



**“We Want to Graduate!”:
Students’ Perspectives on What They Need to Succeed**

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Presentation Overview

- Purpose of Study
- Objectives
- Context and Rationale
- Conceptual Framework
- Methodology
- Findings
- Significance/Implications

Purpose of Study

- Work in partnership with Level IV students
- Understand challenges encountered at school
- Propose interventions

Objectives

Explore and describe student experiences:

- Barriers and challenges encountered
- Opportunities and supports needed
- Strategies and responses desired

Context and Rationale

- Local and provincial context
- Addressing the challenge of early school leavers
- Successful school-to-work transitions
- Importance of student voice

Conceptual Framework

- Hermeneutic
- Participatory
- Strengths-based
- Critical

Methodology

- Level IV Students and their involvement
- Research design
 - ❖ Focus groups phase 1
 - ❖ Focus groups phase 2
- Analysis and representation of data

Findings

- **Scheduling, flexibility and graduation**
- **Teaching, learning and curriculum**
- **Respect, belonging and partnership**

Scheduling, Flexibility & Graduation

- Partial course load over full year
- Scheduling and distribution of classes
- Class schedules and working students
- Full course load not always needed
- Guidance on course selection
- Flexible graduation requirements
- Alternative high school completion options

Scheduling, Flexibility & Graduation

STUDENT VOICES

I think they should try and get 4th years out as quick as possible.

There should be a month long program whenever we wanted it, even if we had to pay for it, where we learned what we needed, and then do an exam at the end.

Classes in the morning. None in the afternoon. If you have a class in the morning and another in the afternoon, these classes should be put back to back.

There are times I sit at Tim Horton's for 2 hours because of free periods

Scheduling, Flexibility & Graduation

STUDENT VOICES

I don't need a full course load. I am doing courses that I already got my credits for. I am doing useless courses that are not going to help me.

Right now it is . . . more of a struggle to graduate with these unnecessary courses that should not be a requirement to graduate.

It would be a lot more convenient to be able to finish in half the time so they can get out and go to university or college.

I don't really enjoy the fact that I'm a fourth year. I should be out now, and getting on with my career.

Teaching, Learning & Curriculum

1. Active Learning

“We need more productive dialogue and to have conversations.”

2. Relevant curriculum

“Curriculum needs to be more relevant and real to life and interesting.”

3. Academic support

“We need more individual attention and extra support.”

4. Positive, collaborative student-teacher relationships

“Teachers should say encouraging things and not be like our parents.”

5. Choice and flexibility of evaluation

“Give choice and options. Students know what they need.”

6. Youth-positive school environment

“School needs to be interesting and fun.”

Respect, Belonging & Partnership

1. Respect and positive regard

“People think that because you are a 4th year that you are bad because unlike everyone else you didn't finish school in 3 years.”

2. Our own space / Homeroom

“We don't have either a place to go for extra study or to be during a free period. We have to leave the building which is unfair.”

3. Fair rules

“We can't join in any extra-curricular activities or sport teams or go on trips. We can't join student council.”

Significance/Implications

- Students know what they need to succeed
- Students report a complexity of factors spanning all aspects of schooling
- Students as our educational allies (e.g., common ground between student analyses and educational research analyses)
- Acknowledging the challenge - many students want more than just reform, they are interested in transforming high school culture and practices

Significance/Implications

Level IV: A Social Justice Issue

- Inequities of access and inclusion
- Deepening of stigmatization, labelling
- “Setting students up for failure”
- Insufficient bridges to connect to students’ complex lifeworlds
- Lack of student voice and leadership

Significance/Implications

Possibilities

- Building partnerships
- Expanding knowledge and awareness
- Openness to dialogue about change
- Student input to collaboration to leadership
- Continued student involvement & on-going process/project

Significance/Implications

Challenges

- Time, resources, commitment
- Maintaining student voice and leadership
- Expanding the partnership to school district and provincial department levels
- Potential to use student voice to reinforce rather than disrupt current Level IV program



Questions?

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