and achievement. She was curious to find out why some people are unafraid of challenges and why some people achieve what they set out to do while others don't, and what kinds of things people do to stay motivated. She uses the term "mindset" to describe the beliefs that each person has about their qualities and abilities.

She has found that people have two types of mindsets: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. People with a **growth mindset** believe that they can develop their intelligence, talents, and abilities. This outlook leads them to develop a passion for learning, a drive to grow, and to work hard and overcome difficulties by learning from them.

On the other hand, people with a **fixed mindset** believe that intelligence, talents, and abilities cannot be developed. They also believe that only talent leads to success, leading them to view hard work as a sign of weakness instead of an effective and necessary strategy for the development of personal potential.

Research has shown that explaining how the brain works and its capacity for growth affects students' mindset and how they learn.

🛠 Explicit skills development to support learning

1.Clearly identify a key target behaviour that students practice during a learning task. To claim it, you need to name it.

2.Discuss the benefits of practicing the specific target behaviour. "In what ways will it help me grow as a learner, be successful in school and in my life?"

3.Invite students to identify some things they would see and hear when successfully engaging in the target behaviour. In this way, students are more likely to own the target behaviour.

4.Model or have students demonstrate the target behaviour.

5.After students complete the learning task, invite them to reflect on how they experienced the use of the target behaviour or how it helped them engage and find success in the learning experience.

6.Provide feedback with examples of what the teacher saw and heard to leverage the group's strength and effort to support future commitment.

7.Have students assess their individual or group use of the target behaviour through written or oral reflection.

8.Analyse the data from the class's reflections, the teacher's feedback, and the students' self-assessments and calibrate the next lesson.

https://engagingschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SEL-white-paper-final-10-24-19.pdf

Socio-emotional learning throughout the pandemic

Supporting socio-emotional wellbeing when students return to school will not only help students prepare for learning, it will also lay the basis for a greater integration of socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning.

Below are a few examples of activities that will foster socio-emotional learning during and beyond the pandemic and that can be used for both in-person and distance or online learning.

Providing a space for students to discuss their feelings and emotions in the classroom and normalizing the expression of feelings. This can be done using a range of techniques that can encourage students to name and share their emotions without forcing them to (see the examples box below).

Teachers sharing own experiences of school closure and the pandemic and what they have learned from this with students.

Providing a sense of normalcy, calm and hope. This will be particularly important for older students who have been affected by long periods of distance learning and who might be worried about exams, transition to upper secondary or university.

Weekly or daily class meetings for students to motivate each other, help solve problems, and plan class events.

Modelling socio-emotional skills. This can be done by acknowledging emotions in front of students when teachers raise their voices, for instance, talking through their own process of setting goals and organizing strategies to reach them, acknowledging students' perspectives, modelling respectful behaviours, communicating clearly, engaging in team work with students, modelling problem solving strategies by demonstrating how to identify a problem, analyse it and evaluating pros and cons before making a decision.

Setting class rules at the beginning of the year by involving students in identifying what they need and want from a safe and conducive learning environment and guiding them in elaborating class rules that will maintain it, and consequences for noncompliance.

> ⚒ **Examples of activities:**
>
> **Rose, Thorn and Rosebud** technique where students share their rose (something positive going on for them today), Thorn (something less positive) and Rosebud (something they are looking forward to in the future).
>
> **Daily emotional check-in (inner weather forecast)** technique where students say how they feel on a given day. This can do done using images with young children, emotion cards, or online quiz-type apps or forms. "Today I feel… happy, excited, sad, angry, anxious, overwhelmed, bored"
>
> **Weekly check-in technique** asking students "What was best for you this week?", "What was most challenging for you this week?", "How did you manage to overcome the challenge?", "Would you like to talk privately to a school staff about this?", "What are you most looking forward next week?"
>
> **Worry boxes** technique. Students post their anxious thoughts in the box to park them and not carry them around. Worry boxes can be used at any time when students want to park a fear or anxious thought, or in small-group activities where students share their worries discuss them and get support and solutions from their peers before folding their paper and posting them in the worry box.
>
> **Feeling displays** in the classroom, such as a mood meter, feeling tree, emoji board for young children to express their emotions, and supporting them with vocabulary to express their feelings.
>
> **Mood meter** technique. A mood meter is a tool to identify, recognize, understand and express one's emotions. It can also be used to help students empathize with others. Students name their mood and place them on a quadrant low energy/high energy – unpleasant/pleasant. Assessing our mood can help linking emotions with thoughts and body sensations. It is a starting point to reflecting on what strategies work for us to move from low to high energy and unpleasant to pleasant feelings (Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence).
>
> **The 14 things list**. Ask students to list the 14 things they are looking forward to (i) when school reopen, or (ii) for the academic year to come. Play along! Use creative ways of displaying the lists (posters, collages, word clouds, wish trees, etc.).

Additional resources

Useful studies on social and emotional skills

- OECD, *Beyond Academic Learning: First Results from the Survey of Social and Emotional Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2021.

Social and emotional learning teacher and student resources:

- World Bank Group, *Step by Step: Social and Emotional Learning Programme*, 2016.
- Panorama Education (website), *Measure and Understand Socio-Emotional Learning*
- Transforming Education (website), *SEL resources for educators*
- *SPECTRUM database*, available from the Education Endowment Foundation
- UNICEF Montenegro, *My values, My virtues: Development of Social and Emotional Skills*, 2018.

Growth mindset:

- [Growth mindset](#) toolkit by Transforming Education
- World Bank Group, *Step by Step – Toolkit Promoting Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Children and Teens, Grades 7 and 8 Curriculum,* 2018.

Reflect

1. To what extent are you teaching socio-emotional learning in your class/school?
2. What are the barriers that prevent you from embedding socio-emotional learning in your teaching/classroom/school?
3. What would you, as a professional, need in order better to support students at risk of dropping out in order to improve their socio-emotional skills?

UNIT 2 INCLUSIVE SKILLS-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Many students at risk of dropping out are low performers, lack the skills to learn effectively, or struggle to be motivated or to remain confident in their abilities when learning gets more difficult or challenging. Others have special educational needs that might require individualized learning.

Building on the general framework for socio-emotional learning in Unit 1, this unit focuses (i) on key principles for inclusive pedagogy, including gender-based and culturally-responsive teaching and learning, and (ii) on a few specific skills that aim to strengthen students' ability to cope with learning challenges, learning disruption and distance learning.

Inclusive teaching and learning strategies

Learning support for students at risk of dropping out and those lagging behind in their learning starts with using sound pedagogical principles in the classroom. This module does not aim for an in-depth analysis of inclusive pedagogy, nor does it cover pedagogical and child-centred teaching and learning principles, including differentiated instruction and the provision of constructive feedback, which can be explored in other learning specific modules and training (see Additional Resources for Unit 2 below for more information on available relevant resources).

The above-mentioned pedagogical principles belong to *Tier-1 Universal interventions* implemented school-wide for all students. To which can be added a few other key strategies, including inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning, gender-responsive and culturally-responsive teaching and learning strategies.

Inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning

Inclusive pedagogy is an approach that supports the learning of all children. It is underpinned by the recognition that every learner is different, and that ability is not fixed, all children having the capacity to learn. Inclusive pedagogy challenges practices that recommend 'additional provision for some children based on their needs', which can be exclusive rather than inclusive. Inclusive pedagogy *"extends what is generally available to everybody, as opposed to providing for all by differentiating for some."* (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

A key principle of inclusive pedagogy and strategy to address diversity in the classroom is the use of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, which supports designing curricula and instruction that are accessible to all learners, rather than trying to cater for the needs of one particular group, such as students with disabilities. UDL builds on how our brains receive, process and respond to information and calls for:

- Multiple means of representation of information such as pictures, written and oral instructions, or culturally-relevant materials;
- Multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they are learning, either orally, in writing, gesture, manipulation of objects etc; and
- Meaningful opportunities to participate in learning to secure attention, interest and motivation. Examples include optimizing informed and reflective choices of learning activities, based on goals and needs, and autonomy in learning activities and supporting students in developing coping and self-assessment skills (Johnstone, 2014)

Gender-responsive teaching and learning

Research has provided ample evidence about how gender stereotypes impair the performance of boys and girls, most particularly in reading (for boys) and maths (for girls) (Pansu et al., 2016; Carlana, 2018; Huguet and Regner, 2007). While gender stereotypes might be subtle and have been internalized by both students and teachers, questioning them is an important part of the journey to improving learning and supporting boys and girls at risk of dropping out.

Inclusive teaching and learning environments are gender responsive. Gender-responsive teachers have identified and challenged their own gender bias in order not to be influenced by positive or negative stereotypes when assessing students' skills, strengths, weaknesses and potential. They pay attention to possible gender differences in planning lessons, creating materials, instruction, managing classrooms and assessing learning. At the core of gender-responsive teaching is ensuring that both boys and girls are equally valued and have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the class, are supported according to their personality and needs, and are encouraged to reflect on gender-biased stereotypes and attitudes.

> ⚒ Tips for establishing gender-responsive learning environments
>
> Teachers:
> - Reflect on teaching skills, classroom set-ups, teaching and learning materials, and classroom dynamics and interactions;
> - Look for characteristics/behaviours resulting from social norms that may hinder academic learning and performance (e.g., shyness, arrogance, dominance, bullying, lack of confidence, and fear of speaking out in class);
> - Ensure that materials depict and portray men and women in leadership and professional roles;
> - Ensure that working groups are mixed and that everyone has the opportunity to lead discussions, serve as note takers, and present results from group work;

- Ensure that each student has equal opportunities to manipulate objects and to practice on the demonstration models without being made to feel uncomfortable and without being belittled by others;
- Ensure that both boys and girls sit both at the front and at the back of the class;
- Ensure that both boys and girls have access to classroom corners, the school library, labs and computers;
- Use gender-neutral language that does not reinforce gender bias or inequalities;
- Make students more aware of those gender stereotypes connected to the field you teach (and in related professions);
- Help students question gender-biased attitudes in order to prevent them from happening in the future; and
- Discourage and sanction gender-discriminatory and sexist behaviours.

Sources: adapted from USAID (n.d.)

Culturally-responsive teaching and learning

Students from ethnic minorities such as Roma or refugee and migrant children are sometimes at a high risk of dropping out in the region.

Adopting culturally-responsive teaching and learning not only promotes inclusion and strengthens the sense of belonging of students to the school, but it is also critical for maintaining motivation. Ensuring that both curricula and learning tasks are relevant to students' diversity and builds on a range of linguistic, cultural and life experiences is, therefore, important. Teachers have used multiple strategies to do so in the region.

Examples of culturally-responsive teaching and learning activities:
- Community visits by school directors and teachers;
- Training teachers and school staff on the history and culture of Roma, ethnic minority and migrant communities;
- Participation of the school in community cultural events;
- Enabling students to share and discuss cultural knowledge and practices;
- Including multiple cultural references in class and curricula;
- Employing community-language speakers as teaching assistants, pedagogical assistants, mediators or home-school liaison officers;
- Engaging with families through spoken rather than written communication;
- Establishing links with NGOs working with a given community, such as Roma or migrant NGOs;
- Inviting community representatives to talk in class, including on job and career-related themes;
- Implementing induction programmes for newly arrived students;
- Ensuring education in mainstream classrooms for newly arrived students;

Culturally-responsive teaching and learning pays particular attention to:

- Supporting mother tongue-based multilingual education; and
- Additional language teaching strategies.

Mother tongue-based multilingual education has a positive impact on access to education, reading and learning outcomes, learning of other languages and it improves children's self-concept and identity and supports local culture and parental involvement (RTI, 2011).

While these modules do not aim to provide specific teaching and learning approaches for mother tongue-based multilingual education and second language teaching strategies, these two approaches contribute to dropout prevention and to strengthening school connectedness.

Strengthening autonomy and skills to work independently

Skills that enable students to work independently are critical, not only for students who have little support at home, but also for students who have been struggling throughout the pandemic-related education disruption and distance learning.

There are a range of skills supporting students to work independently, which can be named and classified in different ways depending on the frameworks we use. These skills span both mindset and learning management skills. They include skills related to:

- **Self-management**, which refers to organization skills such as time management, self-discipline, stress-management and goal setting;
- **Self-efficacy**, which is about people's belief about their own ability to execute an action; and
- **Self-regulation**, which encompasses the mental processes of understanding and learning (cognition), metacognition (ability to plan, monitor, evaluate and change learning behaviours), and motivation.

To these generic skills, digital skills and, more specifically, how to use online educational platforms and social networks for distance learning has become critical.

Table 10 Skills for working independently

Skills	Description	Activities
Self-management	Organization skills such as time management, self-	- Finding when is the best time to study - Study routines (preparation of materials, etc.)

	discipline, stress-management and goal setting	• Understanding when students focus best and what distracts them from learning (phones, etc.) • Setting up a goal for each study period • Breaking down learning tasks into small tasks • Organizing the workload for the day/week • Planning homework and assignments
Self-efficacy	People's belief about own ability to execute an action	• Building confidence by starting with small tasks • Using scaffolding methods • Peer modelling • Learning from others' successes and failures • Teaching self-verbalization • Recalling previous experiences Teachers to demonstrate high expectations from all students and their belief in their capacities and success
Self-regulation	Encompasses the mental processes of understanding and learning (cognition), metacognition (ability to plan, monitor, evaluate and change learning behaviours), and motivation (EEF, 2021)	• Anticipating learning strategies • Teaching how to assess one's learning • Evaluating the effectiveness of learning strategies • Teaching debugging strategies • Reflecting on learning progress Teachers to explicitly teach these skills and to model out loud their own thinking and approaches to challenging learning tasks

⚒ The pillars of learning readiness

Setting a study space	Organizing materials	Setting a study time	Organizing a support network
A designated place to study, fit for purpose and comfortable (light, comfortable seat, clear desk space, easy access to learning materials, away from distractions, in a quiet place or with others around when this best suits students).	Pens, pencils, notebooks, textbooks, IT devices, etc. Organized notebooks or folders (dividers, colour coding, etc.)	Understanding when, where and for long to study. Timetables and learning routines (e.g., setting up the same study time every day, or the same homework time every day).	This can include parents, siblings, other relatives or neighbours, teachers, friends, class peers, etc. This also relates to communicating within the network, including frequency and through what channels (e.g., WhatsApp group with peers, weekly study group with peers, asking questions to adults,

			organizing homework support, etc.)

<div style="background-color: #8cc084; padding: 10px;">

⚒ Examples of activities to strengthen self-efficacy

- **Achievement timeline** – Students summarize every year of their life using one key achievement to get a sense of how growth happens. Ask students to project themselves into the future and anticipate their achievements in the next three years, 10 years, etc… This activity can then lead to action planning, with students brainstorming three actions they could take now towards their future achievement.
- **Recalling past experiences** – Before students engage in a complex or challenging learning task, ask them to recall a time when they achieved a challenging or complex learning task in the past. Ask them to recall what they were thinking as they were engaging with the task, how they were feeling, and what they were doing and how. This will help students put themselves in a positive frame of mind before tackling the learning task in front of them.
- **Learning journal**. Ask students to keep a learning journal on a daily or weekly basis, depending on age and interest. Students can journal a few sentences about what they have learned, what they have found challenging, how they have overcome these challenges, what learning strategies they have used. This can be done during class time (five minutes at the end of a lesson) or at home. Ask students to reflect, every month or term, on how they have progressed and what has changed in their learning on the basis of their journal entries.

</div>

Increasing and maintaining motivation

The pandemic has had a significant impact on student motivation and has accelerated the process of learning disengagement for many.

Throughout the pandemic, the confidence of low performers or of students who could not participate in distance and online learning might have been affected. Avoiding stigmatization when assessing learning upon school return is key. This involves:

- Avoiding the use of summative assessments of the previous year's learning at the beginning of the academic year;
- Prioritizing assessment for learning, combining both formative and diagnostic assessment;
- Maximizing the use of self-assessment and peer assessment;
- Providing feedback for learning;
- Identifying the next learning step for each child so that they focus on where to go in their learning rather than on what has not yet been learned;
- Consulting with students, parents, support staff/specialists to decide on the best assessment strategies;
- Revising IEPs, with all parties involved, to take into account any learning regression, to ensure that support is provided at the level appropriate to the student, particularly

for those for whom distance and remote learning were not accessible, and to decide on best strategies to address learning gaps.

One of the trickle-down effects of student lack of motivation is the impact that it has on teachers' own motivation, which is a key factor in student motivation itself.

The ARCS model of motivation

ARCS is an abbreviation for Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The ARCS model was developed by John Keller as an approach to instructional design that focuses on motivation.

The table below describes each dimension and can be used as a checklist for teachers.

Table 11 Dimensions of the ARCS model of motivation

Dimension	Descriptions	Considerations for instruction design
Attention	Attracting and maintaining interest	• Active participation (hands-on) • Inquiry (questions) • Real-world examples • Humour • Incongruity and conflict (to spark interest) • Variety of approaches (including student-led approaches, flipped classrooms, etc.)
Relevance	Meeting students' needs	• Linking to prior knowledge • Choice of activities/themes • Immediate applicability (explanation of) • Future usefulness (explanation of) • Modelling usefulness • Cultural relevance
Confidence	Helping students believe they can succeed	• Clear objectives • Learning requirements and expectations • Feedback for learning • Give learners control
Satisfaction	Reinforcing accomplishment with rewards	• Encouraging intrinsic enjoyment of learning, increasing relatedness (to others) in learning • Praise and rewards

Source: Adapted from Edutech Wiki http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/ARCS and Poulsen et al. (2008) ARCS Model of Motivational Design and TexasTech University Worldwide eLearning (n.d.) ARCS Model of Motivation

---

✎ Examples of activities to support intrinsic motivation

Supporting confidence through increasing competence:

- Create learning opportunities for students at the right level – sufficiently challenging to spark interest and motivation, and achievable so as not to undermine self-confidence.

Increasing motivation through linking school and work

In secondary education, learning motivation can be increased through reinforcing links between education/curricula and livelihoods/access to work, and making learning relevant to students' career goals. This can be done through:

- Career guidance and discussing with students possible academic and training paths;
- Inviting professionals from a range of ethnic backgrounds, genders, communities, sectors and types of work, to talk about their work and discuss their academic and training path;
- Inviting former students and young entrepreneurs to talk about their experience, further education choices and careers.
- TVET schools have a high proportion of students at risk of dropping out in some countries, particularly those students who feel little confidence in their academic abilities. In such contexts, student motivation may be affected by the pandemic due to the economic recession and changes in the labour market that have made some professions less attractive due to pandemic restrictions. The following interventions might contribute to contextualizing learning and motivating disengaged young people:
  - Valorization of the chosen education stream or pathway early in the year by making the links with professionals and opportunities for further education;
  - Career guidance, and supporting access to vocational paths in gender-desegregated well-performing sectors of the economy;
  - Career plan development (identifying career goals and steps to reach those);
  - Professional mentoring schemes (linking with businesses and professional associations);
  - Work placements;

- Talks from and interaction with professionals from a range of sectors, communities, ethnic backgrounds and genders;
- Talks from and interaction with former students/alumni;
- Provision of digital and other skills for work that are little taught in schools;
- School projects based on entrepreneurship skills, business incubators, etc.

Career guidance plays a significant role in dropout prevention. For boys, it might help to reinforce the links between education/curricula and livelihoods/access to work. For girls, career guidance might support access to vocational paths in well-performing sectors of the economy.

Additional resources:

Inclusive pedagogy

- UNICEF ECARO, Teacher Training Modules for Inclusive Education, 2015:
    - Introductory booklet
    - Module 1: Vision, Theory and Concepts
    - Module 2: Working together to create Inclusive Schools
    - Module 3: Enabling environments for personalized learning
- Florian, L., Black-Hawkins, K., *Exploring inclusive pedagogy*, *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 37, No.5, October 2011, pp. 813–828.
- Spratt, J., Florian, L., *Inclusive pedagogy: From learning to action. Supporting each individual in the context of 'everybody*, Teaching and Teacher Education 49, 89e96, 2015.
- Florian. L.; Sretenov, D., *From Special School to Resource Centre: Supporting Vulnerable Young Children in Central and Eastern Europe: A Guide for Positive Change*, International Step by Step Association, 2021.

Universal Design for Learning

- https://www.learningdesigned.org/resources
- https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl

Learning to learn

- For literature on Executive functioning (working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control) – see Harvard University Centre on the Developing Child , and age-appropriate resources for 3-5 year-olds, 5-7-year-olds, 7-12-years-olds , and teenagers.
- Education Endowment Foundation, *Metacognition and Self-Regulation: Guidance Report*, 2019.
- *Socio-Emotional Learning and School Culture and Climate* by Transforming Education

Culturally responsive teaching and learning

- Additional language strategies and strategies for learners with limited first language literacy from the UK Bell Foundation

- UNESCO, *Enhancing Learning of Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual or Multilingual Education In The Early Years*, 2011.
- British Council, *Improving Education Outcomes for Pupils from the New Roma Communities*, 2016.
- Council of Europe, Curriculum Framework for Romani, 2008.
- Nusche, D., *What Works in Migrant Education. A Review of Evidence and Policy Option*, OECD Education Working Papers n.22. OECD Publishing, 2019
- Council of Europe, Thematic Visit on Roma Mediation, 2017 (With A Focus On School Mediators/Assistants).
- UNESCO International Bureau of Education, *Teaching Additional Language*, n.d.
- British Council, Using Multilingual Approaches: Moving from Theory t Practice. A Resource Book of Strategies, Activities and Projects for the Classroom, 2019.
- OSCE and UNICEF webpage on multilingual education in Central Asia: http://edu-resource.net/ (in Russian)

Reflect

1. Reflecting on this Unit, what strategies could you integrate in your class/school to improve (i) student autonomy and independent learning, (ii) student motivation for learning?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your teaching/your school regarding inclusive, gender- and culturally-responsive teaching and learning?

UNIT 3 LEARNING SUPPORT FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

For students at risk of dropping out, targeted and tailored learning support (Tier 2 and Tier-3 on the three-tier intervention model) might be needed to appropriately respond to their learning needs. The strategies provided below complement the Tier-1 strategies presented in Unit 1 above on inclusive teaching and learning.

Type of learning interventions

Research evidence

The **Education Endowment Foundation** (United Kingdom) summarized international evidence on teaching 5-16-year-old students. They analysed the evidence based on impact (low, medium or high), cost and robustness of evidence.

Figure 20 International evidence on teaching 5-16-year-old students

Intervention	Cost (5-point scale)	Robustness of Evidence (5-point scale)	Impact
Feedback	◊	●●●	+8
Metacognition and self-regulation	◊	●●●●	+7
Collaborative learning	◊	●●●●	+5
Homework (Secondary)	◊	●●	+5
One-to-one tuition	◊◊◊◊	●●●●	+5
Oral language interventions	◊	●●●●	+5
Early years' interventions	◊◊◊◊◊	●●●●	+5
Peer tutoring	◊	●●●●	+5
Small group tuition	◊◊◊	●●	+4
Social and emotional learning	◊◊◊	●●●●	+4
Digital technology	◊◊◊	●●●●	+4
Outdoor adventure learning	◊◊◊	●●●	+4
Behaviour interventions	◊◊◊	●●●●	+3
Individualized instruction	◊	●●●	+3
Parental engagement	◊◊◊	●●●	+3
Arts participation	◊◊	●●●	+2
Extending school time	◊◊◊	●●●	+2
Homework (Primary)	◊	●●	+2
Sports participation	◊◊◊	●●	+2
Teaching assistants	◊◊◊◊	●●	+1
Repeating a year	◊◊◊◊◊	●●●	-4

Source: Education Endowment Foundation (2018)

This table indicates clearly that interventions such as repeating a year, teaching assistants or extending school time appear to be less effective than Tier-1 learning interventions, such as feedback, metacognition and self-regulation, or Tier 2 and 3 interventions such as one-to-one tuition, language interventions, peer tutoring, small group tuition (the tier model was presented in Module 1 Unit 2).

Targeted and tailored learning interventions

The intensity of the learning support will vary depending on students' needs.

Table 12 Examples of targeted and tailored interventions for learning support

Targeted interventions	Tailored interventions
- Language classes for students whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction - Additional classes (remedial) - Small group learning (in the classroom or when the rest of the class is engaged in non-core subject classes) - Peer tutoring (for selected students) - Skills development classroom support/workshops - Homework clubs (after class, organized by the school or community groups and volunteers) - Catch-up classes and summer classes (organized by schools, by NGOs, by local groups, municipalities, etc.) - Extra support around examination time - Providing learning activities ahead of long periods of absence, for seasonal migrants, for instance, or children on the move. These can be based on an e-learning platform when access to technology allows	- Individual Education/Learning Plan - One-to-one teaching/tutoring - Academic school transition plans to support learning transition (see Module 3) - Other interventions aimed at individuals at very high risk

While technically all support activities can be undertaken through online and distance learning, students that are the most at risk of dropping out might be unable to access this. During periods when children are not physically in schools, schools might want to promote peer-tutoring from children from the community, small group learning and one-to-one tuition facilitated by mediators, and community-based homework clubs. This will require some planning and preparation and liaising with mediators, NGOs and other third parties involved to align support with school practices.

> **!** Effective learning support approaches are to be included on learning passports for those children who are using this system, such as seasonal migrants or children on the move. This will provide useful information to the next school, mediators or community educators and might be replicated in different location so as to keep a coherent continuum of learning support.

⚒ Peer tutoring

"Peer tutoring includes a range of approaches in which learners work in pairs or small groups to provide one another with explicit teaching support, such as:

- cross-age tutoring, in which an older learner takes the tutoring role and is paired with a younger tutee or tutees;
- peer-assisted learning, which is a structured approach for mathematics and reading with sessions of 25 –35 minutes two or three times a week; and
- reciprocal peer tutoring, in which learners alternate between the role of tutor and tutee.

The common characteristic is that learners take on responsibility for aspects of teaching and for evaluating their success.

Peer tutoring appears to be particularly effective when pupils are provided with support to ensure that the quality of peer interaction is high: for example, a checklist of questions to use in tutoring sessions, and training and feedback for tutors. In cross-age peer tutoring, some studies have found that a two-year age gap is beneficial and that intensive blocks of tutoring are more effective than longer programmes.

Peer tutoring appears to be more effective when the approach supplements or enhances normal teaching, rather than replaces it. This suggests that peer tutoring is most effectively used to consolidate learning, rather than to introduce new material."

Source: Education Endowment Foundation (2018b)

Remedial teaching, extra-classes and study hours

In this section we present two main learning support options: (i) **remedial teaching**, understood broadly as additional learning support provided to individual or groups of children to help them catch up with their learning, particularly on core academic subjects, and (ii) **additional or supplementary classes and study hours**, which welcome students on a voluntary basis.

Remedial teaching usually targets students with short attention spans, with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, with very weak confidence in their ability to learn, low self-expectations and a strong lack of motivation for learning due to repeated underachievement or other personal reasons.

Remedial teaching is based on a thorough needs assessment to understand what the issues are (cognitive, metacognitive and in terms of motivation), and learning targets set by teachers. Remedial teaching can take several forms, such as:

- One-to-one tutoring during class time (when the student is provided additional tuition during breaks for instance or when a teaching assistant is supporting a child during the class);
- One-to-one tutoring or small group learning occurs outside of class time, usually before school starts, during the lunch break or after the last class period.

> **!** Remedial teaching is targeted at those students lagging most behind, not to provide extra instructional time to the majority of the class.

Below are a few principles for ensuring effective remedial teaching:

- Favouring short and regular sessions (such as 30-minute sessions three times a week);
- Linking remedial teaching with regular teaching/lessons;
- Based on learning targets identified by the class teacher;
- Actively involving students in their learning and supporting them to understand what they need to improve and why and involving them in monitoring progress;
- Varying instructional techniques and learning materials, using the Universal Design for Learning principles (see Unit 2);
- Differentiating learning materials to respond to students' varied needs;
- Teaching learning skills and learning strategies;
- Addressing learning misunderstandings and misconceptions;
- Enabling students to progress at their own pace;
- Exploring how Computer-Assisted Learning can support remedial learning support. This can be particularly valuable for catching up on foundational literacy and numeracy skills;
- Ensuring that parents receive relevant information about remedial learning;
- Involving parents in reviewing the progress made during remedial teaching;
- Monitoring progress.

> **Checklist for parental engagement in remedial learning**
> - Have parents been involved in developing the objectives, content and logistics of remedial learning?
> - Have parents been informed about the objectives, content and logistics of remedial learning before their child is invited to participate?
> - Have vulnerable or hard-to-reach parents been informed through appropriate channels?
> - Have parents provided informed consent to the participation of their child?

Other learning support options provided by the school can include extra classes and study hours, for students to join a safe learning space provided by a teacher, pedagogue or school volunteer. These learning support options are usually more flexible and can be taken up by students on a voluntary basis. Such options might have 'open door' policies, enabling students to come when they feel the need. Issues of place and time are to be jointly decided with students, parents and teachers, to maximize participation.

Below are a few principles for ensuring effective additional learning support:

- Based on students' consultation and needs;
- Based on students' strengths;
- Fostering study skills, autonomy and independent learning (see Unit 2);
- Fostering motivation for learning (see Unit 2);
- Fostering socio-emotional learning (see Unit 1);
- Varying teaching methods and learning materials;
- Responding to students' learning styles and the principles of Universal Design for Learning;
- Fostering collaborative learning;
- Celebrating students' success;
- Gathering feedback from students, parents and teachers to inform future development;
- Assessing the impact on students' learning, motivation and school attendance.

! Teachers' low expectations of students involved in remedial learning or extra learning support is a key challenge in effective learning support provision, as well as stigmatization of students attending supplementary classes.

To avoid stigma attached to remedial teaching and additional learning support options, schools can ensure that all learning support is embedded within its structure in order to benefit from:

- Articulation and promotion of learning support as a core function of the school to support the success of all students;
- Clear communication about available options to students and parents;
- Appointment of a school staff member to oversee all provision of learning support in the school;

- Monitoring of students' participation and progress;
- Gathering feedback from students, parents and teachers;
- Inclusion of learning support as an area of investigation for the school self-evaluation (UNICEF Serbia, 2017).

> **!** While this is beyond the scope of this course, financing mechanisms to support remedial learning are key to secure the quality and sustainability of remedial teaching strategies and additional learning support.

Reflect

1. What surprises you about the research findings presented in Figure 7? Why?
2. What would be your 10 top recommendations for other teachers and schools regarding the implementation of learning support activities for students at risk of dropping out and underachievers?

MODULE 5 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers and teaching assistants. You might also consider including district or regional education officials, students, parents, local authorities and external health and social services in this exercise.

Improving learning support for students at risk of dropping out.

Step 1: Review existing learning support provision

1. To what extent does your school address socio-emotional learning? What are the key areas for improvement regarding socio-emotional learning in your school that all students could benefit from?

2. What is your school provision for learning support for students at risk of dropping out and underachievers? Does your provision serve all students at risk of dropping out, across all ages and grades?

3. What are the key strengths and weaknesses of your learning support provision for students at risk of dropping out?

4. Based on a review of the effective learning support criteria provided in Unit 3, identify the main areas of your learning support provision for students at risk of dropping out that need improving.

Use all information provided in this Module to inform your review and make it as comprehensive as possible.

Step 2: Reflecting on Step 1 mapping and assessment, how could your school improve learning support for students that are most at risk?

1. Using the list in Unit 3, what target interventions could your school focus on to respond to students' learning needs?

2. How should those interventions be implemented (if new) or improved (if ongoing) to be effective?

3. How could you involve students and parents in the design, implementation and monitoring of your targeted learning support provision?

4. How will you monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of your learning support interventions?

5. What support do you need and from whom to implement your learning support provision?

MODULE 6.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Module 6 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: Reviewing parental engagement practices • Benefits of parental engagement • Barriers to parental engagement • Assessing parental engagement practices Unit 2: Improving parental engagement • Strategies for engaging hard-to-reach parents • Effective communication • Involving parents in school return Module 6 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Explain the benefits of parental engagement in education • Identify the barriers to parental engagement in your school • Assess the parental engagement practices in your school • Devise strategies for engaging hard-to-reach parents • Explain the principles of effective communication • Adopt a simple framework for effective conversations with parents • Identify a means of engaging parents in school return • Support parents to engage in homework and remote learning • Develop a plan to improve parental engagement in your school.	

This Module investigates how to harness the potential of parental engagement in school and learning to prevent dropout.

UNIT 1 REVIEWING PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

This unit outlines the benefits of parental engagement in education for dropout prevention and strategies to overcome the barriers to the participation of parents.

The role of parents in learning and their relationship with schools has drastically changed over the COVID-19 pandemic, with parents taking increased responsibilities for supporting and monitoring the learning or teaching of their children. While some might have gained a clearer view of their children's education and have improved relationships with teachers, for others, however, the pandemic has widened the gap between the home and the school. Some parents have faced a range of barriers to supporting the learning of their children, due to family situations, lack of equipment or limited skills and confidence.

Benefits of parental engagement

There are multiple types of parental engagement in education:

- Parent engagement and participation in the life of the school;
- Parent engagement in decision making and school governance;
- Parent involvement in the learning of their children; and
- Parent advocacy for the meaningful inclusion of different groups of children, including children with disabilities.

Parental support of education is a protective factor against school dropout. It is associated with increased school attendance, improved attainment and achievement, increased motivation, higher levels of confidence and self-esteem, improved peer interaction and lower chances of dropout.

Research shows that parental engagement in the learning of their children is associated with education success (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012) and plays a bigger role in education success than the socio-economic status of the family. There is also increasing evidence of the impact of fathers' involvement on attendance, wellbeing and behaviour (Department for Education and Skills, 2004).

Parents also gain from school engagement, experiencing increased support from the school, increasing parental confidence and skills, higher aspirations for their children and a deeper understanding of how the school and the home can work together to support their child (School–Home Support, n.d.).

Barriers to parental engagement

There are a range of barriers to parental engagement, some stemming from parents themselves, others coming from the school practices or the attitude and behaviour of school staff.

When identifying the barriers to parental engagement, it is important to keep in mind that parents are not a homogeneous group:

- **Fathers and mothers and male and female caretakers**, might play a different role in the education of their children, have different views about the education system, the school, teachers or different educational and life aspirations for their children. Fathers and mothers might also engage differently with the school or support services.

- **Young parents or older carers** such as grandparents will have different backgrounds, life experiences, parenting styles and patterns of engagement with schools and other services.
- **Parents and caretakers can face challenges**, due to migration, poverty or difficult life circumstances (single parenting, domestic violence, substance addiction, mental health issues, disability, etc.) which can affect how they engage with school staff and their children's education. The pandemic has also exacerbated some of the challenges faced by families and resulted in bereavement, loss of livelihood or isolation.

Below is a summary of common barriers to parental engagement in school.

Table 13 Common barriers to parental engagement

Barriers from the parent side	Barriers from the school side
General - School is an unfamiliar environment or is intimidating - Unpleasant memories about own school experience - Transport issues (parents live far away); disability/mobility; lack of IT for remote meetings - Timings of meetings - Language issues - Lack of understanding of education system or of school expectations - Gender norms (e.g., education is a matter for mothers) - Fear of stigmatization; fear of being judged (particularly when not having appropriate clothing, shoes, etc.) - Difference between home and school values/culture - Meeting fatigue or being repeatedly called for a meeting due to child attendance or behaviour issues **Learning specific:** - Lack of time - Lack of computer/connectivity and digital skills - Low aspirations for the education of their children - Perception that their child is not welcome in the school - Low levels of literacy	- Lack of time - No space for private meetings - Lack of know-how about engaging with parents, particularly hard-to-reach or disadvantaged parents - Use of education jargon - Lack of arrangements for overcoming language barriers - Parental involvement not part of teachers' job description - Lack of understanding of how cultural practices might affect parent's engagement with staff. - Staff assumptions that parents disengaged with schools are careless parents - Stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes among teacher/school staff - Lack of training among teachers and school staff on parental engagement in learning - Lack of activities aiming to support parents to engage in children's learning - School information available online only, preventing access from non-connected parents

• Low level of education and feeling that learning is for 'experts' • Feeling excluded from discussions about learning in school					

Because parents/carers are a heterogeneous group with diverse backgrounds and styles of engagement with school staff, schools have to adapt how they communicate, involve, engage and make decisions with parents, sometimes on a case-by-case basis. When parents/carers are particularly vulnerable, or when students are at risk of dropping out, schools need to find additional or different strategies to effectively work with parents.

Assessing parental engagement practices

Working with parents can be challenging and requires sustained effort and support. Many schools do not have a clear vision or shared practices about how they engage with parents, particularly the most marginalized or those of students at risk of dropping out, and teachers have rarely been trained on parental engagement.

Reviewing practices to assess how and how well schools and/or teachers are engaging with parents, particularly the parents of students at risk of dropping out and hard-to-reach parents is the first step towards improving home-school or parent-teacher relationships.

Self-evaluation: school practices in parental engagement

Below is a tool to assess how well your school is doing on communicating and engaging with parents.

Table 14 School self-assessment tool on parental engagement

Domains	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Good	Outstanding	Comments
Parents' welcome					
How welcoming is your school to parents?					
How well can your school facilities accommodate parents' meetings and parents' activities in the school?					
How well does your school provide translation of documents/ interpretation of parents' evenings or meetings?					
Parents' participation					
How well does your school consult with **all** parents and consider their views and solutions?					
How well does your school engage with marginalized parents and those who are hard-to-reach?					
How well does your school consult less-involved parents on what they would find					

Domains	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Good	Outstanding	Comments
Helpful to support their engagement?					
How well does your school involve **all** parents in school activities and events, including the most marginalized?					
How well does your school involve **all** parents in decision making and governance structures (school board, PTA etc) , including the most marginalized?					
Communication with parents					
How well does your school know the parents of their students in person?					
How effective are the strategies of your school in communicating with the most marginalized or hard-to-reach parents					
How well does your school communicate the schools' expectations about parents' role?					
How well does your school communicate with parents about children's learning (issues, progress and achievement)?					
How well does your school communicate with parents about children's socio-emotional wellbeing?					
How well does your school communicate with parents about support services available in the community?					
Parents' engagement in learning					
How well does your school provide **all** parents with information on the education system, including disadvantaged/hard-to-reach parents?					
How well does your school make full use of **all** parents' knowledge and expertise to support the curriculum and school activities?					
How well does your school support parents with tips and resources to support learning at home?					
How well does your school engage parents in the development, monitoring and review of IEPs, and in decisions about education placements and transition planning for students with disabilities or special educational needs?					
How well does your school support the most marginalized parents to engage in their					

Domains	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Good	Outstanding	Comments
children's learning throughout the pandemic, including remote and online learning?					
Capacity for parental engagement					
How well does school staff deal with conflict with parents?					
How well trained is your staff on parental engagement practices?					
How effectively does your school plan for parental communication and engagement for the most vulnerable students and those at risk of dropping out?					

Source: Inspired by and adapted from Her Majesty Inspectorate of Education (2006) and from the EU funded project Involve Parents - Improve School. Concepts and materials for fostering the participation of parents in school life with particular emphasis on families with an immigrant background (last accessed May 2018).

Reflect

Part 1:

1. Think about the diversity of parents in your school and identify the barriers that prevent mothers/fathers/carers, particularly the most vulnerable or marginalized parents (i) from getting involved in the life of the school, (ii) from communicating with teachers, and (iii) from engaging in their children's education and learning.

Part 2: Reflect on how you/your school engages with hard-to-reach parents and parents of students at risk of dropping out.

2. How are interactions organized?

- Who? (directors, psychologists, teachers, other support staff, or parent-initiated communication);

- (Engages) with whom? (mothers, fathers, parents of children from certain grades, parents of low achievers, parents of disengaged students, hard-to-reach parents, or school staff?);

- Why? (discuss an attendance or behaviour problem, provide information, give positive feedback on achievement, etc.);

- Where? (director's office, classroom, cafeteria, staff room, outside the school, parents' home, online, etc.);

- How? (one-to-one meetings, group meetings, phone calls, letters, emails, newsletters, home visits, community meetings, formal/informal communication, regular communication, one-off communication, etc.).

2. What do you notice about the main patterns of communication you have/your school has with parents of students at risk of dropping out?

3. To what extent do these communication approaches address the potential barriers to parental engagement identified in Part 1?

UNIT 2: IMPROVING PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

This unit focuses on concrete strategies to support the engagement of parents of students at risk of dropping out, including hard-to-reach parents.

To improve parental engagement, activities must take place at two levels:

- **School level:** improving communication with parents, strategies for engaging with hard-to-reach parents, increasing parental participation in schools, reviewing what works and what does not in parental engagement;
- **Individual (teacher) level**: strategies for building trust with parents, communication skills and techniques.

Strategies for engaging hard-to-reach parents

Epstein et al. (2009) have identified six main areas of parental involvement:

- **Parenting**: Assist families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students.
- **Communicating**: Conduct effective communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school about school activities and student progress
- **Volunteering**: Organize volunteers to support the school and students. Provide volunteer opportunities in various locations and at various times.
- **Learning at home**: Involve families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.
- **Decision-making**: Include families as participants in school decisions, and develop parent leaders and representatives
- These principles apply for all parents, including the most marginalized and hard to reach.
- **Parenting**. This might include: (i) training workshops for parents on topics that interest them, including behaviour management, conflict resolution, communication skills; (ii) Parents peer-support groups; (iii) Fathers-only and mothers-only activities for parents, based on their interest. Consider using phone-based or SMS-based training and tips sharing techniques for hard-to-reach parents.
- **Communicating**. Good communication principles include: (i) being consistent in your communication approach, (ii) treating parents with respect and dignity and treat them as equals, (iii) sharing decision making with them, (iv) showing your commitment, care for the child and that you are ready to help, (v) facilitating translation, (vi) being honest, (vii) being open and transparent about problems, (viii) contacting parents when things are going well (and not only when there are problems!), (ix) share information about children often, (x) provide other information that may be useful to parents, such as local support services. Communication can be supported by school mediators from the community, appointed by local authorities, the ministry of education or identified by communities. Private guided visits of the school can also be organized.
- **Volunteering**. Engaging parents in school activities, through participation on cultural days, creating teaching and learning materials, crafting toys and equipment.
- **Learning at home**. Give tips for parents to create a supportive learning environment at home: (i) how to set up a conducive environment to study, (ii) preparing learning materials, (iii) homework guidance, (iv) time management tips, (v) guidance on avoiding distractions, (vi) guidance questions that parents can use to support

students' regulated learning and self-assessment. These can be shared by SMS, leaflets in parents' native languages, or through mediators.

- **Decision-making**. This includes trying to involve parents in governance structures such as PTA and school board. When this is challenging, other avenues to consult parents on school topics can be found, through community meetings and working with religious or community leaders.

When parents rarely engage with the school and do not respond to meeting invitations or phone calls, schools must find different strategies to reach out to them. Perspective taking is useful to try to put oneself in parents' shoes and to understand why they are not engaging and how trust and communication could be established.

Schools have been successful in establishing contact with hard-to-reach parents through:

- Conducting regular community meetings to get to know influential community members and establish trust between the school and a particular community;
- Contacting mediators, community leaders, religious leaders, other parents or member of the communities to try to reach out to the parents;
- Conducting home visits;
- Contacting health, social services and local authorities to discuss possible parent engagement strategies or request support to contact the family. This might be done in different manners, such as a social worker passing on positive information to the family about their child's performance at school or positive messages from the school; and
- Changing strategies when they do not work – doing the same thing brings the same result!

Tips for engaging with parents' cultural diversity:
- Approach families as partners who want the best for their children;
- Invite families to share knowledge about their children's lives, interests, hopes and struggles;
- Invite families to share information about family cultures and traditions;
- Recognize and respect differences in family structures;
- Recognize the role that identity and background may play in shaping relationships between school staff and families;
- Understanding the context of communication: age, sex, region, culture, etc.;
- Bring a sense of self-reflectiveness and cultural humility to all interactions;
- Demonstrate awareness and respect of various cultures and customs.

Source: Schraf (n.d.)

Parenting skills and parent engagement could be useful dropout prevention strategies for both boys and girls, so that parents are, for example, more equipped to deal with their teenagers' behaviour or more engaged in the learning of their children. Adolescent parenting skills programmes will need to consider the gender differences and gender socialization processes happening during adolescence to help parents better understand and respond to the gender-specific needs of their children. Dropout prevention activities that focus on increasing father engagement might be more effective for boys in some cases than for girls, or vice-versa depending on the context

---

Romania Parenting Education Programme

UNICEF Romania supported a comprehensive parenting education programme developed by Holt IS, called *Innovation in Social Services Romania*, which was based on the Appreciative Inquiry model, for parents of children of all ages. The programme aimed to improve parenting abilities and to improve parent-child relationships. Parents were organized in groups of 10-15 people and attended eight to 10 meetings of 2.5 hours over an eight to 10-week period. Core topics were covered (positive parenting skills, managing stress and anger, effective parent-child communication and trustworthy parent-child relationship, how to accompany children throughout their development, positive approach to child behaviour, child abuse and neglect prevention, child participation, developing local parent networks) as well as topics that were identified collectively by participants. Group discussions were moderated by a parent educator who undertook training and was accredited by the programme. Particular attention was paid to the location and timing of the meetings for parents to be able to participate. Separate father groups could be organized in communities where fathers traditionally engage less in children's education and development. Participants could expose their issues and receive feedback and support from other parents as well as from the parent educator. The focus was on generating collective intelligence from participants' experiences. Between sessions, educators were encouraged to follow up with parents to provide additional support.

Several evaluations revealed that the programme helped parents shift their behaviour from control to appreciative support, communicate better with their children (including improved listening skills), increase positive discipline vs corporal punishment, increase time spent with children, and communicate better with the school.

Source: UNICEF and Holt IS (2015).

Effective communication

Teacher/staff-parent communication skills are critical to dropout prevention. Without a strong partnership between the home and the school, students at risk of dropping out have less chance of remaining in school. To develop strong partnerships with parents, schools must be able to establish, maintain and nurture communication. Often communication can be tenuous between vulnerable or marginalized families and schools, and a word, a sentence or a specific attitude from a school staff member can have significant

consequences. This unit makes a voluntary assumption that whatever their level of experience, everybody can always improve their communication skills.

This unit's content is relevant not only to parent engagement, but also to communication with students (touched upon in Module 4) and between professionals (relevant to Module 7).

Communication skills

Communication between two people (a **sender** and a **recipient**) is about a **message** that is properly **encoded** (language, clarity), delivered through an appropriate **channel** (phone, letter), received, and properly **decoded and understood** by the recipient.[7]

Communication is more than conveying information. It is also about feelings and attitudes.

Communication is more than words. It is also about the tone of voice and the body language (non-verbal cues).

Research shows that 7 per cent of messages pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken, 38 per cent is the tone of voice and 55 per cent is body language including facial expression (Mehrabian, 2007).

Table 15 Communication skills

Skills	Explanation
Listening	Paying close attention to what the other person is saying, his/her body language, asking clarifying questions, and rephrasing what the person says to ensure understanding
Asking questions	Asking questions that are constructive and useful for gathering information
Non-verbal communication	Body language, eye contact, tone of voice
Clarity and concision	Saying just enough, not too much, not too little
Friendliness	Friendly tone, a personal question, or simply a smile to encourage people to engage in open and honest communication
Open-minded	Being flexible, open to understanding and listening to the other person's point of view, rather than simply getting a message across
Empathy	Ability to understand and share the feelings of a person
Respect	Conveying respect for people and their ideas

---

[7]

https://www.tutorialspoint.com/effective_communication/effective_communication_meaning_and_definition.htm

Feedback	Providing information back, that is given with a positive intention, that is based on fact or behaviour and that is constructive and beneficial

Source: https://www.thebalancecareers.com/communication-skills-list-2063779 and Starr (2011)

> ⚒ **Tips for effective listening**
>
> - Focus on what the person is saying (words, body language and other non-verbal cues)
> - Don't interrupt – interrupting means 'What I have to say is more relevant' or 'I am more important' or 'I do not really care what you think'. Rather, use small gestures or verbal affirmations 'I see' to show that you are listening
> - Ask clarifying questions to make sure you understand what the person is saying
> - Reformulate what you have heard for the person to know that you have understood
> - … and remember… *you cannot listen if you do all the talking!*
>
> Source: Schraf (n.d.)

Effective conversations

Preparation:

To be fruitful, conversations with parents must be prepared, particularly when addressing issues of low attendance, behaviour or low achievement. Key elements to prepare the conversation are:

1. **Why** are you having the conversation? (purpose of the conversation, what do you want the parents to do after the conversation)
2. **What** do you need to know and what messages you want to get across?
3. **How** will you have the conversation? (channel, location…)

Starting and closing a conversation

Below are tips for starting and closing difficult conversations with parents.

> ⚒ **Tips for starting a conversation:**
>
> - Create a positive atmosphere;
> - Introduce yourselves;
> - Explain the context and purpose of the meeting/conversation;
>
> **Tips for closing a conversation:**
>
> - Summarize what has been discussed;
> - Review any decision made so that everybody is in agreement about who should do what;

- Explain what will happen after the meeting/discussion;
- Give contact details of the school staff who can be contacted by the family;
- End on a positive note;
- Thank the family for their time.

Four-step framework to structured conversations with parents:

Using the framework to guide your conversations will help you ask the right questions, gather the information you need and get the commitment you need from parents.

EXPLORE

Active listening, paraphrasing, communicating, understanding

Identifying priorities, clarifying key

FOCUS

Agreeing targets, planning, seeking outcomes, developing action plan

PLAN

Summarizing, clarifying next steps, arranging further communication

REVIEW
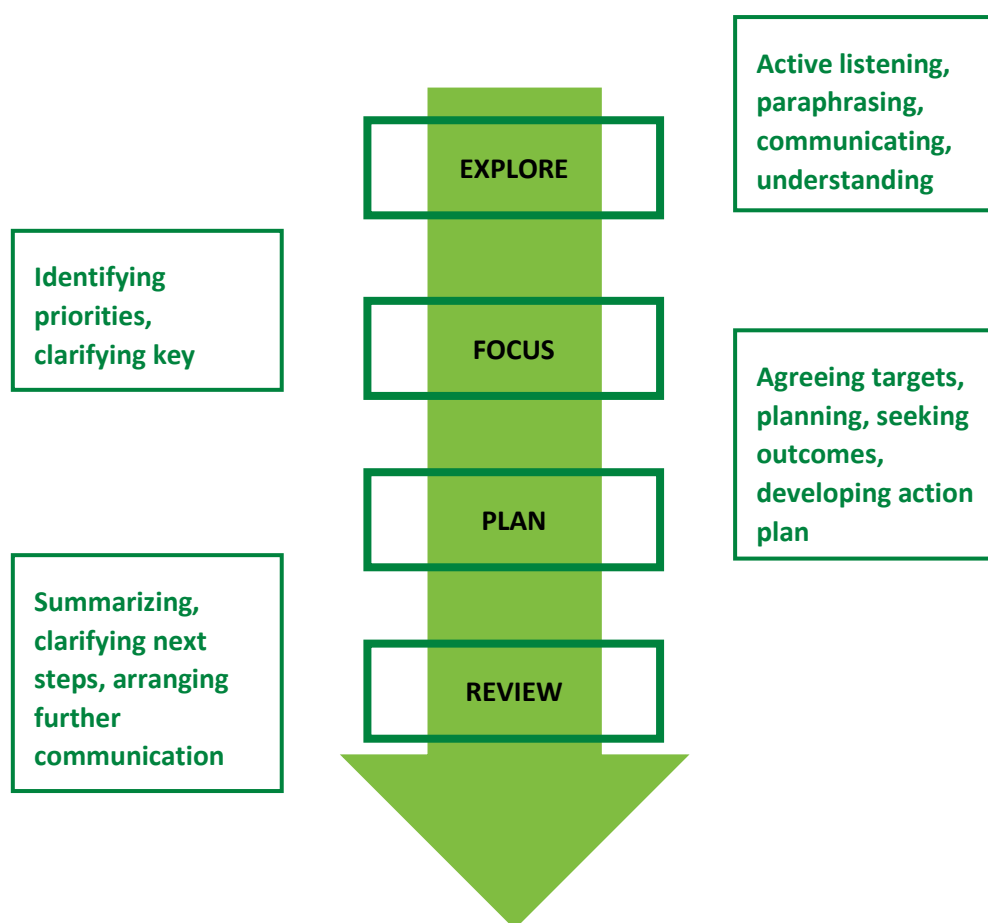
Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009)

Below are examples of questions that can be used when discussing a tardiness problem with parents using the four-step framework and constructive questions.

Table 16 Elements for a structured conversation – examples of questions

Steps	Aim	Examples of questions
Explore	Understand the reasons behind tardiness	• Did you know about the tardiness of your child? • What are the reasons for your child being late for school? • Are there any other reasons for your child being late? • How do you explain your child's behaviour?

		• What have you been doing to reduce the tardiness?
Focus	Clarifying and prioritizing the reasons behind tardiness	• What is the main reason your child is not on time? • Can you tell me more about [reason X]? • Can you describe how [reason X] prevents your child from being on time? • Can you explain what specifically happens when [reason X] occurs? • What have you tried in the past to solve [reason X]? What has worked? Why do you think this has worked? What hasn't worked? Why do you think this hasn't worked? • What would need to happen for your child not to be late to school?
Plan	Agreeing a way forward and concrete outcomes	• What could you do for your child to be on time? • What is the first thing that you could do for your child to be on time? • What should your child do to be on time? • What should the school do to help your child be on time? • Is there anything else to be done for your child to be on time? • How will you know that the tardiness problem is solved?
Review	Summarizing, next steps and clarifying communication	• Do you have any questions? • What is the best way to contact you if we need to do so? • When shall we next meet to review progress?

> ! Discussions with parents should enhance their own ability to solve problems with limited outside intervention. Building on families' strengths and own solutions gets better results than trying to 'fix' the problem for them.

Involving parents in school return

Schools have had a role to play in encouraging parents to send their children back to school when schools reopened.

Schools across the world have used 'welcome back to school' messages for parents, such as:

- Messages to reassure parents that you are doing everything possible to mitigate infection risks and complying with the national guidelines;
- Messages to reassure parents that you are doing everything possible to support children catching up on their learning;
- Messages asking for parents' support and explaining how they can best contribute to welcoming back children to school, such as by following the rules, sharing their concerns and views, and supporting their children's learning;
- In schools where parents have been consulted and included in decision-making about school reopening processes, parents have been less reluctant to send their children back to school.

Where school return has proven challenging or students have not engaged in distance learning, engaging with parents to identify the reasons for disengagement or nonattendance is necessary. This might be done through phone calls or home visits when parents have not been responsive. Working with mediators or community members in closed neighbourhoods will help establish contact with parents.

Effective strategies when conducting home visits or communicating with parents whose children have not returned to school or participated in distance learning include:

- Establishing a rapport with parents and explaining the purpose of the visit without stigmatizing or blaming parents for their children not attending or participation in learning;
- Acknowledging the hardship experienced by families and students throughout the pandemic;
- Raising awareness about the importance of education and its multiple benefits for children, their future and their families;
- Reassuring parents by presenting the health and safety measures in your school;
- Explaining how the school will support the wellbeing of children in this difficult period and how teachers will support their individual learning needs if they have missed out on learning opportunities.
- Providing information to families on available services (psychological support, housing, employment, training, social services, children, families and young mothers' services) and support mechanisms to help re-enrolling children;
- Reminding parents/carers of their obligations towards the education of their children;
- Exploring, discussing and agreeing on possible solutions/measures to help the child return to school or participate in distance learning;
- Conveying that you have the best interests of the child at heart and that institutions are ready to help.

Examples of constructive questions for home visits

- What is the primary reason for your child not going to school/attending distance learning?
- Are there any other reasons why your child is not going to school/has not returned to school?

- What difference would that make to you if your child was going/returning to school/attending distance learning? What difference would that make to your child?
- What have you tried in the past year to help return your child to school/to support your child's participation in distance learning?
- What has worked? Why? What has not worked? Why?
- What could be done to facilitate your child's return to school/engagement in distance learning? (by the school, municipalities, social services, your family, the child, etc.)
- What is the first thing that needs to happen for your child goes (back) to school/engage in distance learning?
- Who could support you to ensure that your child goes (back) to school/engages in distance learning?
- How could we best help you?
- What is the first thing you need to do to assist your child in going (back) to school/engage in distance learning?

Additional resources:

- Fundación Secretariado Gitano Spain, Roma Education Fund, Fundaţia Secretariatul Romilor, Ministry of Education of Bulgaria, Ministry of Education of Romania, Ministry of Education of Spain, *Guide for Working with Roma Families towards Achieving the Success of their Children in School: A Transnational Methodological Proposal for Professionals*, 2013.
- Ivanova, V. Parenting in the prevention of early school leaving in the Roma community. Prevent Project, PREVENT Project, 2013.
- Education Scotland, Engaging Parents and Families. A toolkit for practitioners, 2017.
- Welsh Government, *FaCE the challenge together: Family and community engagement toolkit for schools in Wales*, 2016.
- School–Home Support, *Parental Engagement: A training toolkit for of useful resources for supporting parents with complex needs*, n.d.
- Education Scotland*, Engaging parents and families - A toolkit for practitioners, 2021.*
- Garcia, M.E.; Frunzi, K.; Dean, C. B.; Flores, N.; Miller, K.B., *Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education*, Washington, DC: US Department of Education; Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education
- UK Autism Education Trust, *Parent Guide for Working Together with Your Child's School*

Reflect

Think about a student of yours who is at risk of dropping out or from a marginalized group and whose parents are not engaging with the school, or whom you haven't been able to contact throughout the pandemic.

1. Reflecting on your learning from Module 4, Unit 4: Addressing discrimination, identify your possible unconscious bias or subtle prejudices towards the parents of your student.
2. Make a long list of all the barriers faced by parents that might be preventing effective school-home communication (see Unit 1 of this Module for more information).
3. What strategies have you deployed to contact the parents and established trust before and during the pandemic? What has worked? Not worked?
4. Brainstorm other strategies you could put in place to improve your relationship with these parents, build trust and engage them in their child's education.

UNIT 3: SUPPORTING PARENTS TO ENGAGE IN LEARNING

This unit provides strategies to support parents of students at risk of dropping out to engage in the learning of their children.

The section on barriers to parental engagement above shows that some parents might lack the time, skills or confidence to engage in their children's learning. The pandemic has exacerbated some of these barriers, with parents feeling more pressure and responsibilities to support their children while not always being able to help, particularly when learning occurs online.

Supporting parents to engage in learning is a process, particularly for those parents who are facing engagement barriers. Open and positive communication, based on short and regular interactions is the basis for building trust and engagement. Teachers can communicate about students' learning progress, inform parents about class projects and test dates, suggest family learning activities and share tips and strategies for learning or studying at home.

Supporting parents of children at risk of dropping out with homework or remote learning

Equipping parents to support their children at home during remote learning (or just with homework) requires schools to clearly communicate: (i) what the child will be studying at home and (ii) how parents can best support their child to do so.

Teachers and schools can share simple messages with parents to engage in the learning of their children at home.

Type of content to share with parents

Below is a simple checklist of messages that schools and teachers can communicate to parents:

- Information on what the child will be studying;
- Expectations that parents will play a supporting role rather than a teaching role;
- Expectations about the amount of remote education (i.e., number of hours per day);
- How to access homework and learning tasks/materials;
- How to set a time for studying/homework;
- How to organize a quiet space to work;

- How to prepare the equipment and materials/supplies needed;
- How to set up learning routines and create a study timetable;
- How to provide feedback to children;
- Ideas for family learning projects; and
- Where to find help if they need some.

The UK Department for Education provided parents with the following advice to support their child during remote learning:

1. Focus on routine
2. Have a dedicated workplace
3. Stay in touch with your school
4. Find time to work and play
5. Be active
6. Get involved if you can
7. Praise your children
8. Be mindful of mental health
9. Don't be too hard on yourself.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzaC3Jsgb4Q

Communication

Home study information and tips can be shared to parents and families through various channels and media:

- Leaflets, email;
- Teacher-parent meetings (at school or online);
- Phone calls;
- SMS;
- A quick chat at the school gate; and
- Sharing information with mediators that can be relayed in communities.

Adaptations in terms of language and media might be necessary depending on the needs of various groups (e.g., illiterate parents). This might involve translation into other languages. Personalized communication tends to be better received by parents, particularly those lacking confidence. By showing interest in how parents support their children at home and encouraging them to share pictures or anecdotes of their children studying at home, teachers can also build a deeper connection and trust with parents. Some parents might require regular encouragement and experience increased confidence when they understand how their efforts have impacted their child's learning.

Feedback from parents

Providing avenues for parents to share their views, opinions and concerns over periods of distance learning and learning at home will ensure they feel heard and understood.

Encouraging parents to say how teachers could support them better also enables teachers to fine-tune their communication and support to parents.

Parents' support groups

Some schools invite parents to co-create strategies to best support their children's learning at home, and to develop fun family learning activities. This can be done through parent meetings where they can share their ideas about supporting learning at home and increasing their children' motivation for learning remotely or for homework (in school or online). Organizing parent meetings in communities, such as Roma neighbourhoods and refugee and migrant communities, to discuss and share learning routines, learning support and learning tips between parents are effective strategies, particularly when those are supported by mediators or local NGOs.

✂ Examples of questions that parents can ask their children

Questions on learning readiness

- How can we make a space for you to learn best? How can we improve your study space for you to learn best?
- What material do you need (to do your homework, to engage in distance learning)?

Questions on how to best support the child

- What is the best way for me to help you?
- How are we doing when we work together?
- What can we improve when we work together?
- Who else could help you?

Questions when the child is stuck

- Where did you get stuck?
- What have you tried already to get unstuck?
- What have you done in the past when you got stuck in your homework? Would one of these strategies work now too?

Questions to develop autonomy and self-regulation

- (Before) How will you approach your homework/learning task?
- How well did it go?
- What was challenging?
- How did you overcome this challenge?

✂ Tips to give parents to support reading at home

Promote shared reading time at home (reading with the child, discussing about the child's reading).

Encourage children to have a daily reading routine.

Talk about the joy of reading whenever you can. Share what you are reading about with your child.

Ask your child a lot of questions! Who? What? When? Where? Why? What do you think the character is feeling?

Ask your child to make predictions about what they have read. What do you think will happen next?

Ask your child to summarize what they have read. Can you remember what happened?

Ask your child to write about what they have read. Can you write one sentence to explain what you liked or didn't like about the story/text? Can you draw a picture about what you've read (for younger children)?

Read and discuss reading with friends or family. Encourage your child to share them with a relative or friend, over a phone or video call.

Source: Adapted from Education Endowment Foundation, [Tips to Support Reading at Home](), 2020.

⚒ Techniques for consolidating learning

- Quiz children on the content;
- Ask children to explain what they have learned;
- Ask children to explain how they have solved a learning task, what strategies they used;
- Ask children to do a 'done list' at the end of day, of all the learning and learning task they have achieved; and
- Ask children what they feel they understand well and less well about specific content. Ask them how they will go about what they know less well and who could help them.

⚒ Tips to support parents to cope with children's anxiety

- Encourage parents to spend more time together with their children after class upon school reopening to talk about their day, how they have overcome their anxieties, if any, and discuss what they are looking forward to.
- Encourage parents to support their children speaking to their friends before returning to school.
- Encourage parents to help their children focus on things they are looking forward to. Make a list of 14 things you are looking forward to!

Adapted from https://www.barnardos.org.uk/support-hub/back-school-strategies-coping-feelings

Supporting parents with online learning

For some parents, online learning has become an additional barrier to engagement in the learning of their children. Stigma attached to the lack of available IT devices or connectivity, or low digital skills are important factors to acknowledge when communicating with parents on those issues.

Most of the information from the previous section applies to online learning too, but parents may need additional support for online learning in two areas: (i) using the technology and (ii) online safety.

Schools have developed a range of strategies to support parents with technology throughout the pandemic, including:

- Live demonstration of how to access e-learning platforms;
- Training parents on basic digital skills, in collaboration with local libraries or local NGOs; and
- Sharing information on available digital skills support.

Regarding online safety, governments and schools have published guidelines and tips. Refer to your country guidelines for more information.

> Tips to support parents to cope with children's anxiety
>
> - Alerting parents to online risks for children;
> - Explaining how to respond to and report harmful contact, conduct and content online;
> - Setting rules and boundaries for screen time and Internet time;
> - Explaining the importance of anti-viruses and privacy settings;
> - Encouraging parents to discuss with their children about how and with whom they are communicating online;
> - Supporting children to distinguish education content and advertising;
> - Noticing change in devices and Internet use in children, which might be a sign of cyberbullying.
>
> Source: Adapted from UNICEF, COVID-19 and its implications for protecting children online April 2020.

Additional resources

- Education Endowment Foundation, *Working with parents to support children's learning*, 2018.
- Bernardo's, *Supporting your child with additional needs settle into school*, 2020.
- UNICEF, *Supporting your child's mental health during COVID-19 school returns*, 2020.
- UK Department for Education, *Supporting your children's remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)*, 2020.
- UNICEF Montenegro, *How can the Family Support the Development of Socio-Emotional Skills? Handbook for Parents and Guardians*, 2021.

Reflect

1. What are you doing in your school/classroom to engage parents in learning?

2. What extra support did you give parents throughout the pandemic?

3. Of the tips presented in this unit, which could you integrate in your teaching/school practice?

MODULE 6 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers and teaching assistants. Involving parents and mediators will be critical for this exercise.

Develop a plan to improve parental engagement in your school/class.

Step 1: Conduct a self-assessment of parent engagement presented in Unit 1. For each question choose the answer that best corresponds to the situation of your school. Be as honest as possible and add comments to justify your scoring whenever necessary.

Step 2: Based on the self-evaluation, answer the following questions:

1. What are your school's main strengths in parental engagement?

2. What are your school's main weaknesses in parental engagement?

3. Select three priority areas of practice in parental engagement requiring improvement.

4. Brainstorm actions that you/your school could take in these three priority areas.

5. What is the first step that your school needs to take in order to make any change happen in these areas?

Step 3: Develop a simple plan to improve parental engagement in your school/class. The plan must include both universal interventions and targeted interventions for hard-to-reach parents and parents of students at risk of dropping out.

MODULE 7.

MULTI-SECTOR, MULTI-ACTOR AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Module 7 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
Unit 1: Working with other agencies on dropout prevention • Mapping services, agencies and community organizations • Entry points for engaging with external stakeholders Unit 2: Referring students to external support services • Types of referrals • Referral procedures • Dos and don'ts when children disclose abuse • Self-assessment tool for effective multi-agency working Module 7 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Map relevant agencies and services to provide dropout prevention support • Explain when to refer a child to an external service • Understand what to do and not to do when a child discloses abuse • Assess the school's effectiveness in working with multiple agencies • Explain how external agencies can support dropout prevention efforts • Identify avenues to address students' socio-economic barriers to education • Identify avenues to address early marriage • Assess the school's effectiveness in partnering with the community • Develop a simple plan to increase partnership working with external agencies and community organizations to combat dropout	

This module explores how school can work in partnership with other agencies and community organizations to support dropout prevention.

UNIT 1: WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES ON DROPOUT PREVENTION

On some occasions, preventing dropout is beyond the capacity of school staff alone; students and their families may require support that schools cannot provide, whether economic, social or psychological. In such cases, education authorities, local authorities and professionals from other services might need to be involved, as well as communities more broadly.

Mapping services, agencies and community organizations

Schools do not exist in isolation and are part of a network of organizations (statutory, private, non-governmental and civil society) that provide activities and support services to children and families.

By developing institutional and community partnerships, schools can tap into expertise, resources and sources of support for their daily activities, including dropout prevention.

There are three broad categories of actors:

- **Within the education system**: support services from the ministry or regional and district education departments;
- Public, private and not-for-profit **local services** for children and families;
- **Civil society organizations** from the cultural and social sectors, and **businesses**.
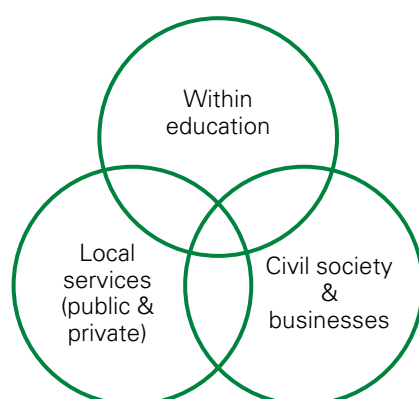
Source: Adapted from Columbia University (2016)

Some of these external stakeholders have **statutory obligations** regarding children at risk (such as social services and municipalities).

Others have **valuable expertise**, such as NGOs working with marginalized communities or children with disabilities.

Lastly, others have either an **interest and/or are available** to work with schools on dropout prevention, including on learning recovery, such as cultural organizations, academia or the private sector.

Community partnerships are beneficial for schools. They can contribute ideas, human resources, curricular and extracurricular activities, and funds. They can help in reaching out to traditionally excluded communities. They can also promote the school within the community and make it visible.

Regarding dropout prevention and response, external organizations can support:

- The identification of compulsory school-age children and adolescents who are out of school,
- Information as to why students might dropout from a particular group, community or geographical area,
- Interventions for students who have dropped out from school,
- Dropout prevention for students at risk of dropping out.

Table 17 Generic list of possible professionals, services, agencies and organizations

Within education	- Early childhood education and pre-primary providers - Primary & secondary schools - Vocational schools - Special schools - Higher education institutions - Second chance education providers - Teacher training institutions - Resource centres - Special education centres - Education authorities - Career guidance centres - Psychologists, counsellors, mobile teams
Local authorities & services (public & private)	- Health authorities & services (clinics, hospitals, health centres), health staff (doctors, nurses, visiting nurses, health assistants, birth attendants) - Psychological support services - Child protection authorities, services and officers - Juvenile justice authorities, officers and judges, services - Police authorities, officers and services - Minority authorities, services and officers - Migrant and refugee authorities, services and officers - Youth authorities and youth workers - Local authority/municipality staff and services - Social workers and social services (for family and children) - Housing association staff; - Shelter staff and services (for homeless people, refugees, migrants, victims of human trafficking, street children or victims of domestic violence); - Job centres/unemployment agencies and officers
Civil society, & businesses	- NGOs/CSOs with a specific education focus - NGOs/CSOs with a broader social justice focus - Youth associations - Local/community organizations/associations

	• Libraries
	• Cultural centres
	• Pensioner associations
	• Private sector, local businesses
	• Universities
	• Media
	• Religious leaders
	• Sport coaches

Entry points for engaging with external stakeholders

On the three-tier model, external stakeholder is likely to be necessary for targeted and tailored interventions.

For instance, a very demotivated student lagging behind in learning but not facing any particular challenges at home would mostly require the attention of the school, while a student facing extreme poverty and abuse at home would require support from other agencies as well as from the school.

Some universal interventions, such as recreational and cultural activities organized by municipalities, youth groups or NGOs could, however, be part of the broader solution to reducing the risk of dropout.

Figure 21 Involvement of schools and other institutions for students at risk of dropping out

| Universal (all children) School-wide PREVENTION | Targeted Groups of students at risk EARLY INTERVENTION | Tailored Individual at high risk HIGH INTENSITY RESPONSE |

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

| Low to growing dropout risk concerns for some students. Some level of individualization will take place, links with other agencies might be | Major dropout risk concerns for some students. Individualization required, including multi-agency |

Example 1: Universal – all children benefit from: (i) attendance monitoring, (ii) learning progress monitoring, (iii) extracurricular activities, (iv) interactions with school staff, (v) school-home interactions/communication, (vi) school climate improvement, (vii) overall inclusive education ethos/approach in the school, including wellbeing support.

Example 2: Targeted – Migrant and refugee children benefiting from additional language classes to learn the medium of instruction in their host country. A group of students with learning difficulties benefiting from remedial classes. A group of students at risk of dropping out with a dropout plan. A child living in extreme poverty for whom the school made a referral to social services. A child with special educational needs benefiting from an individual education plan.

Example 3: Tailored – An abused or neglected child whose family is assigned a social worker or case manager within social services. An adolescent in conflict with the law and at risk of dropping out who is mentored by a probation officer or equivalent within a minor police unit or equivalent. A student with severe disabilities with an individual education plan who is receiving a range of educational and non-educational support services to be able to continue his/her education. An adolescent who attempted suicide and is gradually coming back to full-time education.

> **!** In Module 2, it was suggested that school staff are assigned to case management for students at high risk of dropping out in their school. This case management approach is described as a way to coordinate discussions and school-initiated dropout interventions for a specific child. When students face severe adverse situations, they are often known by or referred to social services. Social services will usually adopt a case management approach to respond to the needs of the child/family. Whenever social services have an open case with the child/family, the social worker is the overarching manager of the case. When the child is also at risk of dropping out, this does not preclude schools from appointing a coordinator at the school level to liaise with the social worker in charge of case management and to coordinate the school-based dropout prevention activities for the child.

Reflect

1. With which agencies or organizations has your school engaged to help students remain in school or reenrol?

2. Which categories of organization has your school never engaged with to support students' access to education, learning or wellbeing?

UNIT 2 REFERRING STUDENTS TO EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES

There are times when schools will have noticed something in their students and/or their families that would justify a referral to an external agency, such as social services, child protection or other support agencies.

It is critical that schools understand when and where to refer students, so that situations do not escalate, and students' wellbeing needs are addressed in a timely manner.

Types of referrals

Abuse, violence and neglect

School staff who receive information on or have suspicion of child violence (neglect, violence, abuse including sexual abuse) are usually placed under an obligation to alert a child protection focal point in the school or the authorities/external services. School staff must follow the steps/referral protocols outlined in the legislation of their countries.

Mental health issues and behavioural delay

School staff who have concerns about the delay, behaviour or mental health of a student might discuss with parents and encourage them to have their child assessed by professionals. The assessment might be done in schools (e.g., screening for developmental delay or learning needs) or outside (such as in a medical facility for a mental health assessment or by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals working in the area of special educational needs and disability). Note that in many countries, such assessments cannot be conducted without parental consent.

Extreme circumstances

Staff might also refer families in situations of extreme poverty or very difficult life circumstances to social services. The boundaries for doing so might be outlined in legislation. Referrals are not to be made without the prior consent of families.

Referral procedures

Laws, regulations and policies concerning protection and safeguarding of children in school, mandatory reporting and obligations of school personnel vary from country to country.

When a school staff member identifies or is suspicious of abuse, violence neglect or mental health issues, they usually have to report this to the school management so that the case can be referred to relevant agencies and services locally. The exception would be when the school management is implicated in the disclosure.

It is important that:

- School staff are aware of their reporting obligations;
- Schools understand the existing referral procedures in place for different domains and adequately inform and train teachers on their purpose and use;
- Schools appoint a child protection focal point to whom students and teachers can raise abuse issues or suspicion of abuse;
- Schools are aware of the child protection, mental health and psychological support services available in the school and in the community;
- Schools keep an updated contact list of such services;
- Schools maintain a list of contact persons in key institutions for referral purposes; and
- Schools communicate information about the child protection focal point and referral procedures to students, parents and staff.

> **!** With school closures and hybrid learning practices, teachers might be the only people that a child will be in contact with during distance learning, or the first

trusted person a child will meet. This might result in increased abuse disclosure from children. Teachers and schools ought to be prepared and have systems in place to respond appropriately.

Following the pandemic, additional psychological support services will have been made available in many communities, which will have to be added to the existing mapping of support services providers.

Dos and Don'ts when children disclose abuse to school staff

There are generic dos and don'ts to follow when children disclose abuse or violence to a school staff member. Below is an example, which should be complemented by be rules and advice from your country.

Do:	Don't:
• Listen with care, show care	• Stop the child from talking or saying what they wish to say
• Find a private place if possible	
• Be patient, don't rush them or yourself	• Act scared or shocked
• Stop asking questions if the child/young person does not want to talk further and/or becomes distressed	• Doubt the child (question the validity of their story)
	• Threaten to harm or punish the perpetrator
• Do not make a promise to the child about keeping information secret or confidential	• Promise that everything will be fine, that they will be safe, happy, better
• Use open questions	• Ask leading questions
• Record what you have been told	• Insist that they answer questions, provide more information when unwilling/unable to do so
• Speak with a senior member of staff as soon as possible to help you determine the next step (for example, referral to support services, the police, etc.)	• Interview others or investigate matters
• Respect their privacy by sharing only relevant information with the people who need to know	
• Look after yourself	

Source: Department of Education of South Australia (2013)

Self-assessment tool for effective multi-agency working

Below is a simple self-assessment tool that schools can use to assess how effective their multi-agency working is in practice. This applies both to the context of dropout prevention and to the pandemic context.

Table 18 School self-assessment tool for effective multi-agency working

What effective multi-agency working looks like in the context of dropout prevention	Rate 0-4	Current impact on dropout prevention (low, medium, high)
Your school		
School staff are aware of the role and mandate of local authorities and other sectors' agencies and services regarding dropout prevention (police, social services, health, local authority/municipality officials, local education authorities, etc.)		
School staff are trained on safeguarding/child protection issues		
The school has a directory and contact details for all relevant local authorities, agencies and services (police, social services, health, local officials, etc.)		
The school use existing referral processes/protocols effectively to signal children in need to other agencies		
The school refers students at high risk of dropping out to other agencies/services for additional support		
The school requests support from other agencies/services in school-based dropout prevention activities		
The school provides timely information on children to other agencies as/when requested (paper or electronic format)		
The school participates in inter-agency Case Management for families/children in need		
The school provides parents, families and students with a range of information about services available (social services, benefits, birth certificates, health, etc.)		
The school contributes to multi-agency planning, at local level, on issues that are related to dropout (e.g., municipality/regional dropout prevention plans; municipality/regional children welfare plans; municipality/regional youth plans, etc.)		
Other		
External agencies and services		
The school is routinely provided with information on families/children facing multiple problems by other agencies		
The school is provided with information when requested on students at risk of dropping out from other agencies (according to data protection protocols)		

The school is invited to participate in inter-agency case management for families/children in need		
The school is provided with relevant information from the local authorities, agencies and services (e.g., protocols, referral forms, available programmes, guidance, policies, strategic plans, etc.)		
The school is consulted alongside multi-agency planning at the local level on issues that are related to dropout (e.g., municipality/regional dropout prevention plans; municipality/regional children welfare plans; municipality/regional youth plans, etc.)		
Other		

Reflect

1. What are the statutory obligations for school staff and schools in terms of referral of children at risk to external agencies?

2. What is the level of awareness in your school of these statutory obligations and of the procedures to follow?

UNIT 3 PARTICIPATION OF EXTERNAL AGENCIES AND COMMUNITIES IN DROPOUT PREVENTION

This section explores more in detail how external stakeholders can contribute to the overall dropout prevention effort.

External stakeholders' interventions in dropout prevention

External stakeholders can play various roles in dropout prevention and response, and provide a range of activities:

- for children in the community (e.g., sports and educational activities)
- for parents and families in the community (e.g., parenting classes)
- for schools (e.g., substance abuse awareness)

In the case of Kaloyan below, for instance, a range of external stakeholders have contributed interventions to help Kaloyan remain in school:

Kaloyan

Kaloyan is 16 years old and studies in Grade 8. He is frequently absent from school because he plays music with his father and uncles for a living, which involves long drives and late nights. He has been identified as at risk of dropping out. He has poor grades and teachers worry he will not be able to keep up in Grade 9. The school conducted a home visit and discussed with Kaloyan and his father. The father wants Kaloyan to continue

playing music with him and Kaloyan would also like to complete Grade 9, but he feels tired and ostracized at school for being different and poor.

To address the socio-economic issues of the family, the school linked Kaloyan with a local NGO providing homework support (room, snacks and educators) and obtained a small scholarship from the municipality for Kaloyan. It also requested the social assistance department to review the case of Kaloyan's family to make sure they received all benefits they are entitled to. To address the learning issues, the school organized a meeting with all teachers discuss how to best support Kaloyan, including (i) mentoring to help him organize himself and his school work better, (ii) requiring that teachers avoid tests on a Monday morning when he comes back tired from his weekend work. The homeroom teacher worked with the entire class to develop a support network and two students volunteered to share lessons notes with Kaloyan for the missed lessons. The school worked with the father on a timetable to ensure that Kaloyan would not miss more than five classes per month. Kaloyan's older brother accepted to tour with his father one weekend per month for Kaloyan to have time to catch up with sleep and homework. Supporting Kaloyan was a lengthy process, but he graduated Grade 9 and enrolled on a VET course.

Source: Adapted from UNICEF Bulgaria/Ministry of Education and Science (2018)

A key aspect of dropout prevention in many countries and communities has been about being innovative and creative with the partnerships that schools can build with other organizations. These partnerships might aim to support the school, the students or the families.

Civil society organizations and businesses can play a role in dropout prevention, but they are rarely required to do so by schools who tend not to develop partnerships with organizations other than NGOs.

Below are examples of possible contributions of a few stakeholders: (i) education authorities (such as municipal or district education staff), (ii) social services can do to contribute to dropout prevention, and (iii) businesses.

Table 19 Examples of contributions to dropout prevention from external stakeholders

	Support to students & families	Support to schools
Education authorities	- Discuss with parents/carers - Discuss with and mentor students - Discuss, liaise and plan with school directors and teachers - Discuss, liaise and plan with municipalities/local authorities - Find school placements - Follow-up on specific cases (e.g., expulsion)	- Map and make available lists of services for families and children - Support schools in dropout prevention planning and response - Train schools on dropout prevention approaches, early warning systems, etc. - Build school networks to facilitate the exchange of ideas and share learning and practices - Discuss, liaise and plan with NGOs and businesses

Social services	• Conduct home visits • Discuss with parents/carers • Discuss with children • Support families applying for social benefits • Support families accessing family and children's services • Case Management (social workers) • Referral to adequate services	• Training to schools and school staff on parental engagement, legislation and other relevant matters
Businesses	• Provision of scholarships • Mentoring • Job placement • Fundraising for a cause (e.g., assistive technology, secondary school fees, community centre, etc.) • IT devices, mobile phones and Internet credit	• Fundraising for a library, books, a computer room, etc. • IT devices • IT maintenance • Career guidance contribution • Mobile phone credit for school-wide SMS campaigns (to support school re-enrolment, to provide learning tips for parents, etc.)

Cross-actor collaboration for addressing socio-economic barriers to education

Addressing economic barriers to education

While addressing socio-economic barriers is not the main responsibility of education institutions and is not under their control, schools have a role to play in:

- Partnering with local authorities, organizations and services to support students and families;
- Signalling students in need to local authorities and other relevant agencies;
- Informing families of existing support and connecting them to other institutions and services; and
- Providing their own support to students and families in needs.

Below is a list of targeted socio-economic-related interventions that can support the wellbeing of the most disadvantaged students so that they can return to or stay at school and participate in learning.

Table 20 Examples of interventions to address students' socio-economic needs

Addressing socio-economic needs	Schools	Local authorities & communities	National authorities
Free or concessionary school transport		✓	✓
Free school meals/breakfasts, with alternatives for periods of distance learning (delivery, picking up meals at school or at specific points in communities, etc.)	✓	✓	✓
Free textbooks and school supplies	✓	✓	✓
Free IT devices/connectivity (incl. partnering with IT networks)		✓	✓

IT devices loan schemes	✓	✓	✓
Internet hotspots in communities for access to online learning		✓	✓
Scholarships, particularly for secondary education		✓	✓
Social benefits, disability allowance, housing benefits, unemployment benefits, cash transfer and voucher programmes			✓
One-off school return allowances			✓
Referral to NGOs/local services for accessing financial services	✓	✓	
Provision of information to parents about organizations engaged in socio-economic support (job centres, career centres, municipality services, social services, NGOs, etc.)	✓	✓	
School fundraising activities (clothes, school supplies, IT devices, food, etc.)	✓		

> 💬 During the Serbia UNICEF-MoES project on school dropout, a school partnered with a local bakery and grocery store to organize daily food donations to support the education of a few Roma students in the school.
>
> 💬 Schools in many countries called for laptop and tablet donations throughout the pandemic to support student with distance learning. In the UK, this was done with the support of local BBC radio stations. In other countries, with the support of NGOs or engineering schools that offered to refurbish donated equipment for free. Schools organized IT equipment loan systems for the most vulnerable students to benefit from the schemes.

> **!** Removing financial barriers is often a prerequisite for the most marginalized students to remain in education, but it is not sufficient on its own. Research shows that Roma students, for instant, have less chance of dropping out from lower and upper secondary education when scholarships are combined with mentoring from an adult of the school, to support students with their learning.

Addressing early marriage

Early marriage is of particular concern to many education professionals in the region. Early marriage is often considered a private matter, deeply rooted in community and cultural practices. Teachers and professionals from other sectors often do not feel equipped to address the issue. Yet, early marriage often conflicts with adolescents' overall wellbeing.

The reasons behind early marriage vary from community to community. Common factors, some of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, include:

- Perception of lack of opportunities;

- Security concerns (for girls);
- Poverty reduction – parents think that marriage will offer a higher social standing, and financial and material gains for girls;
- Gender norms, such as mothers' image in the community, issues of honour and shame, norms restricting dating, girls being perceived as a commodity/asset, norms around premarital sex and the value of virginity, and stigma and discrimination of unmarried girls; and
- Broader social norms such as ethnic identity, the role of marriage in consolidating community, and ignorance about health or legal consequences of early marriage (UNICEF, 2018b).

Responding to early marriage issues holistically requires coordinated multi-sectoral activities before, during and after early marriage.

Table 21 Examples of interventions to address early marriage

Addressing early marriage	Schools	Local authorities & services	Civil society
Skills development (communication, negotiation, goal setting, etc. through curricula, extracurriculum and peer activities) that girls can apply to negotiating education retention and delaying marriage	✓		✓
Awareness raising about the negative effects of child marriage (including for Roma parents in communities where early marriage is practiced), including peer-to-peer activities	✓	✓	✓
High expectations for all students (particularly girls and Roma girls in contexts with high early marriage prevalence rates among a Roma community)	✓		
Linking with female role models (organizations or individuals)	✓		✓
Meeting with parents and community leaders, working with mediators	✓	✓	✓
Providing opportunities for boys and girls to explore social and gender norms and stereotypes to encourage changes in attitudes and behaviours	✓		✓
Sexual and reproductive health activities (curricula, peer activities, extracurricular activities)	✓		✓
Engage boys in becoming agents of change in advocating for delayed marriage so that boys and girls can complete their education, including upper secondary education, before marriage	✓		✓
General school dropout prevention interventions and transition support	✓	✓	✓
If the girl is married:			
Individualized programme of work to support return to education/catch-up	✓		
Negotiation of flexible school hours	✓		
Meeting with husband/mother-in-law Linking with women role models, NGOs and local services		✓	✓

> UNICEF supports multi-sectoral and multi-level interventions to prevent early marriage. Schools and education have a role to play:
>
> - In Montenegro and Serbia, adolescent boys and girls are trained to deliver peer workshops and peer learning activities on child marriage and adolescent issues.
> - In Serbia, additional activities are conducted to improve access to and the quality of education to prevent girls from dropping out.
> - In Turkey, girls receive life skills training and mentoring.
> - In Bulgaria, awareness-raising activities are conducted in school and girls receive extra support to complete their education up to Grade 9.
> - In Bosnia and Herzegovina, boys and girls participate in theatre for change activities and girls receive IT training to motivate them to complete their education.
> - In addition, schools work in collaboration with child protection, justice and municipal authorities and contribute to community mobilization and awareness raising.
>
> Source: UNICEF (2018b)

Engaging with communities throughout the pandemic

Community stakeholders can be of great help for:

- **The return to school phase** – by identifying students who have not returned to school or who are not participating in distance learning, and by facilitating access to IT and the Internet.
- **Learning recovery** – by providing learning support to students in school and after school hours. In many countries, library staff, retired people, university students and youth associations are contributing to tutoring programmes, homework clubs, digital skills strengthening, or supporting parents to engage with their children's learning at home, etc.
- **Wellbeing support** – by offering recreational and cultural activities, including sports and physical activities in the communities.

Assessing school-community partnerships

Below is a simple self-evaluation form for the school to assess partnership working with community organizations.

Table 22 School self-assessment tool of community partnership practices

What might a community partnership look like in practice for dropout prevention	Rate 0-4	Priority actions
The school works in partnership with several community organizations, NGOs or civil society organizations in dropout prevention		

The school has mapped and has contact details of all possible community organizations, NGOs or civil society organizations which could contribute to dropout prevention		
The school works with local community organizations to engage families, particularly families from ethnic minorities or traditionally excluded groups, families from children with disabilities and hard-to-reach families		
The school provides families with a range of information about activities and services available in the community, including adult learning opportunities, parenting classes, psychological support, educational and recreational activities, administrative support, etc.		
Local community organizations provide activities for students in school, including students at risk of dropping out (career guidance, clubs, extracurricular activities, entrepreneurship courses, business incubators, socio-emotional skills development, etc.)		
The school contributes to community organizations' dropout prevention programmes, or return to school programmes		
The school opens up its facilities to local and community organizations to conduct their own activities after school hours		
Community representatives are part of the school board and contribute to the school development plan		
Community representatives contribute to the development of the school dropout prevention plan (or dropout prevention component of the school development plan)		
Local shops or businesses support or sponsor social events and fundraising initiatives, or volunteer their time to assist the school and students at risk of dropping out (e.g., mentoring)		
Local businesses contribute dropout prevention by offering work experience placements or coming to the school to talk about their work		

Source: Adapted from Welsh Government (2015) Family and community engagement toolkit.

Reflect and synthesize:

What are you doing well? What could you do better? What could you do more of?

Reflect

1. Think about a student at risk of dropping out for whom you/your school has gone the extra mile to reach out to other services and community actors to prevent dropout and/or to return to school? Who was involved and how?

2. How is your school contributing to early marriage prevention? How is your school supporting pregnant girls and teen mothers to continue their studies?

3. How has your school broadened or intensified its partnerships with community organizations throughout the pandemic to support students returning to school and help them catch up on their learning?

MODULE 7 ASSIGNMENT

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers, teaching assistants and mediators. Including district or regional education officials, local authorities, external health and social services, NGOs and other civil society organizations will be critical in this exercise.

Strengthening partnerships with local services and community organizations.

Step 1: Conduct the rapid assessment of your school effectiveness in multi-agency working, using the template in Unit 2 above.

1. Rate each item on a scale of 0-4.
2. Reflect upon: (i) What you are doing well, (ii) What you could do better and (iii) What could you do more of.

Step 2: Conduct a rapid self-assessment of your school's partnership with the community using the template in Unit 3 above.

3. Rate each item on a scale of 0-4.
4. Reflect upon: (i) What you are doing well, (ii) What you could do better and (iii) What could you do more of.

Step 3: Using information from Step 1 and Step 2, brainstorm:

1. Strategies to enhance the participation of state and local government agencies and services in dropout prevention, including throughout the pandemic to support children's return to school, learning and wellbeing.

2. Strategies to improve partnerships with community stakeholders, particularly NGOs, businesses, universities, civil society organizations, local organizations and improve them more in dropout prevention activities, including throughout the pandemic to support children's return to school, learning and wellbeing.

3. Identify a few organizations you have never engaged with and brainstorm strategies to involve them in dropout prevention activities, including throughout the pandemic to support children's return to school, learning and wellbeing.

Step 4: Develop a simple plan on how your school will increase and strengthen partnership working for dropout prevention, including throughout the pandemic to support children.

MODULE 8.

SCHOOL PLANNING FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Module 8 is organized as follows:

Module summary	Length
This module covers • School ethos, vision and values for dropout prevention • School planning cycle and dropout prevention Module 8 Assessment	
Module objectives	
At the end of this module, participants will be able to: • Understand the importance of the school ethos for dropout prevention • Describe a simple planning cycle for school dropout prevention • Describe a simple planning framework for dropout prevention • Develop a holistic school dropout prevention plan.	

This short module aims to bring all the learning gained in the previous modules together and provide schools with a holistic view about how to mainstream dropout prevention in its regular work and planning cycle, and make it a core pillar of its ethos.

School ethos, vision and values

A whole-school approach to dropout prevention requires a strong ethos from the school with inclusion and non-discrimination at its core.

Ethos

Ethos can be defined as a set of ideas and attitudes associated with a particular group of people or a particular type of activity (Collins Dictionary). The ethos of a school can, therefore, be described as the "atmosphere" or environment, the "underlying beliefs or values" (the culture) and the "practice, action and activity" in place to build the ethos (McMurty, 2005).

School ethos stems from the activities, environment, interactions and climate of the school. It can also be shaped to support the achievement of the school vision or goals, particularly around dropout prevention.

A whole-school approach to dropout prevention requires a school ethos and culture that strives to develop an environment:

- conducive to school completion and education transition;
- based on underlying values and beliefs that all children and young people can succeed and that no student should be left behind;
- enacted by activities and practices that promote education achievement, increase educational aspirations and reduce dropout;
- supportive of school staff; and
- empowering for students and their families.

A school ethos supportive of dropout prevention will address inclusion, diversity, respectful and positive relationships and interactions between staff and students and among students, student voice and participation, family & community participation, and promote high expectations in terms of attendance, behaviour and learning for all students.

Vision

A school vision is critical for ethos shaping and is at the core of school leadership. A vision, developed with the participation of all school stakeholders, will create a common understanding among stakeholders about the expected results for all students (in terms of attendance, learning, behaviour, socio-emotional wellbeing, access to opportunities, etc.). It will also give a meaning and a sense of purpose to the school community and help to bring about change in practices and attitudes. Lastly, a vision gives a direction to what schools do. It enables schools to prioritize and harmonize their activities so that the vision can be realized.

Values

School ethos is underpinned by a set of values shared between all stakeholders. Values are the basis upon which all school stakeholders are making decisions and acting (practice). Values might include: ambition, commitment, excellence, respect, anti-discrimination, kindness, fairness, fun, tolerance, teamwork, equality, responsibility, etc.

Planning cycle for dropout prevention

Addressing dropout prevention systematically at the school level requires planning and monitoring to improve practice and learn from experience.

An easy **school planning cycle** is the Assess, Plan, Do, Review approach:

Figure 22 School planning cycle overview

- **Assess**: •Analyse the situation: who are the dropout students and what are the school dropout practice.
- **Plan**: •Establish a vision and plan activities building on current strengths and addressing areas for improvement
- **Do**: •Implement plan activities. Record and document.
- **Review**: •Monitor implementation regularly & evaluate the plan to feed into the situation analysis
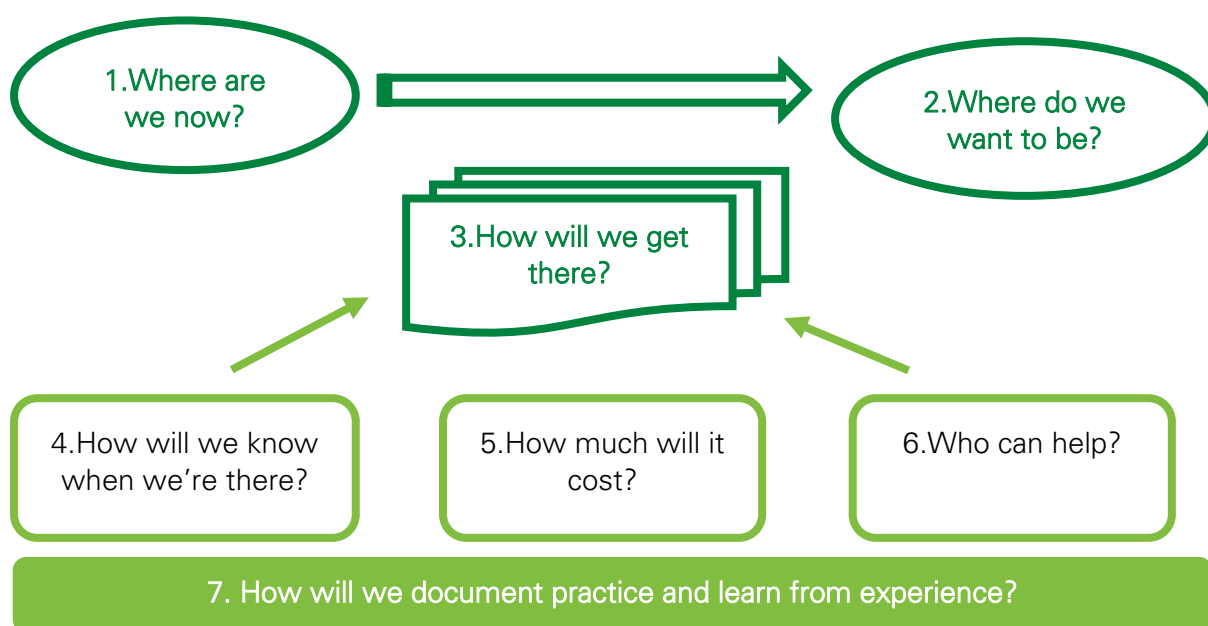
Like any other school planning activity, planning for dropout prevention is best done participatorily, by **involving all parties concerned in all phases of the planning cycle**. For dropout prevention it is particularly important to involve:

- School management
- Homeroom teachers
- Teachers
- Other school staff: social pedagogues, school psychologists, school nurses, special teachers, librarians, teaching assistants, school mediators, volunteers, etc.
- Students
- Parents and families
- External services (social and health services, municipalities, NGOs) and the broader community (businesses, associations, etc.)

Initiating the planning process, and bringing people together is usually done by the school management, sometimes by a school team (e.g., school dropout prevention team). Regardless of who initiates the planning process, it is important to ensure that **clear responsibilities** are outlined for the situation analysis (Assess), planning (Plan), the implementation (Do), and monitoring and evaluating the plan (Review).

The diagram below summarizes the key questions that schools should ask themselves when planning for dropout prevention and response.

Figure 23 Guiding questions for school planning

1.Where are we now?

2.Where do we want to be?

3.How will we get there?

4.How will we know when we're there?

5.How much will it cost?

6.Who can help?

7. How will we document practice and learn from experience?

Source: Adapted from UNICEF Kosovo (UN resolution 1244) and MOES (2014).

⚒ Tips for improving school staff capacity development

Capacity development opportunities by external experts:

- Accredited trainings from in-service teacher training institutions
- School-based trainings (horizontal trainings) for all school staff to be trained on the same topic
- Conferences
- Coaching/mentoring (teacher trainers, inspectors, project mentors, CSOs, etc.)
- Capacity development opportunities by school staff themselves
- Whole-school training on a collectively chosen topic (led by a staff member)
- Action research projects (set up, implementation, analysis of results, lessons learned)
- Peer classroom observation and feedback
- Discussion circles (e.g., one topic is discussed every month during the lunch break or after class)
- Reading research and studies (and sharing with colleagues)
- School networks and peer sharing

Reflect

1. Reflect on your school ethos and the extent to which it is supportive of dropout prevention. Summarize the main points of your discussion according to (i) atmosphere/environment of the school, (ii) values of the school, (iii) practices and activities of the school.

Length of the assignment: 3 to 6 hours depending on the setting of the training.

Where possible, conduct this assignment in a group, with several members of your school, including: the school director and deputy directors, teachers, other staff such as pedagogues, psychologists, special teachers, teaching assistants and mediators. Including district or regional education officials, local authorities, external health and social services, NGOs and other civil society organizations as well as parents and students will be critical in this exercise.

Develop a school dropout prevention plan.

Step 1. Based on all the reflective activities and assignments done throughout this course, summarize *Where is your school now?* in terms of dropout prevention:

1. Who are students in your school and who are the students who drop out from school (profile)?

2. What are the school environment and the school and school staff practices that might contribute to or mitigate dropout?

3. What has worked/not worked in dropout prevention in your school in the past and what are the lessons learned?

Should you need an additional tool to do this, a school self-assessment tool is provided below.

Step 2. Based on all the assignments done throughout this course, develop a school dropout prevention plan. You can use your own planning template, or, should you need one, the template provided below. Involve as many stakeholders as possible in the design of your plan: teachers, parents, students, community members and external agencies. Ensure that your plan includes indicators to measure progress and achievement.

Step 3: Identify any capacity development needs among your staff to implement the plan, and brainstorm avenues to respond to their capacity development needs.

School self-evaluation for dropout prevention

Capacity functions	Strongly in place	Acceptable	Needs improvement	Gaps
The school makes dropout prevention a top priority				
The school has a dedicated team/individuals for dropout prevention				
The school ethos supports dropout prevention				
The school identifies students at risk of dropping out regularly (a system is in place)				
The school analyses absenteeism and dropout data to inform its dropout prevention interventions				

The school has a whole-school approach to dropout prevention, including targeted interventions for groups of children most at risk				
The school has a system in place to plan and monitor individual dropout prevention interventions				
The school uses welcome back strategies when students chronically absent come back to school				
The school supports students at risk in their transition to the next education cycle				
The school adopts a three-tier approach to wellbeing support				
The school promotes targeted wellbeing support activities for students at risk				
The school promotes positive relationships between teachers, other adults and students				
The school actively addresses prejudices and discrimination, particularly against gender, ethnicity and disability				
The school adopts a three-tier approach to learning support				
The school implements targeted learning support activities for students at risk				
The school understands the barriers to parental participation				
The school applies effective communication practices with parents				
The school implements strategies to involved hard-to-reach parents				
The school implements strategies to involve the most marginalized and hard-to-reach parents in the learning of their children				
The school engages and works effectively with external agencies/services				
The school is aware of referral procedures in case of violence, abuse and neglect against children				
The school engages and works effectively with communities				
The school collects and analyses data to support dropout prevention planning and evaluation				
The school includes dropout prevention in the self-evaluation and school development planning process				
The school monitors, evaluates and learns from dropout prevention activities				

The school evaluates how it works together as a team for dropout prevention				
The school shares experience and best practices on dropout prevention with other schools and with education authorities				

School Dropout Prevention Plan Template

Situation analysis	[Identification of the key issues and problems based on the "Where are we now?" section: Profile of students dropping out and at risk of dropping out Analysis of the environment, structures, policies, practices and previous experience of the school in dropout prevention – SWOT]					
School vision	[Where do we want to be?]			Indicators (impact)		
Expected result 1	[result that will contribute to achieving the vision]			Indicators (outcomes)		
Activities	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility	Cost/funding source	Indicators
1.1					
1.2					
1.3					
Expected result 2	[result that will contribute to achieving the vision]			Indicators (outcomes)		
Activities	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility	Cost/funding source	Indicators
1.1					
1.2					
1.3					
Expected result 3	[result that will contribute to achieving the vision]			Indicators (outcomes)		
Activities	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility	Cost/funding source	Indicators
1.1					
1.2					
1.3					

Repeat objectives and activity rows as necessary.

ANNEX 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appleton, J., Christenson, S., Furlong, M., Student Engagement with School: Critical Conceptual and Methodological Issues of the Construct, in Psychology in the Schools, Vol. 45(5), Wiley Periodicals Inc., 2008.

Attendance Works, Monitoring Attendance in the 2021-22 school year, 2020.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Social and emotional wellbeing: development of a Children's Headline Indicator. Cat. No.PHE 158. Canberra, AIHW, 2012.

Bélair, F., Ma Classe-Qualité au secondaire. Des outils pratiques de gestion de classe inspirés par la Théorie du Choix. Les éditions de la Chenelière Inc., 2009.

Borgna, C., Struffolino, E., Pushed or pulled? Girls and boys facing early school leaving risk in Italy, in Social Science Research, Volume 61, Pages 298-313, January 2017.

California Department of Education, Social-Emotional Development Domain, 2018. Accessed 1 November 2021: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/itf09socemodev.asp

Clarke, A.M., Morreale, S., Field, C.A., Hussein, Y., & Barry, M.M., What works in enhancing social and emotional skills development during childhood and adolescence? A review of the evidence on the effectiveness of school-based and out-of-school programmes in the UK, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Health Promotion Research and National University of Ireland Galway. Accessed on 1 November 2021:

Columbia University, Collective Impact and The New Generation Of Cross-sector Collaborations For Education, 2016.

Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment of Northern Ireland, Identifying and Supporting Learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 2014.

Department for Children, Schools and Families, Achievement for All: the Structured Conversation. Handbook to support training, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009.

Department of Education Northern Ireland, Pupils' emotional health and wellbeing, n.d. Accessed on 1 November 2021:

Department of Education of South Australia, Guidance in responding to children and young people, 2013.

Education Council, Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, 2018.

Education Endowment Foundation-EEF, Teaching and Learning Toolkit, 2018.

Education Endowment Foundation-EEF, Peer-tutoring, 2018b.

Education Endowment Foundation-EEF, Improving Social and Emotional Learning In Primary Schools, 2020.

Education Endowment Foundation-EEF, Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning, 2021.

Irish Department of Education, Supporting the Wellbeing of School Communities as Schools Reopen: Guidance for Schools, Dublin, Irish Department of Education, 2021.

Finn, J. D., School engagement and students at risk, Washington, DC. National Center for Education Statistics, 1993.

UK Government, Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project: Final Project Report, London, UK Government Office for Science, 2008.

Great Schools Partnership, The Glossary of Education Reform, n.d.

Harrington, I., The use of school discourses to understand boys early school leaving in Queensland, Australia, Paper presented at British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Glamorgan, 14-17 September 2005.

Her Majesty Inspectorate of Education, How Good Is Your School? Self-Evaluation Series, 2006.

Ife, J., Human Rights and Social Work: Towards Rights-Based Practice (3rd ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI:10.1017/CBO9781139197182, 2012.

Lavrentsova,E., Valkov, P., Dropping Out Of School: Risk and Protective Factors, LABOR et EDUCATIO nr 5/2017, DOI: 10.4467/25439561LE.17.006.7981, 2017.

Lehr, C.A., Johnson, D.R., Bremer, C.D., Cosio, A., Thompson, M., Essential tools: Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving From Policy and Research to Practice A Manual for Policymakers, Administrators, and Educators, Minneapolis, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004.

Lyche, C. S., Taking on the Completion Challenge. A Literature Review on Policies to Prevent Dropout and Early School Leaving, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 53, OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/5km4m2t59cmr-en, 2010.

McLaughlin, C. (ed.), The Connected School: A Design for Well-Being – Supporting Children and Young People in Schools to Flourish, Thrive and Achieve, London, Pearson, 2015.

McLeod, S., Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Simply Psychology, Updated 2018.

McMurtry, D., Understanding School Ethos. Presentation at the 'How Good is Our Ethos?' Conference, 7 June 2005.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo and UNICEF, Equity in Education for All: Manual for School Prevention and Response Teams Towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in Compulsory Education, 2014.

OECD, PISA 2015 Results (Volume III) Students' Wellbeing., 2017.

OECD, Beyond Academic Learning: First Results from the Survey of Social and Emotional Skills, OECD Publishing, Paris, DOI: 10.1787/92a11084-en, 2021.

RTI, Improving Learning Outcomes through Mother Tongue-Based Education, 2011.

Rumberger, R., 'Dropping out of Middle School: A Multilevel Analysis of Students and Schools', American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 583-625, Autumn, 1995.

Schraf, A., Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education, Montgomery, Teaching Tolerance, n.d.

Scottish Government, Building positive relationships: A training programme for support staff, 2008

Starr,The Coaching Manual (3rd ed.) London, Pearsons , 2011.

Trickey, S., Coldwell, M., Holland, M., Close, P., Rybinski, D., Evaluation of Valued Youth: A National Peer-Tutoring Programme To Increase Self Confidence And Motivation. Paper presented to the European Conference on Educational Research, University College Dublin, 7-10 Sep 2005

UK Department of Education, Preventing and tackling bullying Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, 2017

UNESCO and UN Women, Global Guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence, Paris, UNESCO, 2016.

UNICEF, The Right of Roma Children to Education: Position Paper. Geneva, UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS), 2011.

UNICEF, The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education, Geneva, UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS), 2012.

UNICEF, A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities, UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), 2015a.

UNICEF, Training of Trainers Modules on Inclusive Education, 2015b. Available from https://www.unicef.org/eca/education

UNICEF, The Investment Case for Education and Equity, New York: UNICEF, 2015c.

UNICEF, Improving Education Participation. Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout, UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Volume 2, Geneva, UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2017.

UNICEF, Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping Out: Improving Education Participation; Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, 2018.

UNICEF, Child Marriage in Europe and Central Asia. UNICEF's Response: Regional Overview. Geneva: UNICEF ECARO, 2018b.

UNICEF Romania and Holt IS, Ca este educația parentală ?, 2015.

UNICEF and Ministry of Education of Bulgaria, Guidelines for School Enrolment Teams, 2015/

UNICEF and UIS, Monitoring Education Participation: Framework for Monitoring Children and Adolescents who are Out of School or at Risk of Dropping Out, UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Vol I, Geneva, UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2016.

UNICEF Serbia (2017) Kako do kvalitetne dopunske nastave –oslonci za unapređenje i primeri dobre prakse.

USAID, Introduction to gender-responsive teaching methods, n.d.

Welsh Government, Family and community engagement toolkit, 2015.

WHO, Evidence for gender-responsive actions to promote well-being Young people's health as a whole-of-society response, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2011a.

WHO, Evidence for gender-responsive actions to promote mental health Young people's health as a whole-of-society response, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2011b.