

# Exploring the social-emotional strengths of youth put at risk

A research project by Boyle Street Education Centre and the University of Alberta

## Background

For students to have positive academic experiences, their social-emotional wellbeing must be supported. When students' social-emotional needs are not met, it can be very difficult to learn in school settings. This is particularly true for students put at risk, including students who have experienced trauma, as well as Indigenous learners, for whom disparities in educational outcomes exist. In research and practice, there has traditionally been a focus on the deficits and challenges of youth put at risk. However, focusing more on strengths can empower youth put at risk and allow schools to draw on students' existing assets.

In recognition of the importance of understanding how to support the social-emotional wellness of students put at risk, partners from Boyle Street Education Centre and the University of Alberta began a collaborative research project.

1

### Research Question

How do school professionals and students put at risk define success for students put at risk?

2

### Research Question

How can we most effectively measure the social-emotional strengths of youth put at risk in culturally sensitive ways?

## Methods



- \* We will complete a literature review to identify tools that measure students' social-emotional strengths.
- \* We will distribute the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scales - Second Edition (BERS-2) to BSEC students to identify gaps and trends in the data with respect to measuring the social-emotional strengths of students put at risk.

- \* We will conduct interviews with BSEC staff to discuss their experiences measuring the social-emotional strengths of students put at risk.
- \* We will carry out focus groups, including arts-based activities, with students to obtain their input on their social-emotional strengths and successes.
- \* We will create a practice brief, video, and draft a new tool to measure the social-emotional strengths of students put at risk.

## Timeline

Year 1

- \* University ethics approval
- \* Literature Review
- \* Distribute BERS-2

Year 2

- \* Interviews
- \* Focus groups
- \* Art exhibit

Year 3

- \* Draft tool
- \* Practice brief
- \* Video

## Impact

Through this project, partners will aim to inform the development and enhancement of appropriate services and supports for students put at risk. We will equip educators to put our research findings to use by developing a practice brief and video. The ultimate goal of this project is to contribute to improving outcomes for youth put at risk.

For more information about this project, please contact Principal Investigator Dr. Melissa Tremblay at [mkd@ualberta.ca](mailto:mkd@ualberta.ca)