Factors related to positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal Children in Canada:

Findings from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey

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CSSE Conference, Ottawa, June 3, 2015
Objectives of panel

- Overview of the Aboriginal Peoples Survey
- School success among Inuit children
- Speaking an Aboriginal language and school outcomes
Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS)

- National survey of the social and economic conditions of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis, and Inuit
- Designed and implemented in partnership with national Aboriginal organizations.
- Cross-sectional, post-censal
- Self-reported Aboriginal identity
- Self-reported data for adults, parent/guardian-reported data for children under age 15
Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS)

- APS – 4 cycles:

  - Data on education, health, language, employment, housing, mobility

  2012: Thematic approach
  - In-depth education and employment data
  - Health supplement
  - Language, housing, mobility
School Success Framework

- Socio-ecological model
- Acknowledges the influence of a variety of factors on children’s school outcomes
- These factors – present at the individual; family; school; community; and cultural levels – are what we call “social determinants”
School Success Framework

Culture
Community
School
Family
Individual

School outcomes

Age
Gender
General health
Chronic health conditions
School Success Framework

- Household food security
- Parental education
- Siblings dropped out
- Parental hopes
- Parental involvement
- Prior residential school attendance
- Exposure to books
School Success Framework

- Previous preschool program attendance
- Ever learned Aboriginal language at school
- Ever been taught other subjects in an Aboriginal language at school
- School environment (positive and negative)
School Success Framework

- Community
- School
- Family
- Individual
- School outcomes

Community support
School Success Framework

- Aboriginal language as mother tongue
- Ability to speak Aboriginal language
- Exposure to Aboriginal language at home
- Exposure to Aboriginal language outside of home
School Success Framework

Culture

Community

School

Family

Individual

School outcomes
Findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

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Research Background

- Inuit students in Canada are at higher risk of school dropout.
- Little evidence-based research on factors promoting school success among Inuit children.
- Students’ pathways are multifaceted and begin as early as child’s very first years in school.
The Present Study

- 2012 APS
- Focus on Inuit children living in Inuit Nunangat
- Grades 1 to 6
- Sample size: ~700 children
- Person most knowledgeable-reported
- Research question:

What are the social determinants of school success among elementary school-aged Inuit children?

Arim et al. forthcoming
Social Determinants of School Success

- Culture
- Community
- School
- Family
- Individual

School outcomes
School Outcomes

Inuit children in grades 1 to 6

- Mainly "A"s: 52%
- Skipped classes: 50%
- Missed school: 49%
- Repeated a grade: 11%
- Receives or needs tutoring: 23%

Illness / injury
Sleeping in / feeling tired

Poor academic performance
Enhancing school program

Source: 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

Arim et al. forthcoming
Social Determinants of School Success: Summary

**Individual**
Younger kids
Being in excellent/very good health

**Family**
Living in a food secure household
Having parents with postsecondary education

**Culture**
Being exposed daily to an Inuit language outside the home

**School environment**
Kids feel safe, happy, and parents are given many opportunities to be involved
There are fewer alcohol-, drugs-, bullying-, or violence-related problems

Source: 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey
Arim et al. forthcoming
Multivariate Results (odds ratios)

- Food security
- Positive school environment
- Mainly “A”s
- Parent(s) having PSE
- Did not skip/arrive late
- Younger Age
- Excellent/very good health
- Did not miss school
- Daily exposure to Inuit language outside the home
- Never repeated a grade
- Daily exposure to Inuit language outside the home
- Does not need tutoring
- Negative school environment

Source: 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

Arim et al. forthcoming
Strengths and Limitations

- Use of a large, population-based data source representative of Inuit children in Inuit Nunangat
- Associations, not causality
- Cultural relevance of school success measures
- Limited to content of 2012 APS
School Success among Inuit Children

An Inuk child who is healthy, not hungry, who has parents who value education, who is attending a school with a climate conducive to learning and where parents are given opportunities to be involved, and who is exposed daily to the Inuit language, has better odds of succeeding at school.

Source: 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

Arim et al. forthcoming
Speaking an Aboriginal language and school outcomes

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Aboriginal language

- For many First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit, language is an important part of their identity.
- Learning and speaking an Aboriginal language associated with school outcomes.
Is speaking an Aboriginal language associated with children’s outcomes?

- Learned Aboriginal language at school?
- Doing well at school?
- Looks forward to school?
- Repeated a grade?
- Suspended or expelled?
- Parental importance of PSE?
- Parental satisfaction with school?

Children who speak an Aboriginal language and learned it at school, age 6 to 14

Source: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006
Doing well in school, 6 to 14 year olds, 2001

Looks forward to going to school, 6 to 14 year olds, 2001

Children who spoke an Aboriginal language were no more or less likely to:

- Repeat a grade
- Be suspended or expelled from school

No association with learning the language in school or not in school

Parental perceptions, First Nations off reserve, 6 to 14 year olds, 2006

- Learned language in school: Parents more likely to think post-secondary education is very important.
- Did not learn language in school: Parents less likely to be satisfied with school.

Is speaking an Aboriginal language associated with children’s outcomes?

Learned Aboriginal language at school?

- Doing well at school
- Looks forward to school
- Repeated a grade
- Suspended or expelled

Parental importance of PSE
Parental satisfaction with school

Results from:
Limitations

• Cross-sectional data
• Parent-report
• School factors
Conclusions and future research directions

• Language use at home and school was associated with positive school outcomes and parent’s perceptions of school for Aboriginal children.

• Future research
  – Timing and extent of Aboriginal language instruction (questions available on APS 2012)
  – Explanatory variables
  – Qualitative studies
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