

ON TRACK TO SUCCESS

2019 Independent Evaluation Report





ON TRACK TO SUCCESS = ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Grades UP : **6%** | School Attendance: Absent **3.5** fewer days per term

ON TRACK TO SUCCESS THIRD PARTY EVALUATION - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last three years, Dr. Rajeeva Sinha, Associate Professor from the Odette School of Business at the University of Windsor, and his team of researchers have been independently investigating the impact that the On Track to Success (OTTS) program has had on students, families, school staff and the community at large.

Over the last two years, the study gathered data through both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including academically verified surveys, stakeholder interviews, and direct observations. The evaluation of students in the OTTS program was conducted using a control group of 'at-risk' students who were carefully selected by school board student success teachers to be part of the quasi-experimental design. The students in the control group had a similar profile to the OTTS group, except that they could not be part of the program because of limitations in funding.

Dr. Sinha also collected school performance data for both the On Track to Success students and those in the control group. The findings are summarized in TABLE 1.

What Dr. Sinha and his team found is that the **impact of the OTTS program on school performance was statistically significant** and contributes to an improvement of over 6 percentage points in final marks for the term when compared with the performance of the control group students. The number of missed school days was also significantly less for OTTS students over the term by 3.5 days.

Students that are not part of the On Track to Success program were also assessed as one point behind the OTTS group on a four-point scale for a range of subjective indicators that are typically assessed in a school report card. These subjective indicators are teacher assessments on: Ability to Work Independently, Organization, Initiative, Responsibility, and Self-regulation.

This is a noteworthy finding. There is significant evidence to show that in fact, it is the development of soft skills that make young people stronger academic performers and more likely to graduate, and less likely to slide back into the economic challenges their families are facing. (Shetty 2015).

TABLE 1: SUMMARY—SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DATA		
Statistically Significant Differences Only for Vulnerable Students		
ITEM	OTTS	NON-OTTS
Final Marks for All Courses	70%	64%
Days Absent	8.5 days	12 days
Works Independently	3	2
Organization	3	2
Initiative	3	2
Responsibility	3	2
Self-Regulation	3	2

SOFT SKILLS & CAREER READINESS



OTTS equips students with the assets they need to take charge of their own destiny. Strengthening Developmental Assets is a proven way of helping these young people to overcome economic adversity. The more young people have multiple sources of support—like the Success Coach, the better they do on social asset scores, because the supportive adults are reinforcing values about schooling and achievement. The multiple levels of mentorship—academic, financial, social, and career mentoring—is what sets these students up for success.

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS PROFILE RESULTS

The Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) also measures soft skills and qualities that contribute to long-term success and post-secondary school completion rates. It is a statistically validated instrument developed by the Search Institute which has advanced, evidenced-backed empirical norms derived from hundreds of thousands of school children in North America and other parts of the world.

TABLE 2 documents the impact of the OTTS program on the soft skills of the students. The evaluation found that that because of the OTTS program intervention, the total asset score of the OTTS group is higher and a greater percentage of students are in the 'Excellent' and 'Fair' categories.

Percentage of students who self-reported internal and external assets as fair or higher	OTTS	NON-OTTS	DIFFERENCE
Commitment to Learn	77%	47%	+30%
Social Competencies	83%	67%	+16%
Positive Identity	73%	63%	+10%
Empowerment	90%	67%	+23%
Total Asset Score	85%	65%	+20%

Students in the OTTS program identified that they are motivated to do well in school, that they are actively engaged in their learning and that they know how to plan ahead and make good choices. They feel that they can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations and that they can resolve conflict non-violently.

They also reported that they believe their life has purpose, that they feel optimistic about their personal future and that adults in the community value youth.

PROGRAM STAFF OBSERVATIONS

OTTS program staff, in their assessment of the OTTS students, observe statistically significant improvement in the development of soft skills amongst the students and their expectations and plans for their future. The data from the academically vetted surveys show that the OTTS program is indeed making a difference in the OTTS youth's sense of self, and their plans for their future are more aspirational.

OTTS program staff reported that students were more persistent than before when it came to homework completion, that they were better equipped to solve problems independently, and that they were better able to compromise with peers during times of disagreement or conflict.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK



**United Way
Centraide**
Windsor-Essex County

SCHOOL STAFF FEEDBACK

One of the challenges facing educators in regard to vulnerable students is that they relinquish supervision of these students between the hours of 2:20 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., on weekends, and during the December holidays and summer recess.

The school staff know that the time out of school is when 'at-risk' students are most vulnerable and that the OTTS provides a critical support during those times. Ultimately, school staff believe that the success of the OTTS program is because of the after-hours involvement and commitment of the OTTS Success Coaches.

Many interviewees offered lavish praise for the Success Coaches for their work in advocating for parents and their children in challenges with the schools and for their ability to make positive interventions in the family lives of OTTS youth. School staff said that because OTTS Success Coaches are not formally associated with schools and social service agencies, they play an important mediation and advocacy role to help parents and their children navigate the complex social and economic network that often excludes and devalues them. Staff say Success Coach mentoring and their strengths-based approach, combined with financial support to help them aspire to higher education is effective.

PARENT FEEDBACK

Parents were very supportive of the OTTS program, especially the Success Coaches. Some parents claimed that the Success Coach turned their child around, saying that they helped their child come out of their shell. Others said that the Success Coaches motivated their kids to aspire to go to university.

Parents also pointed out that OTTS staff can advocate for their children since the OTTS staff are not employed by the school boards. The parents repeatedly in their comments highlighted the heightened social confidence they felt because the Success Coaches were there to help them navigate the system, both in the school and in accessing various services.

One parent reported "...the Success Coach is an advocate, (and) is fantastic, kind, approachable; I don't feel that you are not being heard, open kind person, kids related to Success Coach, they even go to Success Coach about bullying."

Most parents agree that OTTS support goes beyond their child in the program, that it is helping the whole family. Several noted that one of the unintended effects of the support has been that their younger children now aspire to go on to post-secondary and want to do better in school.