

A new study reveals the positive impact of a mentoring program on educational success in Québec

Montréal, QC, April 1st, 2025—Today, for its 10th anniversary, the School of the Greats, one of Québec's leading school mentoring programs, unveils a groundbreaking study highlighting the significant impact of its program on educational success.

In a landscape where numerous initiatives aim to combat dropout rates and encourage students to remain in school, yet where evidence of their effectiveness is limited, this study marks a significant advancement. For the first time within Québec's educational research context, findings quantitatively demonstrate the positive impact of a mentoring program on both mentors' and mentees' academic success.

Addressing a concerning situation where nearly one in five boys and more than one in ten girls leave high school without obtaining a diploma or vocational qualification, and over 70% of college-level students fail to graduate on time, the School of the Greats offers an innovative solution. Each week, elementary school pupils from disadvantaged areas visit their local CEGEP to receive mentorship from volunteer CEGEP students. This program, now active in nearly three-quarters of the province's administrative regions, supports students with their homework and engages them in science awareness activities.

Scientific literature indicates that not all programs, whether extracurricular or mentoring, have equal impacts on the success and engagement of their participants. This new study highlights particularly how the School of the Greats serves as a significant lever for promoting equal opportunities, especially for young boys in vulnerable situations at elementary schools who are at risk of dropping out later during high school.

Significant improvements for pupils, particularly boys

The study, conducted by researchers specializing in education, pedagogy, and psychoeducation, reveals concrete and positive effects on the success of both CEGEP mentors and the elementary school pupils they mentor.

The researchers found that the School of the Greats program limited the decline in mathematics results among boys in elementary school to 3%, compared to an 8% drop observed in the control group. For boys with multiple vulnerability factors (from schools in disadvantaged areas and with general averages between 50% and 70%), the program helped stabilize their math grades, preventing a significant 9% drop observed in the control group.

The study presents conclusive results, including improvements in certain educational success indicators, reductions in inequalities, and enhancements in college education careers. This is particularly important given the labour shortages are affecting the education sector. Some college students participating in the School of the Greats program use this experience to confirm their career choice, for example, pursuing special education techniques or early childhood education, while others develop an interest in teaching. The study reveals a 2.5% increase in mentors' sense of competence, highlighting the program's positive impact on their confidence and professional development.

Additionally, the researchers examined several indicators of educational success among the college mentors, including the social adaptation index, a crucial element for personal, professional, and social success. Volunteer

mentors at the School of the Greats showed significant improvement in their social adaptation: 4% for women and 10% for men, compared to those involved in other activities or those with no participation in their CEGEP student life. The study also highlights promising results among male college students, particularly regarding their intrinsic motivation for their studies, confidence in acquiring new knowledge, and sense of autonomy.

Ultimately, the study reveals that a simple student engagement platform is insufficient to effectively support the success of college students, particularly those facing academic challenges. The researchers' hypothesis to explain the positive impact of the School of the Greats is based on the way the program was constructed.

The study was carried out by Isabelle Archambault, professor at École de psychoéducation de l'Université de Montréal and holder of the Chaire de recherche du Canada sur l'école, le bien-être et la réussite éducative des jeunes, Mélissa Goulet, professor at the Département d'éducation et formation spécialisées de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Aurélie Dussenne, data analyst, Julie Auclair, statistician at the Centre d'Étude des COnditions de vie et des BESoins de la population (ÉCOBES) du Cégep de Jonquière and the team at Foundation W. It received financial support from Québec's ministère de l'Éducation and ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur.

Quotes

"In Québec, although many intervention programs exist to support the educational success of elementary and CEGEP students, few have been rigorously evaluated. We considered it essential to scientifically measure the impact of the School of the Greats from its inception in 2015, and we are proud to note that the results demonstrate the positive effects of this school mentoring program for both mentees and mentors. It's a win-win situation!" — **Alisha Wissanji, Executive Director of Foundation W and Founder of the School of the Greats program.**

"This study is unique and crucial for assessing the benefits of mentoring programs across Québec. We compared the success rates of CEGEP mentors at the School of the Greats with those of their peers who were involved in other activities or were not involved in any activities at all. At the same time, we analyzed the performance in French, mathematics and science of elementary school pupils who were mentored compared to those who were not. The results show that this school mentoring program plays a key role in strengthening academic resilience and effectively supporting educational success." — **Isabelle Archambault, Co-author of the study, professor at École de psychoéducation de l'Université de Montréal and holder of the Chaire de recherche du Canada sur l'école, le bien-être et la réussite éducative des jeunes.**

"The study enabled us to identify the key elements of this extracurricular mentoring program. The School of the Greats is a source of inspiration for the entire educational community, thanks to the rich connections it creates around academic success, awakening curiosity, sharing and mentoring." — **Mélissa Goulet, co-author of the study and professor at the Département d'éducation et formation spécialisées de l'Université du Québec à Montréal.**

Methodology

The study was conducted over five years, from 2016 to 2023, except the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, 368 pupils from 11 elementary schools in disadvantaged areas across Québec were able to take part in the study in service centres where the school dropout rate is higher than or equal to the Québec average, as well as 399 CEGEP students from seven CEGEPs in disadvantaged areas, both in cities and in the regions. As for high school students, three groups were analyzed: a group of mentors at the School of the Greats (experimental group), a group with a similar level of commitment to the experimental group but without participation in the School of the Greats, and a group of less committed students. At the elementary level, the participants in the mentoring program were compared with a control group of pupils with similar characteristics (school, class, gender, general average). The educational success of high school pupils was evaluated using self-reported

questionnaires, with a particular focus on feelings of belonging, competence, autonomy, commitment, intrinsic motivation, success, and perseverance. For elementary school pupils, the effects of the intervention were measured based on report card grades.

About the School of the Greats

The School of the Greats is an extracurricular mentoring program that focuses on homework assistance and scientific education, aiming to support the educational success of vulnerable elementary school students and post-secondary students. As the flagship program of the Foundation W, the School of the Greats is committed to promoting equal opportunities and providing vulnerable populations with genuine access to academic success. The program supports both elementary school pupils and their volunteer mentors, who are college and university students. Since its inception in 2015, the School of the Greats has assisted nearly 4,000 participants in Québec and Ontario, enhancing students' academic performance in French, mathematics, and science. Today, the program is established in 71% of the province's administrative regions. The School of the Greats is made possible thanks to the support of the Quebec Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, TD Bank, and numerous private donors. For more information, visit the [School of the Greats](#) website or their [LinkedIn](#) page.

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