

Detour Program

Final Report



Prepared by: Jennifer Medlock, All In for Youth Strategy Lead

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"It made sense when I had my first interview for the Detour program. They told me that we're not all meant to fit in this one box that has been cut out for us, learning only in one specific way. A lot of us don't fit in that box." – Detour participant

1.1 Background

One in five Calgary youth do not finish high school on time. Many youth face complex challenges such as poverty, language barriers, mental and physical health issues, or lack of natural supports that make it difficult to stay connected with school.

Detour, a four-year learning project, ran between 2013 and 2017, to support vulnerable youth who did not complete the public kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) education system by age 19, by helping them identify a meaningful career goal. The students were then able to complete their required high school pre-requisites to pursue their desired post-secondary training and education.

Within four years, 41 students participated in Detour. The project paid for their tuition and fees at Bow Valley College, provided a monthly living allowance, and connected students to a Success Coach and comprehensive supports including career planning, an individualized learning plan, academic and personal counselling, tutoring, and mentoring.

Detour was created by All In for Youth, a United Way of Calgary and Area funded initiative, and involved the following project partners: Bow Valley College, Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, Burns Memorial Fund, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District, and United Way of Calgary and Area.

1.2 Report Objectives

- Understand the impact of the Detour program on participating students
- Identify what factors contributed to the impact
- Outline recommendations for policy and practice

1.3 Results

a. Completion Rates

- 22 of the 41 students completed their high school pre-requisites. Fifteen of these 22 students moved on to pursue a post-secondary program of choice (4 completed, 6 currently enrolled, 1 waitlisted, 3 have applied and waiting for results, and 1 is doing further upgrading due to a change in career goal).
- 5 of 41 students did not complete their required courses before the end of Detour, but are continuing to take courses independently.
- 14 of 41 students did not successfully complete Detour. The majority of these students had ongoing or new issues in their personal lives that interfered with their ability to focus on education, such as mental health, addiction, homicide of a loved one, pregnancy, or child care.

b. Personal Impacts

- Improved confidence: 78% of students interviewed (n=18) reported feeling more positive about their own abilities and their future.
- Improved self-advocacy: 56% of students interviewed said they felt more able to communicate their needs in both an education environment and more broadly.

- Improved relationships with natural supports: 39% of students interviewed said they had improved relationships with their families as a result of participating in Detour.

c. Success Factors

Project reporting, along with interviews with project partners and students, revealed **four main factors that led to Detour student success: an adult learning environment, support to develop a personalized career path, financial support, and meaningful adult supports such as teachers, counsellors, tutors and mentors.**

By far, the students felt the most significant of all Detour supports was the Success Coach. Many Detour students did not have positive adult role models in their lives, and the Success Coach served as a constant, dependable source of support for them across both academic and personal areas of life by advising students through negative events and celebrating positive ones.

1.4 Lessons Learned and Strategic Recommendations

Lessons Learned	Strategic Recommendations
<u>High school completion is not always the right goal for vulnerable youth.</u> Project learning shifted the ultimate goal of Detour from high school completion to creating an expedited pathway to a meaningful career of choice, whether that included a high school diploma or not. This shift in approach meant Detour students could escape negative high school experiences where they repeatedly failed core courses needed for a high school diploma, and, instead, take courses better suited to their aptitudes and linked with a concrete career goal.	<u>Connect youth to career possibilities earlier in their education path.</u> Detour students showed minimal skills in career planning, and the support of the Bow Valley College Student Liaison was necessary to build a learning plan, something they were not able to do on their own. A recommendation emerging from the Detour project is to work with youth at much earlier ages on career plans to 1) help them start thinking about their futures; and 2) keep them engaged in school by linking their education to career paths.
<u>Ageing out of the public K-12 education systems takes post-secondary training off the table for many vulnerable youth.</u> With courses at Bow Valley College costing more than \$500 each, educational cost can be prohibitive for students age 19 and over who did not complete public K-12 funded system. This leads vulnerable youth to give up on their education and career goals, and feel destined to work in low-paying, low-skilled jobs. When asked where they thought they would be if they hadn't been a part of Detour, 10 interviewees said they most likely would have not returned to school. The other 8 interviewees said they would have continued on in their education, but that the path would have been extremely challenging.	<u>Investigate ways to support vulnerable youth to get needed pre-requisite courses without the financial burden.</u> Proposals to increase the age cap for funding in Alberta acknowledge that not all youth will finish high school in three years. Simply extending the age of eligible youth to attend high school is not adequate. Detour youth cited the adult environment as significant to student success at Bow Valley College by moving them out of a high school environment, which is associated with low self-esteem and failure, and providing role models for discipline, motivation, and planning for the future. Education funding structures need to include high school courses in a post-secondary learning environment, where mature students thrive and are able to envision a positive future.
<u>Dependable, positive adult support is significant for both education and life outcomes.</u> Project team interviewees emphasized the amount of support needed to help Detour students. This is because the barriers that prevented youth from completing high school in the first place do not disappear once they joined the program. In some cases, barriers included past sexual	<u>Programs like Detour need to factor in transition support once the program is finished.</u> The meaningful supports offered in Detour helped students build stronger foundations of life skills, but many did not have stable natural supports after the program. Some Detour youth remained in contact with their Success Coach, particularly in times of crisis, for months to years after

assaults, sex trafficking, trauma associated with seeing a parent murdered, and drug addiction issues. Some students, despite genuine intention, did not make it through the program due to personal and/or family issues; however, partner and student interviewees contend that, while not meeting their academic goals, these students were meeting other personal goals. Students demonstrated tremendous personal growth, including overcoming negative perceptions of school, learning how to navigate the adult world, advocating for themselves, and taking meaningful steps towards a chosen career.	leaving the program. The Coach became their most dependable positive adult support. It would be extremely valuable to integrate support, like Success Coaches, for vulnerable youth while they are in high school and while they transition to their next phase of education, training, or work. For example, high schools linking to support services in post-secondary institutions or government support programs, and, post-high school youth learning more about the services available through community agencies.
<u>Vulnerable youth cycle in and out of educational programs.</u> Research on at-risk students shows a reiterative pattern where they complete some schooling, drop out, and then return. During the Detour program, many students had life circumstances interfere with their education at Bow Valley College, such as hospitalizations, giving evidence at court hearings, and child care obligations. When students needed to miss extended periods of classes or go on leave from the program, they maintained connection with their Success Coach, who supported their return to school by communicating with instructors and administration, and advocating on behalf of students. Keeping the door open for students to return respected their personal and educational needs, and crucially, helped students maintain motivation to complete their education.	<u>Institute mechanisms that allow educators to stay connected with vulnerable youth when they are in the 'out' part of their education cycle.</u> The results of Detour emphasize that in addition to extra time to complete high school credits, students may need to take complete breaks from school. All In for Youth created a Call Back program to individually connect with youth who have dropped out of high school, and invite them to return. Many students assume once they have left, they are not welcome back. The Detour program findings show that for youth with significant barriers to success, maintaining a connection to a positive adult at the school supports their return. The Success Coach played this role for Detour students.
<u>Detour students often have complex needs that require a wide variety of supports.</u> By putting the right mix of supports in place, the Detour project shows that vulnerable youth with complex needs can move towards a positive future. The Detour Project prototyped collaboration on a minor scale, bringing together representatives from the K-12 system, the university and college system, and the social services sector. The needs of the Detour students are academic, but these are inextricably linked with serious personal and social issues; for example, mental health and addictions, poverty, language barriers, other new immigrant concerns, and a lack of natural supports.	<u>Solutions to assist vulnerable youth require collaboration among provincial ministries.</u> While the mandate to increase high school completion falls under Alberta Education, adequately serving the complex needs of these students requires support from Alberta Human Services, and Alberta Health Services. Furthermore, Detour shows that high school completion is not the most appropriate goal for all students. Instead, expediting a path to a chosen career was considered a better fit, highlighting the role post-secondary institutions can play in helping vulnerable youth transition successfully to adulthood, and the need to include Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education in solutions.

2. INTRODUCTION

“It made sense when I had my first interview for the Detour program. They told me that we’re not all meant to fit in this one box that has been cut out for us, learning only in one specific way. A lot of us don’t fit in that box.” – Detour participant

One in four Calgary youth don’t finish high school on time¹. Many of these youth face complex challenges that hinder their ability to stay connected with school, such as poverty, language barriers, lack of natural supports, and mental and physical health issues. As a result, they do not complete the courses required to obtain a high school diploma or go on to further education before they reach age 19 and surpass the Alberta Education funding support for the public K-12 system.

To support these vulnerable youth to successfully transition to a meaningful career, the Detour project was launched in January, 2013. Detour was a learning project built to test whether the right combination of supports and resources offered in an adult learning environment at Bow Valley College (BVC) could positively change the direction of these young lives.

Detour was part of the larger All In for Youth (AIFY) initiative, a collaboration of corporate, government, and non-profit partners working together to create positive adult-youth relationships and build youth success in Calgary. Partners involved in Detour were Bow Valley College (BVC), Calgary Board of Education (CBE), Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD), Burns Memorial Fund, and Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC). See **Appendix A: Detour Collaborators** for a description of the role each organization played in Detour.

Overall, 41 students between the ages of 19 and 24 participated in Detour. The project paid their tuition and fees to attend the Academic Foundations Program at BVC, and provided a monthly living allowance. While in school, students also received comprehensive supports including:

- learning assessments upon enrollment
- an individualized learning plan
- academic and personal counselling
- career planning
- tutoring and mentoring services

2.1 Report Objectives

The Detour project ended in April, 2017. This report provides insight and lessons learned from the program.

- 1) *Understand the impact of the Detour program on participating students.*
- 2) *Identify what factors contributed to the impact.*
- 3) *Outline recommendations for policy and practice that emerge from the Detour program.*

The findings in this report have been compiled from a series of data sources:

- Semi-annual reports completed by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary
- Monthly reports completed by the Detour Success Coach
- Interviews with 18 students who were enrolled in the Detour Program

¹ Calgary Board of Education (2016). Annual Education Results Report 2015-2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/FormsManuals/AERR-2015-2016-3-YEP-2016-2019.pdf>

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- Interviews with Detour Program members from Bow Valley College, Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary and United Way of Calgary.

See Appendix B: Interview Protocol – Students, and Appendix C: Reporting Data Sources.

3. DETOUR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

3.1 Program Design

STEP 1: Recruit and select participants	The Detour team worked with guidance counsellors at alternative and traditional high school programs under CBE and CCSD to identify the 41 Detour Program participants. These included Chinook Learning, Discovering Choices, St. Anne's, and Encore. The counsellors looked for students who: • Were motivated to complete high school or pursue a career • Had significant gaps in their education and were unlikely to complete before aging out of the publicly funded Kindergarten-Grade 12 education system • Were at least 19 years old • Had concrete career goals • Were in financial need After selecting candidates, guidance counsellors met with the AIFY School Liaison and BVC's Student Liaison to discuss each case and determine which students were the best fit for Detour. Students were then interviewed to ensure sustainability for the program.
STEP 2: Develop an individualized learning plan	The BVC Student Liaison worked with selected students to develop individualized academic and career plans. The Student Liaison ensured students set realistic career goals and helped map out course requirements that would qualify them to enter a post-secondary education program in their career area of choice. As well, the Student Liaison included any needed referrals to Learning Success Services, Career Advising or the Registrar's office.
STEP 3: Barrier removal and connection to supports	One core goal of Detour was connecting students to meaningful supports at BVC, such as student advisors, counsellors, tutors, and mentors. Students were also connected to a Success Coach, who counseled them through the transition period, connected them to supports at BVC and the broader community, and helped remove barriers. Funds were provided for tuition, books, and individual needs. As well, a monthly living allowance helped to cover costs of living, including transportation, and housing, so that students could concentrate on their studies without having to work full-time.
STEP 4: Course completion and ongoing support	After receiving an orientation from the BVC Student Liaison, Detour students completed the courses outlined in their learning plans, while receiving ongoing support from BVC and the Success Coach. The Detour Project also held student "mixers" once a semester to bring students together to share experiences.

3.2 Program Enrollment

Of the 41 students who participated in Detour, 28 were female, compared with 13 males. Approximately half were immigrants to Canada, and approximately half were English language learners. Three were indigenous youth. See the chart below for a breakdown of the 41 students by outcome category.

	Number of Students
Students enrolled in Detour	41
Female students	28
Male students	13
Immigrant students	19
English Language Learners (ELL)	21
Indigenous Students	3

3.3 Student Barriers to Success

Many youth face barriers that culminate in complex personal and situational challenges and impact their educational success. Data from project reports and interviews identified a number of interrelated factors contributing to the students' challenges in completing their education. The top four barriers identified are:

- Financial hardship
- Lack of natural supports
- English language learner
- Mental health issues

Most Significant Barriers to Success

Contributing Factors	Examples	Participant Quotes	Context
Financial hardship	A return to school often means lost income for youth who are employed. Costs for tuition, books and transportation, coupled with loss of income yield enormous barriers for youth living in poverty.	<i>"I lived in fear that this is my life....I tried to earn enough money to do CBE learning, but that didn't work because if I made time for learning I wouldn't even have a place to live..."</i> <i>"I was in a vicious circle, there was no way out, and I wasn't keen on going back...to selling what I have, which was myself..."</i>	Recent census data shows Calgary's child poverty rate for individuals under the age of 18 was 6.7%. It was 9.4% in Alberta ² .
English language learner	Immigrant and refugee youth face multiple obstacles that affect their ability to complete school, including English language barriers, exclusion, poverty, isolation, and gaps in their past education.	<i>"Back home, English is a subject but we don't speak it unless it was just for the course...verbs, sentence..."</i> <i>"It was hard for me to understand English. Everybody spoke so quickly."</i>	Approximately 25% of students in CBE ³ and CSSD ⁴ are English language learners.
Lack of natural supports	Family and natural supports are essential for youth in establishing a sense of	<i>"My house felt like a trap. There was so much baggage that I couldn't get out the door every morning."</i>	Children in single-parent families (making up 14% of total families in Alberta)

² Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics. Statistics Canada Table 202-0802. Persons in low income families, annual, CANSIM (database) (2011).

³ Calgary Board of Education (2012). Learning the value of Calgary's public schools.

Retrieved from: http://www.cbe.ab.ca/aboutus/documents/learning_the_value_of_Calgarys_public_schools.pdf

⁴ Calgary Catholic School district (2013). 2012-2013 Annual report.

Retrieved from: <https://cssd.ab.ca/files/reports/AnnualReport2012-2013.pdf>

Contributing Factors	Examples	Participant Quotes	Context
	inclusion, building resiliency and maintaining mental and physical wellbeing.	<i>"...my mom was like my sister, and that's how bad our relationship was because I never had a dad growing up. My mom really couldn't raise me. I had to raise myself."</i>	experience much higher incidences of poverty at 55% compared to couple-parent families. ⁵
Mental health issues	Cognitive and learning disabilities and/or social/emotional problems create serious challenges for engagement in education. Underlying these learning challenges are mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression and addictions.	<i>"I never wanted to drop out of school but I was so depressed at that time....I was going through a lot...I gave up and let go of everything."</i> <i>"I was in a place where I didn't have any...options to get out of the situation I was in."</i>	Approximately 20% of youth experience mental illness. ⁶ The total number of 12 – 19 year olds in Canada at risk for developing depression is more than three million. ⁷

As a result of these barriers, most youth who entered Detour were significantly behind academically, and high school completion was a near impossibility for them via the traditional education system. In general, these youth had negative schooling experiences, which manifested in low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in their academic abilities. In spite of this, each youth selected for Detour identified a concrete career goal and during an intake interview with Bow Valley College staff they demonstrated a 'ready, willing, and able' attitude to enter the program.

In comparison with the general BVC student population, program staff described the Detour cohort as younger and less mature. Generally, they were often low-income and English language learners, and needed more counselling support. Many were dealing with profound personal issues including violence, substance abuse and an extreme lack of self-esteem.

3.4 Course Corrections on Program Design

Two core updates were made to the Detour program design during its tenure; one regarding the long-term outcome of the program, and the other being the addition of a Success Coach for further support of students.

a. Shifting the long-term goal

When initiated, the goal of Detour was to assist students in obtaining a high school diploma. It soon became clear that this was not an achievable goal for many of the youth enrolled. This group faced significant barriers to success that had already interfered with their ability to complete high school, hence they aged out of the publically funded K-12 system. As a result, the Detour program goal shifted to support youth to successfully transition to a meaningful career. What they needed most was to obtain enough high school credits to be able to continue on with post-secondary education or training to enable them to reach their career goals; this did not necessarily mean high school graduation.

Interviews with Detour staff suggest that for some in the Detour cohort, removing the requirement for a high school diploma helped with motivation and self-esteem. Many of the students experienced so much

⁵ Alberta Human Services (2013). An Analysis of Poverty in Alberta. Final Report.

⁶ Offord DR, Boyle MH, Szatmari P, et al (1989). Ontario Health Study II: Six month prevalence of disorder and rates of service utilization. Archives of General Psychiatry, 44: 1069-1078. Retrieved from: http://alberta.cmha.ca/mental_health/statistics/

⁷ Canadian Mental Health Association (2015). Fast facts about mental illness. Retrieved from: <http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/>

failure in the traditional high school setting, particularly from failing the same courses multiple times that it had damaged their self-esteem. In Detour, they avoided having to repeat classes, and instead could enroll in courses directly related to their career trajectory.

b. Adding a Success Coach

A second shift for the project team was understanding the extent of support needed for Detour students, which led to the addition of a half-time Success Coach in April, 2014. Prior to this, supports provided by BVC's Academic Foundations program were proving insufficient to meet the needs of the Detour students. Interviews with BVC staff members indicated that Detour students needed much more attention than the average BVC student. As a result, BVC support staff spent a disproportionate amount of their time with Detour students, making it difficult to meet demands in other areas of their work. Adding the Success Coach was important as it allowed the BVC staff to focus more on developing learning plans, ensuring Detour students were in the right class levels, and connected with the appropriate BVC supports.

Relationships were at the core of the Success Coach's work, which is built on a larger stream of graduation coach approaches that have spread across North America⁸. Coaches serve as "caring adult role models" to multi-barriered youth⁹, and work to "create a home at the school"¹⁰ so that students felt safe, were able to effectively learn, and had a sense of belonging to the school community.

Building on the relationship bond between coach and youth, Success Coaches performed a wide variety of functions:

- Provide one-on-one mentoring and support to students, including problem-solving strategies and life skills development
- Advocate on behalf of students with teachers and school administrators
- Connect students to appropriate resources: counselling, tutoring, mentoring, as well as social, health, and other community resources

Some Detour project team interviewees expressed the opinion of BVC having a stronger support system than the high schools the Detour students came from. For example, BVC offers in-house support for learning disabilities as well as counselling and tutoring services. However, for vulnerable youth, navigating and actually accessing the supports at BVC can be difficult for students to manage on their own. This was another role the Success Coach played for Detour students. The Success Coach noted that it can be hard for students to repeat their stories to different points of support, particularly if they have a history of trauma. Building a strong relationship with the Success Coach, who is trained to use a trauma-informed approach, supported them in accessing other services.

4. DETOUR PROGRAM IMPACT – COMPLETION RATES

As stated above, the goal of the Detour program was for students to obtain the needed pre-requisites to enter a post-secondary education program in their career area of choice. To assess the success of the program, Detour participants have been organized into three outcome categories:

⁸ Lessard, S. (2014). High School Graduation Coach Program Evaluation. Prepared for: K-12 Indspire Institute. Retrieved from: <http://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/indspire-nurturing-capacity-graduation-coach-model-2014-en.pdf>

⁹ Cox, K. (2008). Georgia Graduation Coach Initiative: 2007-2008 report. Prepared for Georgia Department of Education. Retrieved from: http://dropoutprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GradCoachInitReport_20090908.pdf

S. Brown and C. McVee (eds) (n.d.). Across the Stage: Doing What it Takes to Help Every Student Graduate from High School. Retrieved from: http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/if_acrossthestagegradsupportmanualace.pdf

¹⁰ Lessard, S. (2014). High School Graduation Coach Program Evaluation. Prepared for: K-12 Indspire Institute. Retrieved from: <http://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/indspire-nurturing-capacity-graduation-coach-model-2014-en.pdf>

Impact	Description
Successful Detour completion	Students obtained enough course credits in their learning plan to continue onto post-secondary education or obtain employment in their chosen field.
Continuing with pre-requisites courses	Students continue to take courses at BVC or other institutions to satisfy the pre-requisites for further post-secondary education in their chosen field.
Did not successfully complete Detour	Students withdrew from BVC without completing the courses in their learning plan.

The chart below outlines the completion rates for the 41 Detour students: 22 students successfully completed Detour; 5 students are continuing with pre-requisite courses in order to qualify for their post-secondary program of choice; and, 14 students did not successfully complete. Each of these groups will be discussed below.

	Number of students	Successful detour completion	Continuing with high school courses	Did not successfully complete Detour
Students enrolled in Detour	41	22	5	14
Female students	28	17	4	7
Male students	13	5	1	7
Immigrant students	19	11	4	4
English language learners (ELL)	21	12	4	5
Indigenous students	3	1	0	2

4.1 Students Who Successfully Completed Detour

Overall, 22 of the 41 students enrolled in Detour were successful in completing high school courses with enough credits to continue with their post-secondary education. Their ages ranged from 20 to 24 years old. In one case, the student withdrew from Detour for two terms due to medical issues, and then returned.

The average duration of time spent in Detour for students who successfully completed the courses was 12 months. Fifteen of the 22 students moved on to pursue further post-secondary education in the field of their choice at the following institutions:

Post-Secondary Institution	Number of students
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)	6
Bow Valley College	4
University of Calgary	2
Mount Royal University	2
Reeves College	1

Within this group of 15 students, 4 have completed their programs, 6 are currently enrolled, 1 has been waitlisted¹¹, 3 have applied but are waiting to see if they've been accepted, and 1 is doing further upgrading due to a change in career goal. Two of the 3 students who have applied and are waiting to see if they've been accepted, went through the same process last year and were accepted but were unable to attend school due to financial constraints.

The remaining 7 of the 22 students who completed Detour did not go on to further education. Three are currently employed full-time, and the whereabouts of the final 4 could not be determined.

¹¹ Waitlisted – Confirmed to get into the program applied for at a future date when space is available.

Students who Successfully Completed Detour

Red text indicates students interviewed

Number	Months in Detour	Career Goal	Where Are They Now?
DC-01	24	Originally LPN – Changed to Radiology Technician	Upgrading at BVC (Biology & Math) to get prerequisites for Radiology Program at SAIT.
DC-02	12	Social Work	Waitlisted at BVC.
DC-03	12	Computer Engineering	Applied to U of C. Was accepted last year but couldn't attend due to financial constraints.
DC-04	12	Bio-Engineering	Applied to U of C.
DC-05	12	Chemical Engineering	SAIT - 2nd Year.
DC-06	24	LPN	Didn't apply to LPN Program due to mental health issues.
DC-07	12	Journalism	SAIT - 2nd Term.
DC-08	12	Business Administration	Accepted to SAIT for Sept. 2017.
DC-09	12	Criminal Justice	Working retail. Didn't continue with school.
DC-10	20	Travel and Tourism	Not known.
DC-11	20	Addictions & Community Service Worker	Completed program at Reeves College.
DC-12	8	Health Care Aide, LPN	Working for Canada Post. Was diagnosed with learning disabilities so didn't continue on with post-secondary education.
DC-13	8	Registered Nurse	2nd year at MRU
DC-14	4	Automotive mechanic	Completed Automotive Program at SAIT.
DC-15	8	Addictions Studies - Aboriginal Focus	Enrolled at BVC.
DC-16	8	LPN originally. Changed to working in retail.	Shortly after participating in Detour, she realized that LPN was not a good fit. She has worked successfully for 4 years in a pet store.
DC-17	12	LPN	Applied to LPN Program at BVC. Completed Medical Hospital Technician course at SAIT while waiting to get into LPN program at BVC.
DC-18	12	Medical Device Processing	Completed program at SAIT and is employed full time at Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton. This student withdrew from Detour for two terms due to medical issues, but returned to successfully complete the required high school courses.
DC-19	4	High school completion	Not known. After Detour, she struggled with severe, ongoing addiction issues.
DC-20	8	Electrician	2nd year at SAIT. Obtained apprenticeship. On his first attempt to complete high school courses, this student was withdrawn from Detour for failing courses and poor attendance. After being away from Detour for one term, this student asked the Success Coach to help him get reinstated into the program. He returned to complete the required courses with exceptional marks.
DC-21	12	Medical Office Assistant	Completed program at BVC. Seeking employment in her field.

Number	Months in Detour	Career Goal	Where Are They Now?
DC-22	8	Medical Office Assistant	Not known.

4.2 Students Continuing With High School Courses

Five of the 41 Detour students were unable to complete the required courses to get into their post-secondary programs of choice before the end of the Detour program, but are continuing to take courses independently. One has been conditionally accepted for the Licensed Practical Nurse program at BVC, assuming successful completion of her last two courses.

Students Continuing with High School Courses

Red text indicates students interviewed

Number	Months in Detour	Career Choice	Where Are They Now?
OG-01	12	LPN	Upgrading at BVC (Biology 30 & Math 20). Conditionally confirmed for LPN at BVC.
OG-02	16	LPN	Upgrading at BVC (Math & Chemistry) to improve marks needed to apply to LPN Program. She is having a difficult time successfully completing these courses. She is paying for them herself because she doesn't qualify for Alberta Works funding.
OG-03	16	LPN	Had a baby and is now back at BVC. Returned through Alberta Works funding.
OG-04	20	LPN	Upgrading courses at Columbia College to qualify for LPN Program. She had to withdraw from Detour because she failed two consecutive terms at BVC.
OG-05	8	Chemical Technology	Withdrew from Detour, but now attending college in Ottawa.

4.3 Students Who Withdrew From Detour

There were 14 students enrolled in Detour who did not successfully complete the program. They either withdrew from the program voluntarily or were asked to withdraw due to academic or attendance issues. The majority of these students had ongoing or new issues in their personal lives that interfered with their ability to focus on education. These issues included mental health issues, homicide of a loved one, pregnancy and child care, and addiction issues.

Students Who Did Not Successfully Complete Detour

Red text indicates student interviewed

Number	Months in Detour	Reason for Withdrawal
W-01	24	Plans on hold due to pregnancy.
W-02	12	Withdrew unexpectedly. Indicated that he plans to return at a future date to complete the high school courses.
W-03	12	Had ongoing academic difficulties. Had to withdraw after failing the same courses twice.
W-04	20	Went to work in trades.
W-05	8	Had challenging mental health issues.
W-06	20	Dealing with addiction issues. A close relative of his was murdered while in Detour.

Number	Months in Detour	Reason for Withdrawal
W-07	24	Academic difficulties.
W-08	8	Attendance issues and academic difficulties.
W-09	4	Attendance Issues. Left without notification.
W-10	12	Attendance Issues. Left mid-term without notification.
W-11	4	Failed courses and attendance Issues.
W-12	4	Was a no show.
W-13	16	Academic difficulties.

5. DETOUR PROGRAM IMPACT – PERSONAL IMPACTS

This section analyzes the results from in-person interviews done with 18 of the 41 students enrolled in Detour. The following chart shows the success rate of these students in comparison with the overall cohort.

Detour Students Interviewed

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students Interviewed	Percentage of Total Detour Students
Students Interviewed	18	-	44%
Students – Successfully Completed High School	13	72%	32%
Students – Continuing to Complete High School	4	22%	10%
Students – Withdrew from Detour	1	5%	2%

5.1 Confidence and Hope for a Positive Future

Lack of confidence in what they could achieve was a major roadblock for the vulnerable youth in Detour. Before starting the program, a collection of negative experiences led many to have poor self-esteem and a negative outlook on their future prospects. Though not asked directly about their level of confidence, 14 of the 18 students interviewed talked in their interviews about feeling more positive about their own abilities and their future. They discussed now able to see their own inherent value and their potential to succeed in the future across the realms of education, career, and personal life:

“The Detour program has shown me how much potential I have as a person, and how it’s made me feel differently about myself. I never used to think I could do anything and didn’t think I could be successful.. After this program and all its support, I look at myself differently. Whatever I decide to do, I can make it happen. It’s changed my attitude. It’s a whole different picture. I can accomplish and finish things. I never thought I’d be here today, having finished this program and getting into the social work program. It used to feel impossible to accomplish anything.” – Interviewee #1

Detour “was so vital because it started to change my mindset from a place of being stuck and seeing myself as a failure, to saying okay, where am I, and then let’s move on. How to overcome things. How to learn from things instead of dwelling in the past... It helped me to get on a more successful path, in the long haul on life skills...Because I didn’t have parents who taught me those life skills and I was able to learn that.” – Interviewee #3

Detour “changed me a lot...the knowledge that challenges can be overcome always, and there are always possibilities...the Detour project always gives us possibilities.” – Interviewee #14

Detour "made me realize that whatever there is in your life right now, if you really want it, go for it. Because no one is ever going to give you...you'll never know about the future and for me the future is something that you need...if you want it to be good, you need to do something...That's the big change inside of me." – Interviewee #18

"Now I am looking at everything with possibility. Before I wasn't like that, honestly. Before I was here, I was kind of a down person. But when I got here, and I see you guys, and learned to look at everything – positivity – and now I'm changed because there is an opportunity for everything. Now I've changed and learned to smile...With positivity I am getting results from this." – Interviewee #11

This finding comes with an important caveat. Though students have identified more hope for the future and confidence in their abilities, many of them still face the same barriers they did before they started Detour. As an example, Interviewee #2 said that she is *"a lot happier because of Detour. It made me realize there was much more to life than I previously knew about...I decided that I wanted to do something useful."* But at the same time, she also talked about her ongoing struggle with depression and anxiety: *"I'm still scrambling and a little lost. I have my moments during the day where I sit and cry but it's a lot less since I've been part of the Detour program, since I have people I know I can contact. I used to think that if I passed away, no one would be there."*

5.2 Improved Self-Advocacy Skills

A second area of change for Detour students were improved self-advocacy skills. Ten of the 18 interviewees reported being better able to communicate their needs both in an education environment and more broadly:

"When I came here, you [Success Coach] also encouraged me to never be shy. Ask for help. That is one thing that I always remember. I have to go and ask for help...no matter what you're going through, just ask for help so that's why I was always remembering to do what you said, and I went to the tutors and all my questions, even the little questions, they would answer. That's one thing I gained." – Interviewee #11

"Before, I didn't connect with much people, right? I don't have friends much but when I came to Detour, I connect with you [Success Coach]. I know how to deal with people, how to talk with people. Now I have lots of friends." – Interviewee #9

"[Detour] gave me more people skills than I had when I went in. To be able to communicate and express a need." – Interviewee #5

"Constant fearful thoughts about what others would think kept me from reaching my full potential. Having you guys help me feel comfortable and encourage me to communicate was good advice that really helped me out...I made a huge effort to come out of my bubble and comfort zone so teachers knew who I was, and were able to help me with assignments." – Interviewee #1

Before Detour, "I was a really shy person. I'm still a bit shy today, but before I was really shy and I was taking steps backwards...the [Detour] experience changed me... like learning that even through barriers, there are resources that you can tap into that are willing to help you" – Interviewee #10

In Detour, "I would ask the question four times just to get it right because I knew my past experience and that I failed because I was too quiet about it. So I would learn from my mistake." – Interviewee #6

5.3 Improved Relationships with Natural Supports

Seven interviewees also reported having improved relationships with their families as a result of participating in Detour and with the life skills that they learned. Interviewee #5 described having *"more of an established relationship"* with her mother, while Interviewee #16 said her relationship with her mother had *"improved drastically."* Interviewee #18 described being able to adjust better and manage an abusive parent. For Interviewee

#6, the support provided by the Success Coach and others helped her to better support her family. She had many responsibilities taking care of her siblings and not much support for looking after herself:

"My mom always looked after my brothers and nobody took care of me, so [the] Detour Program took care of me...I never had that support since I came to Calgary, so I think having that was really, really good. It took pressure off me – knowing that if I fell, someone would pick me up, and then I would pick my family up."

In the case of Interviewee #2, the support from Detour extended to support to her family members. In one example, it allowed her mother to feel secure enough to work again:

*"With me in the Detour program, took a lot of stress off her as well because when she didn't have to worry about my academics, about where I'd be during the day, about me being home alone, about me financially...she actually got a job she wanted. **Now that I could leave the house and actually function on my own through Detour, she felt safe enough to get her job trucking...**It worked well for the relationship with my dad as well. We have a closer relationship because of it. It has affected almost everyone in my life as well."*

In a second example, her sister was connected to community supports through the Success Coach:

*"If I hadn't gone back to school and been part of the Detour Project, my little sister wouldn't have met you. She wouldn't have gotten the connections to the Louise Dean. **She would still be a teen mom dropout struggling with her abusive boyfriend.**"*

6. SUCCESS FACTORS

This section combines findings from project reports, student interviews, and interviews with program staff and project partners to describe the four main factors that led to Detour student success. The factors are listed below, along with the number of students interviewed (n=18) identifying it as a significant support and the number of students identifying as the *most* significant support:

Detour Supports

Support Type	Number of students identifying support as significant	Number of students identifying support as MOST significant ¹²
Adult environment	14	0
Personalized career path	18	4
Funding	18	7
Success Coach	18	11

6.1 Adult Learning Environment

BVC offers an adult learning environment where instructors treat students as mature adults. Students are expected to be independent and are responsible for their own studies. Interviews with Detour program staff discussed how dropping out of high school and working for a period of time gives students more life experience, so when they return as a student, they are more mature and ready for an adult learning environment.

Student perspectives on the adult learning environment highlighted the importance of being surrounded by mature students whom they saw as role models. Students described Detour as more friendly, calm, and lacking the "drama" of their high school experience. They credit the mature environment in supporting them to be more disciplined and motivated in their studies:

¹² Numbers in this column total more than 18 because some students identified more than 1 support as "most significant".

"I liked being able to go to school and not have the drama of everyone in class and everyone around you. It was just more focused and more mature." – Interviewee #5

"Most of my classmates are in their 30's already. They have kids. There is that big inspiration even though they have this big responsibility, they still want to learn....to continue their dream." - Interviewee #18

"You meet peers who want to learn with you. You don't meet people here who want to gossip and dwell on relationships. The focus is on what you have in common."- Interviewee #16

"The whole experience is different. Lots of people there and everyone is older so you have to have more respect.....more discipline." – Interviewee #17

6.2 Personalized Career Path

Making a career choice involves many steps, including understanding one's own strengths and passions, becoming aware of the range of careers available, and understanding what post-secondary education is necessary. The Detour program supported youth in all of these career development steps by helping them develop individualized academic and career plans. Obtaining a high school diploma was not necessarily the prime objective for Detour students, but instead to obtain the prerequisite courses needed for a chosen career program.

Interviews with Detour students highlighted the support from the Bow Valley College Student Liaison. She was credited with helping identify student strengths and determining career goals, but most often students talked about the help they received to break down the steps needed to successfully complete Detour and to be ready for a career-training program:

***"When I was accepted in Detour, it was hard for me at first to paint a picture of what I wanted to go into...but getting into Detour and knowing the requirements that I needed to have gave me stepping stones if I did nursing...Detour helped me paint a picture of what I really wanted."** – Interviewee #10*

*"I don't just want to do something that is just a job. I want to do something that exercises my mind. Going from nothing to having that is such a huge burden. Like, how do I start? Detour kind of broke it down for me and made all the big pieces a bit smaller and... it was like, just do this semester... and then the next semester... and then do the next semester. It makes it just so much more attainable. **The big picture was brought down to reality for me.**"- Interviewee #16*

***"She broke down the steps for me and she helped me through some things in a less scary way...She took where I was at, and gave me steps along the way to accomplish it... A roadmap to follow."** – Interviewee #3*

Before Detour, students had not developed career-planning skills and did not have natural supports they could work with to develop them. The intensive, personal counselling with BVC staff ensured that students chose well-suited and achievable career paths, and subsequently enrolled in the most appropriate courses. In this way, Detour created an expedited pathway to a career of choice, and ultimately a successful transition to a promising career.

6.3 Financial Support

Financial need was a main criteria for acceptance into the Detour program. Each student had their tuition and resource materials paid for, received a monthly living allowance, and had access to a barrier removal fund for other expenses.

a. Tuition and Resource Materials

All Detour students were at risk of no longer being eligible for the public K-12 funding system before completing the required courses to complete high school, or move on to post-secondary education and training. After age 19 and no longer being eligible for public education funding, creates a significant financial

barrier for vulnerable youth. High school upgrading courses at Bow Valley College cost \$530 each, making upgrading an unrealistic financial option for most of them, at least in the near-term.

As such, acceptance into the Detour program opened up a path for many participants who thought it would always be out of reach. Students described the opportunity as “a prize” (Interviewee #13) and “like winning the lottery” (Interviewee #11).

Five of the 18 students interviewed said the financial support provided significant motivation to work harder. Interviewee #14 said, “I disciplined myself more because of the Detour project...I studied every night in order to make the expectations for the Detour project”, while Interviewee #15 said being given the opportunity of receiving funding makes “you push even harder...if I didn’t have Detour I don’t think I would have continued.” **Four students attributed the financial support to being able to focus more on school** because they didn’t have to work as many hours.

b. Living Allowance

The peace of mind the financial support brought to students was also an important aspect of the program. The majority of Detour students were helping to support their families along with themselves. This was for a variety of reasons, such as being part of a family that had recently immigrated to Canada, having parents who were not working or who were living on low income, or having a parent with mental illness.

Seven of the 18 interviewees talked about how the living allowance reduced their anxiety as they were able to support themselves and their families at the same time as going to school.

“I would support my mom with it [the living allowance]. Sometimes I would buy groceries or something for my sister....It helped me a lot because when I needed to cut back my hours, it was no worry because I was getting that money. I used that money for me and my family.” – Interviewee #12

“The financial support was big for me because I had to be good in academics, but also supporting my parents because when we came here we had nothing. Supporting them financially was a big thing for me.... and in the Detour program providing support like that took off the [financial] burden.”- Interviewee #10

“I switched from survival mode all the way to learning mode, and that was new for me..... When I finally accepted being supported. It was really helpful since I didn’t have to worry about: where am I going to live? Where am I going to eat? What am I going to wear? You know, those are the things I worried about in life.” – Interviewee #3

“I’m super grateful that I was able to get financial support. It took extra stress off my shoulders...There are so many things to pay for that when you’re financially struggling, it makes it hard to give it all your focus. I don’t know what I would have done as I couldn’t have bought all the school supplies.”- Interviewee #1

c. Barrier Removal Funds

The flexibility of the barrier removal funds was also a key success factor. All Detour students have complex needs, but the kinds of needs vary greatly between students. For example, new glasses, fees for diploma exams, dental care, and transit passes.

6.4 Success Coach and Other Meaningful Supports

Students enrolled in the Detour Project receive specialized and comprehensive support services from student advisors, counsellors, tutors, and mentors. These people are available to address students’ concerns when they

need to talk about their challenges and personal issues. This approach allows barriers to be identified and dealt with as they arise, while also contributing to student retention and satisfaction with the program.

The support from the BVC Student Liaison in creating a career path is discussed above, but interviewees also highlighted the Liaison's support in building self-esteem and resiliency. For example, Interviewee #6 talked about feeling down about failing a course and having to redo it: "[she] would be like, 'don't worry. You can do it again,' and then I didn't feel embarrassed about it."

Thirteen student interviewees talked about the support from their teachers, with some contrasting it to the negative experiences they had in high school: "It was good to have a teacher actually recognize you and not just push you along like they did in the high schools. I feel like they actually care more about you than the teachers in high school" (Interviewee #2).

However, by far, students felt the most significant of these supports was the Success Coach. Many of the Detour youth did not have positive adult role models in their lives, and the Success Coach served as a constant, dependable source of support for them across both academic and personal areas of life, advising through negative events and celebrating positive events. The increased confidence and positive outlook on the future described by Detour youth above was most often attributed to the Success Coach:

"When I had challenges, I'd talk to you about it. And then you'd be like, 'it's okay, you can do it.' It's not like a pressure, like always knowing that someone is always there for you....like a mom...You'll always have support and hope so the next day you can try to do better." – Interviewee #6

"It taught me a great lesson because I learned that some people can make such a difference in one person's life. Getting that support really changed my life." – Interviewee #12

"Without you [Success Coach], there would have been many times where I would have given up on myself and life. It was so vital." Interviewee #3

"I've never had someone who cared that much about me, or someone that was really pushing me and wanting me to succeed...It helped me be successful and meet my full potential...It was motherly love. You're definitely a mom for me." – Interviewee #1

"For me, it was great support because I don't feel like she is just a coach for me. She is someone you can go to with problems.... You just don't give up on your dreams, especially when you feel like you can't do it anymore..." – Interviewee #18

"...nice having someone so supportive – just letting it all out instead of holding it in." Interviewee #8

"Life coach...when unable to forgive or motivate myself, the Success Coach would." Interviewee #16

The Success Coach also helped Detour students gain life skills and build up their resilience:

"I feel like I really have had a life coach for almost two years now. It's not just the learning process, It's about you as a person, and how you are accepted, and how you handle things... I could hear you say, 'you're forgiven. You can still do it'....having someone do that for you is a blessing." – Interviewee #16

"[I've learned] how to overcome things, how to learn from things instead of dwelling on the past, on should haves and could haves. That's what [the Success Coach] taught me. I didn't have parents who taught me those life skills." – Interviewee #3

"You, as our role model, really built us up in terms of resiliency because during that time I was easily disempowered and you were really good at building us up... telling us stories of different potentials that we could go into... You weren't only doing things for me but also working with me...." – Interviewee #10

Alongside, 1-1 support, the Success Coach played a key role in connecting Detour students to the right community supports to meet their needs. The chart below gives a sampling of the kinds of community supports Detour students used.

Community Supports	
Boys & Girls Club of Calgary – Adopt-a-Family Program, Script Program, Hope Phone	Renert Tutoring
Burns Memorial Fund	United Way – All In for Youth
YMCA Tutoring	Elizabeth House
Alberta Works	Calgary Housing
Big Brothers Big Sisters	New Horizons
Bissett Bursary Fund	Trinity Foundation
Individual counselling	Calgary Food Bank

6.5 Putting the Supports Together to Build Resiliency

Having the academic, career planning and personal supports in one place contributed to the success of Detour, allowing for collaboration among instructors, Student Liaison, the Success Coach and other advisors for Detour students. The combination of adult supports serves to mentor students in developing life skills as well as academic skills. All of the students interviewed discussed the combination of supports as being significant in their Detour program successes:

*“I remember just hating to get up and come all the way down here... and then I realized that this is really attainable because the amount of support I was given through Detour, they made it impossible to fail. It was like, hey, we’re going to pay you to come to school. You don’t have to worry about supporting yourself. We have people you can talk to and this environment is not embarrassing to be here... we’re in a college. **It took my opinion on education and totally switched it around.**” – Interviewee #16*

*“The most significant [support] was like becoming the second family of mine... like [Success Coach] and [BVC Student Liaison]. They are from week to week, they [helped]. We have appointments and talk about our success... talk about our trials this week. **With that appointment, we realize that there is someone always guides us. And then we will know our strength and weaknesses.**” – Interviewee #14*

“Everybody was there for the students, emotionally... and that was the biggest thing because your emotion can really stop you or push you over. You guys [Success Coach, instructors, Student Liaison] were there for us. We all had things that had happened in our life... and you were there. You’d tell us, ‘It’s gonna rain. You’re gonna have rainy days; however, tomorrow it’s gonna shine.’” – Interviewee #13

*At BVC, “I saw lots of people knowing where they were going. They’d ask me where I was going, and I had no answers. Having everyone from the Detour program, not just you [Success Coach]], but other students and teachers were always encouraging to help where I may go. They didn’t push me – just constant support from all angles. **It made me realize there was much more to life than what I previously knew about... I decided that I wanted to do something useful.**” – Interviewee #2*

7. LESSONS LEARNED AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

“I was shattered pieces of glass...Mosaic represents me being broken into pieces. When those broken pieces are put together, a beautiful work of art is created.”- Interviewee #3

Key Lessons Learned	Strategic Recommendations
<u>High school completion is not always the right goal for vulnerable youth.</u>	<u>Connect youth to career possibilities earlier on in their education path.</u>

Key Lessons Learned	Strategic Recommendations
At the beginning of the Detour project, high school completion was considered a priority outcome. Some Detour partners had experience with early education initiatives in Calgary (Kafe 12 and the UpStart Table), which generally prioritized high school completion and brought this assumption to Detour. Project learning shifted the outcome to creating an expedited pathway to a meaningful career of choice, whether that included a high school diploma or not. The process included supporting youth to identify their strengths and weaknesses, become aware of career options that matched their skill set, and figure out an education path to get to their career of choice. This shift in approach meant that Detour students could escape negative high school experiences where they repeatedly failed core courses needed for a high school diploma, and instead take courses better suited to their aptitudes and linked with a concrete career goal.	Detour students had minimal skills in career planning, and the support of the BVC Student Liaison was necessary in building a learning plan. It was not something they were able to do on their own. A recommendation emerging from the Detour work is to work with youth on career planning at much earlier ages. The All In for Youth program, of which Detour is a part, is taking this approach. Funded by United Way of Calgary and Area, its Career Talks program introduces vulnerable youth to a range of career options through volunteer speakers sharing their individual paths to their current careers. This shows youth what different careers look like on the ground and that career paths can take a variety of twists and turns. Career Talks are organized by the City of Calgary's Youth Employment Centre, which also offers individual career planning support. All In for Youth will be further building on this strategy in 2018, working with current and new partners to launch new initiatives that will link vulnerable youth at younger ages to the building blocks of career development.
<u>Ageing out of the public K-12 education systems takes post-secondary training off the table for many vulnerable youth.</u> With courses at BVC costing more than \$500 each, ageing out of the public K-12 system can make education cost-prohibitive, and lead vulnerable youth to giving up on their education and career goals and feel destined to work in low-paying, low-skilled jobs. When asked where they thought they would be if they hadn't been a part of Detour, 10 interviewees said they most likely would not have returned to school, saying things like: ➤ <i>"Would have given up on school. Would be working, struggling – "I'd probably be in a hole" - Interviewee #13</i> ➤ <i>"I would just work and I think worry, too....be forgetting about my dream" – Interviewee #12</i> ➤ <i>"Probably would have been in and out of a lot of jobs...saving money for school but never actually making it – money always needed for something else – glasses, dental care, loaning my mom money." – Interviewee #2</i> The other 8 interviewees said they would have continued on in their education, but that the path would have been extremely challenging. Interviewee #10 said, <i>"I would probably still be juggling three jobs at a time and taken two years longer to qualify for [her degree program]."</i>	<u>Investigate ways to support vulnerable youth to get pre-requisite courses they need without the financial burden.</u> Proposals to increase the age cap for funding in Alberta acknowledge that not all youth will finish high school in three years. The Detour project has shown, however, that simply extending the age that youth are eligible to attend high school is not an adequate solution. They also need a different kind of learning environment. Detour youth cited the adult environment as significant to their success at BVC, providing role models for discipline, motivation, and planning for the future, as well as moving them out of a high school environment associated with low self-esteem and failure. Beyond increasing the age cap for funding, education funding structures need to make it possible to take high school courses in a post-secondary learning environment, where they can learn to thrive and envision a positive future for themselves.
<u>Dependable, positive adult support is significant for this group of youth, for both education and life outcomes.</u> Project team interviewees emphasized the amount of support it takes to help this high-needs group. The barriers that prevented them from completing high school in the first place	<u>Programs like Detour need to factor in transition support once the program is finished.</u> The meaningful supports offered in Detour helped students build stronger foundations of life skills, but many did not have stable natural supports to help them carry on their work.

Key Lessons Learned	Strategic Recommendations
do not disappear once they join Detour. In some cases this included past sexual assaults, sex trafficking, trauma associated with seeing a parent murdered, and drug addiction issues. Their needs are complex, persistent and ongoing throughout their time in the program, and beyond. It is also important to acknowledge that other students, despite genuine intention, did not make it through the program due to personal and/or family issues; however, partner and student interviewees contend that, while not meeting their academic goals, these students were meeting other personal goals. The Success Coach described how every Detour student she worked with made progress, whether they remained in the program or not. Students demonstrated tremendous personal growth, for example overcoming negative perceptions of “school” and learning and learning how to navigate the adult world, how to advocate for themselves and how to take meaningful steps towards a chosen career.	Some Detour youth remained in contact with the Success Coach, particularly in times of crisis, for months to years after leaving the program. The Coach became their most dependable positive adult support. The All In for Youth program has seen this challenge as well in the Success Coach program that’s implemented within the high school system as well. In a few cases, students sabotage their graduation out of worry about not having support once they’ve completed school. Integrating support for vulnerable youth that begins while they are in high school and supports them to transition to their next phase of life would be extremely valuable. Processes could be put in place to link youth to community supports that will be available to them in their next phase of education / training / work. For example, high schools linking to support services in post-secondary institutions, learning more about the services of community agencies for post-high school youth, and, linking with government support programs like Alberta Works.
<u>Vulnerable youth cycle in and out of educational programs.</u> Research on at-risk students shows they tend to follow a reiterative pattern, where they complete some schooling, drop out and then return. This issue came up both in recruiting youth for Detour and keeping them in the program once enrolled. In the project team interviews, issues with timing of the recruitment and selection process were cited as a challenge from both institutional and student perspectives. For example, the semester system at BVC does not line up with the CBE and CCSD systems and can be difficult for students who are still writing exams. Guidance counsellors also said that prospective Detour students were eager to start as soon as possible and found the waiting period challenging as it interfered with their motivation. The guidance counsellors had reservations about referring students to Detour if there were other educational options that could bring them back to school immediately. Once participating in the Detour program, many students had life circumstances interfere with their education at BVC, such as hospitalizations, giving evidence at court hearings, and child care obligations. When students needed to miss extended periods of classes or go on leave from the program, they maintained connection with the Success Coach, who supported their return to school by opening up communication channels with instructors and administration and also advocating on behalf of students. Keeping the door open to return to the program respected their personal and educational needs, and crucially, helped students maintain hope and motivation to complete their education.	<u>Institute mechanisms that allow educators to stay connected with vulnerable youth when they are in the ‘out’ part of their education cycle.</u> The results of Detour emphasize that in addition to extra time to complete their high school credits, students may need to take complete breaks from school. Results also show that maintaining contact supports their return. The All In for Youth program, created a Call Back program to individually connect with youth who have dropped out of high school, and invite them to return. Many students assume once they have left, they are not welcome to return. The Detour program findings show that for youth with significant barriers to success, maintaining a connection to a positive adult at the school supports their return. The Success Coach played this role for Detour students. The All In for Youth program has deployed Success Coaches at 14 high schools in Calgary and serve as another example of a mechanism to support educators in staying connected with vulnerable youth while they are not in school. Success Coaches have the ability to connect with youth outside of school hours and over the summer time. Coaches can meet students at their homes or in their communities. They provide support for improving youths’ personal circumstances so that returning to school becomes an option.
<u>Detour students often have complex needs that require a wide variety of supports.</u>	<u>Solutions to assist vulnerable youth require collaboration among provincial ministries.</u>

Key Lessons Learned	Strategic Recommendations
By putting the right mix of supports in place, the Detour project shows that vulnerable youth with complex needs can move towards a positive future. This happens, for example, by connecting youth to a viable career path and encouraging personal growth in areas such as increasing self-esteem and growing relationship-building skills. The Detour Project prototyped collaboration on a minor scale, bringing together representatives from the K-12 system, the university and college system and the social services sector. The needs of the Detour students are academic, but these are inextricably linked with serious personal and social issues. Examples of this include mental health issues, addictions, poverty, language barriers, other new immigrant concerns and a lack of natural supports.	While the mandate to increase high school completion falls under Alberta Education, adequately serving the complex needs of these students requires support from Alberta Human Services, and Alberta Health Services. Furthermore, Detour shows that high school completion is not the most appropriate goal for all students. Instead, expediting a path to a chosen career was considered a better fit. This has highlighted the role post-secondary institutions can play in helping vulnerable youth transition successfully to adulthood without high school completion and highlights the need to include Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education in solutions. The All In for Youth team, with support from United Way of Calgary and Area, has put policy development and systems change at the centre of its strategy moving forward to foster a more comprehensive and interconnected web of supports for vulnerable youth.

Appendix A: Detour Collaborators

Organization	Role
United Way of Calgary and Area (UWCA)	UWCA initiated the Detour collaboration. This involved identifying potential partners, bringing them together and supporting the relationship-building process among partners who had not worked together before. The UWCA All In for Youth School Liaison was involved in all aspects of program development, initiating and revising recruitment as well as the selection processes, monitoring student progress, and expanding the supports available to students. UWCA was also responsible for securing the funds for Detour.
Burns Memorial Fund	BMF brought experience running a bursary program with low-income students and thus had expertise in due diligence of student applications (for example, confirming low-income status), disbursing funds to students in an ongoing fashion, and liaising with high school students. As part of Detour, the Burns Memorial Fund was part of the advisory group developing and overseeing the Detour Program, and was also responsible for processing applications and administering student monthly living allowances.
Bow Valley College (BVC)	BVC played a number of key roles with Detour. The Dean of the Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning sat on the Detour Advisory Team, and arranged for program management support for Detour students. The on-the-ground support involved initial learning assessments, development of academic learning plans, connections to other campus services (for example, counseling and tutoring.), and general one-on-one caring support for students.
Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC)	BGCC hired and housed the Success Coach for Detour. The Detour Success Coach is connected to the team of fourteen Success Coaches that work in thirteen AIFY high schools.
Calgary Board of Education (CBE) & Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD)	CBE and CCSD had positions on the Detour Advisory Team. As well, they supported the recruitment of students who would be a good fit for Detour. Guidance counsellors identified students, met with them and put together a file to present, as part of the selection process.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol – Students

The following questions were asked of 18 students who had participated in the Detour Program.

1. What are you up to these days?
 - a. Education / training involvement
 - b. Employment situation
 - c. Living situation
 - d. Connection to community supports
 - e. Relationships with natural supports
2. What was life like when you were accepted into the Detour Program?
3. How did Detour support you to manage the issues you faced when you entered the program?
 - a. Financial support
 - b. Adult learning environment at Bow Valley College
 - c. Meaningful supports
 - Detour Connector
 - Teachers
 - Student Advisors
 - Counsellors
 - Mentors
4. What was the most significant support you received through Detour? Why?
5. How have you changed because of Detour?
6. What do you imagine your life would be like now if you had not been a part of the Detour Program?

Appendix C: Reporting Data Sources

Source	Role	Organization
Joan Gauthier	Manager & School Liaison	UWCA All In for Youth
Kathy Baker	Success Coach	Detour Program
Petya Mirtchovska	Student Liaison	Bow Valley College
Dr. Keith Seel	Dean, Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning	Bow Valley College
Semi-Annual Reports		Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary
Student Records		Bow Valley College
18 Detour Student Interviews		

Appendix D: Barriers to Success

Barriers before Detour – based on 18 students interviewed	Number of Students
Financial Hardship	18
Lack of Natural Supports	9
English Language Learner	9
Mental Health Issues	9
Hopelessness	7
Not Interested / Motivated in School	7
Physical Health Issues	6
Lack of Positive Adults	5
Family Responsibilities	5
Justice Issues	5
Addictions	3
Negative Peer Influence	3
Plans on Hold Due to Personal Issues	3
Coursework Too Difficult	2
Learning Disability	2
Parenting Responsibilities	2
Addiction Issues	1
Employed > 20 Hours / Week	1