# The Pathways to Resilience Project
## Resilience Research Centre
## Dalhousie University
# Pathways to Resilience
# Menihek Report

Publication Date: November 6, 2011

## Summary of Findings

The Pathways to Resilience Project is a research study being conducted by the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University to better understand what patterns of formal services and informal supports from family and community work best in reducing risk and increasing well-being among youth. The study is taking place in Atlantic Canada, with sites in Nova Scotia and Labrador and internationally in China, South Africa, New Zealand and Colombia.

Based on our research at Menihek, we have found:

- Students at Menihek show high levels of resilience. Many have very positive things happening in their lives.
- 26.2% of students at Menihek report taking a leadership role at least once a week.
- On the whole, students at Menihek avoid problem behaviours, but 8.1% of students are at high risk of problems like theft, substance use and risky sexual activity.
- 20.2% of Menihek students are at risk of depression.
- Students at Menihek have educational aspirations like graduating high school. 21.5% of students hope to complete a college degree, while 73.9% hope to complete at least a university degree.
- 27.5% of students report having skipped an entire day of school at least once in the past year.
- 73.1% of Menihek students say they would go to one of their teachers for advice. The majority of Menihek students like their school.
- In total, 25.5% of students at Menihek report being bullied, but only 3.4% of students report bullying others.
- 22.8% of Menihek students have had contact with youth corrections or the police. 21.5% have had some involvement with Child and Family Services (at least once in their lives), and 32.9% have used mental health services (at least once).
- 81.8% of Menihek students believe they are treated fairly in their community, yet the majority of students (97.3%) do not feel completely safe in their neighbourhood.
- Overall, students at Menihek are coping well even though they face challenges.

## Introduction

In each of the research sites we work with a variety of community partners, including local school boards, to help identify:

- The culturally specific aspects of resilience (strengths and capacities) that young people in their community and schools use to cope with problems.
- The psychological, social and environmental risks that young people face.
- Young people's service use patterns (their use of mandated services like Child Welfare, Corrections, Mental Health, Addictions, and Special Educational Services), their use of informal supports available through their families and communities, and their use of informal services provided by local not-for-profit community organizations.

Our goal is to give communities, schools, governments, and service providers a very detailed understanding of how young people cope with adversity and the risks they face. We also hope to help service providers from many different agencies find ways to coordinate services, create new services young people say they need, and find ways young people can get connected to community and family supports.

One hundred and forty nine (149) students at Menihek participated in this study by completing the Pathways to Resilience Youth Measure (PRYM). This report provides a profile of these students. The youth chosen to participate in the full Pathways to Resilience Study across Atlantic Canada are all multiple service users, meaning they are already using mandated services and community supports. Our school samples, like this one from Menihek, help us to see whether youth who are using services are the same, or different, from other youth from their same communities. More detailed results from the larger study can be found in the final reports of the Pathways to Resilience Project.

## Student Profile

Of the 585 students registered at Menihek, 149 students completed the PRYM (25.5%). A summary of demographic information is provided in Table 1. 28.2% in Grade 8, 26.8% in Grade 9, 18.1% in Grade 10, 14.1% in Grade 11, and 12.8% in Grade 12. Just over half (57%) of the surveyed students are female and 43% are male. Students have an average of 2 siblings. For the majority of students, English is their first language.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of Menihek (n=149)**

| | | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Entire Menihek Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Average Age** | | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 15 |
| **Sex** | Female | 43.9% | 67.5% | 51.9% | 61.9% | 68.4% | 57% |
| | Male | 56.1% | 32.5% | 48.1% | 38.1% | 31.6% | 43% |
| **Average Number of Siblings** | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

The majority of students report being able to solve problems without harming themselves or others, have people they look up to and cooperate with others (Table 2). Friendship emerges as an important theme, with 90.6% of students reporting that they hang out with their friends once a week or more. Students also report having close relationships with their friends. Over three quarters (83.7%) report feeling supported by their friends and 77.1% of students believe that their friends stand by them during difficult times. Almost all (98.6%) students report having one or more good friends.

**Table 2. Positive Behaviours: Student Profile**

| | Does not describe me at all | Doesn't really describe me | Unsure | Sort of Describes me | Describes me a lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have people I look up to | 0.7% | 5.4% | 14.7% | 33.6% | 45.6% |
| I cooperate with those around me | 0.7% | 2% | 23.5% | 39.6% | 34.2% |
| I aim to finish what I start | 0.7% | 1.3% | 20.1% | 42.3% | 35.6% |
| I can solve problems without harming myself or others | 2.7% | 3.4% | 8.6% | 21.5% | 63.8% |
| I feel supported by my friends | 2% | 2.7% | 11.4% | 37.6% | 46.3% |
| My friends stand by me during difficult times | 1.3% | 4.7% | 16.9% | 26.8% | 50.3% |

The majority of students report having opportunities to show that they are becoming adults and develop skills that will be useful later in life (Figure 1). Many students at Menihek also report taking a leadership role, with 26.2% saying they assume a leadership role at least once a week; this rate steadily increases between Grade 8 (14.7%), 9 (20%), 10 (33.3%), 11 (38.1%), and 12 (42.1%).

**Figure 1: Student opportunities for personal growth**
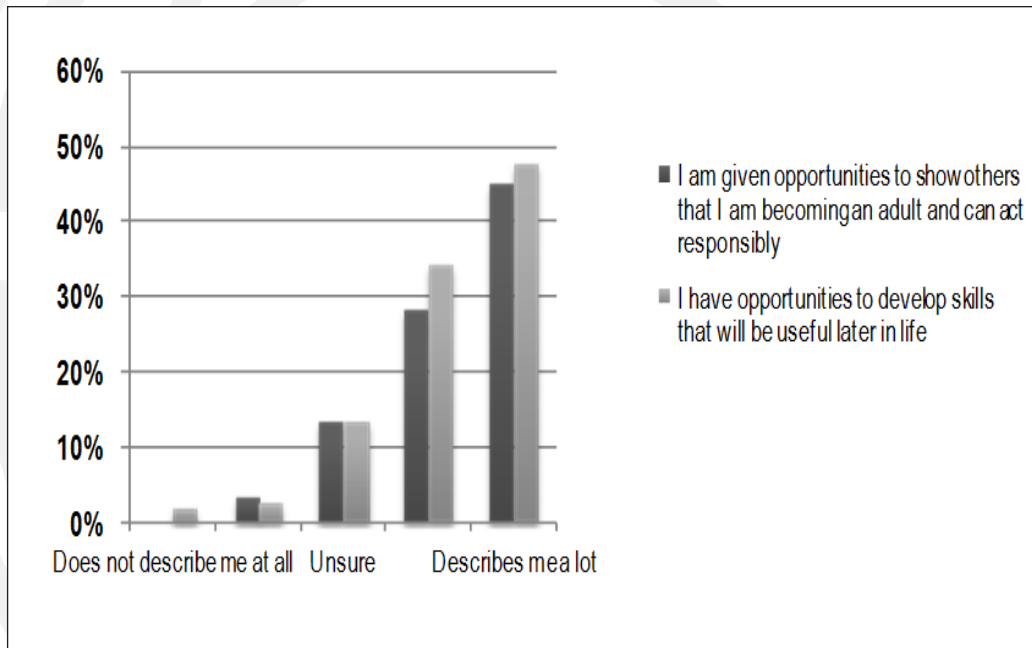


On average, 47% of students spend an hour a day or less on homework and 61.7% of students report that they read for pleasure; these numbers are not consistent across grades. Grade 12, 10, and 9 students spent more than one hour of time on their homework, on average, than Grade 11 (52.4%), and Grade 8 (53.6%) students. Grade 8 (48.8%) students were less likely to spend time reading for pleasure than Grades 9 (67.5%), Grade 10 (59.3%), Grade 11 (61.9%) and Grade 12.

One quarter (25.5%) of students spend 3 hours or more watching television and 29.7% of students spend at least 3 hours on the internet on an average day. When asked about electronic communication, 52.3% of students report spending 3 or more hours on an average day talking to friends electronically, 21.5 % of students spend 1-2 hours talking electronically, and 19.5% spend under 1 hour talking to friends electronically. 6.7% of students do not use electronic tools to communicate with friends.

## Risk and Resilience

We define resilience as a student's ability to get the resources he or she needs to do well when facing life challenges. Resilience is their capacity, and the capacity of others to provide for young people, so they can improve their well-being in ways that make sense to them. Scores on measures of resilience and risk are presented in Table 3. The resilience measure is designed to reflect individual capacity, available relationships, connection to culture, contextual resources in the lives of youth, and youth engagement in pro-social behaviour. The risk measure shows the level of youth engagement in problem behaviours (i.e. theft, aggression, vandalism and substance use), a youth's ability to form age-appropriate relationships and risk of depression. Both resilience and risk scales have a range of 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher resilience or risk. Resilience and risk are inversely related; as resilience increases, risk is expected to decrease.

**Table 3. Overall Resilience and Risk Scores (student mean scores and standard deviations)**

|  | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Entire Menihek Sample | Pathways to Resilience Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resilience Score (out of 100)** | M=81.45 SD=13.18 | M=83.80 SD=9.83 | M=76.11 SD=12.00 | M=75.00 SD=10.80 | M=81.09 SD=10.49 | M=80.16 SD=11.79 | M=63.33 SD=15.47 |
| **Risk Score (out of 100)** | M=10.54 SD=11.07 | M=11.98 SD=9.21 | M=16.05 SD=12.47 | M=19.73 SD=10.43 | M=19.20 SD=10.57 | M=14.32 SD=11.19 | M=36.24 SD=15.69 |

The average resilience score for the school is 80.16 (SD=11.79). Individual scores range from 42.86 to 100. Mean scores are fairly consistent across grades. On average, resilience scores are highest for Grades 8, and 9. These scores drop for grades 10 and 11 and then increase by Grade 12. Risk scores, in comparison, steadily increase between Grade 8 and 11 and start to decrease by Grade 12. Despite these trends, students at Menihek display higher levels of resilience and lower levels of risk than youth in the larger Pathways to Resilience Project.

Among events that Menihek students identify as improving their lives in the past year are: getting closer with family and friends, participating in sports and/or school activities, getting a pet, travelling, getting good grades, moving, starting a relationship with a girl or boyfriend, and getting a job.

Resilience is next broken down into four categories: individual characteristics of resilience, relationships with parents or primary caregivers, relationships with peers and community and the resilience of the youth's contextual characteristics (Table 4). High scores in context indicate an environment that is supportive, respectful, and welcoming. Menihek students score higher on all of the measures than youth who use multiple services and are part of the larger Pathways to Resilience project in Atlantic Canada. Menihek students have more resilience in their relationships with caregivers, peers, and community than the Pathways sample of youth.

**Table 4. Resilience measures**

| | Menihek School | | Pathways to Resilience Sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Mean** | **SD** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| **Individual Resilience (range 10-50)** | 45.88 | 6.39 | 31.44 | 8.05 |
| **Relationship with Primary Caregiver (range 6-30)** | 28.91 | 5.53 | 24.11 | 8.08 |
| **Relationship with Peers and Community (range 3-15)** | 12.62 | 2.17 | 10.56 | 3.66 |
| **Context (range 7-35)** | 39.38 | 14.90 | 25.69 | 7.14 |

## Resilience - In their own words

Youth identified the support of their family and friends as critical in their well being during their interviews. Friends were a significant theme, with many identifying high school as a when true friends are separated from the rest.

*"I have a very good relationship with my mom, well my dad too. Um, you know, me and my mom talk about everything. When I need her, she's always there. She's very understanding and, so's my aunt, my aunt and my mom are very close, so when I need help I will go to them."* (Female, 16)

*"Well now you're starting to figure out who your real friends are for sure, and we became a lot closer, but boyfriends and stuff do have a huge impact, like significantly, because I find if I can't talk to my friends about it I can talk to my boyfriend about it. You know? And even like now you stop asking to hang out as much, and it does hurt a lot, like a lot of my best friends we just don't hang out anymore because of like their boyfriends, or maybe they work together so they click more."* (Female, 17)

*"The only time I hang out with my friends is like on the weekends, because like the weekdays are really really busy. And then like it's good because then when you get together, everyone's like having fun and it's not like you see everybody everyday and then you get sick of them. Like I'm really close best friends that we always talk all the time and then like when we're, you know it's time to hang out, we'll hang out, but like when we don't then [That's ok too]."* (Female, 18)

*"My friend Jake* um, he's the nicest guy I know. I know a lot of people, he's the nicest the guy around. He's so helpful and I don't know, I can't explain it to you, he's just the nicest person ever, like he's nice to everybody, that's who I hang around with."* (Male, 16)

*"I really don't do anything with my family anymore. I'm busy with my friends now, but the good thing about that is I can actually talk to my parents about stuff."* (Male, 17)

Other youth commented about the importance of their family as their main source of support. A 16 year old male stated, "my parents are pretty nice too, I got the nicest parents ever." Other youth discussed:

*"[My mother's] always been there, like no matter what, she'll always like love me and like would never kick me out or nothing like that, so she's pretty cool... I can trust her, she's not going to go and tell her friends about it. Like she can get help for me if I need it."* (Female, 16)

*"My parents for sure. Even my grandparents obviously, they're always supporting me with any decision I make, like my mom said pick whatever school you want and I will try my hardest, like you know, she's tries so much for me. And like my friends, like you know the select few that are actually there all the time. That's like my support network for sure."(Female, 17)*

*"It's, my mom [who] understands me better, like I have a lot of friends … but they can't do anything about it. And like, my mom doesn't do anything about it, it's just that I'm crying…and you can't cry in front of your friends, but I usually don't cry, it's just when I'm really, really upset and I have noth-ing else that I can do." (Female, 16)*

## Risk

Shifting our focus from resilience to risk, we found that the average risk score for the school is 14.32 (SD=11.19) and individual scores range from 0 to 57.14 (out of 100) (Table 3). The lower the score, the fewer risks a youth faces. The overall risk score can be broken down and examined on a number of separate measures. For example, the survey includes a clinical screener of depression. Over three quarters (79.9%) of students at Menihek are categorized as having minimal or no risk of depression, 12.1% of students have moderate risk of depression and 8.1% have elevated levels of risk of depression. A difference is seen by grade, with 5% of Grade 9 students displaying moderate risk of depression compared to 28.6% of Grade 11 students. The elevated risk of depression increased from Grades 8 (4.8%), 9 (7.5%), 10 (11.1%), and 11 (14.3%). Only 5.3% of Grade 12 students displayed a high risk of depression

Other risk behaviours are assessed through a Conduct Problems Scale. The Conduct Problems Scale is measured on a scale of 0-10 and youth are categorized as having normal (0-3), borderline (approaching high levels of problem behaviour) (4) or abnormal levels of problem behaviour (5-10). Less than one tenth (8.1%) of students at Menihek are classified as having abnormal levels of problem behaviour. This is highest for Grade 11 students (23.8%), followed by Grade 10 (7.4%) and then Grades 12 (5.3%), 9 (5%), 8 (4.9%).

When we looked at peer problems, using a Peer Problems Scale which assesses a youth's ability to form age-appropriate peer relationships, we found that 85.2% of students at Menihek score in the normal range, 6.7% are classified as borderline, and 8.1% show an inability to form age-appropriate relationships. Students were also asked how many of their friends smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, do drugs, have sex and break the law other than by using drugs  (Table 5). Scores steadily increased from Grade 8 to Grade 12, indicating students believe their peers engage in more of these behaviours as they age.

**Table 5: Perceived Risk Taking Behaviours in Peers**

|  | None | A Few | Most | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Smoked Cigarettes** | 45.0 % | 39.6 % | 12.1 % | 3.4 % |
| **Drank Alcohol** | 28.2 % | 31.5 % | 24.2 % | 16.1 % |
| **Do Drugs** | 60.4 % | 33.6 % | 6.0 % | 0 % |
| **Have Sex** | 43.6 % | 28.2 % | 19.5 % | 8.7 % |
| **Break the Law** | 62.4 % | 28.9 % | 4.7 % | 4.0 % |

In regards to participation in delinquent and risk-taking behaviours, students were asked about their frequency of substance use in the past year (Table 6). The most regularly used substance was alcohol, followed by cigarettes. Less than 2% of youth indicated sniffing glues, sprays or gases, using chewing tobacco or snuff, using steroids, or using any other drug (e.g. ecstasy, speed, heroin). Less than one quarter (22.8%) of students had sex at least once or twice and only 2% were having regular unprotected sex.

**Table 6: Substance Use in the Previous Year**

| Substance | Frequency | Grade 8 (n=42) | Grade 9 (n=40) | Grade 10 (n=27) | Grade 11 (n=21) | Grade 12 (n=19) | Whole Menihek Sample (n=149) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Smoked Cigarettes | Never | 92.9 % | 87.5 % | 66.7 % | 61.9 % | 57.9 % | 77.9 % |
| | Once or Twice | 4.7% | 7.5 % | 18.5 % | 14.3 % | 21.1 % | 11.4 % |
| | Occasionally | 0 % | 2.5 % | 3.7% | 14.3 % | 15.8 % | 5.4 % |
| | Regularly | 2.4 % | 2.5 % | 11.1 % | 9.5 % | 5.3 % | 5.4 % |
| Drank Alcohol | Never | 69.0 % | 70.0 % | 40.7 % | 14.3 % | 21.1 % | 50.3 % |
| | Once or Twice | 19.0 % | 17.5 % | 22.2 % | 28.6 % | 5.3 % | 18.8 % |
| | Occasionally | 7.1 % | 10.0 % | 25.9 % | 33.3 % | 42.1 % | 19.5 % |
| | Regularly | 4.8 % | 2.5 % | 11.1 % | 23.8 % | 31.6 % | 11.4 % |
| Used Marijuana or Hash | Never | 97.6 % | 90.0 % | 77.8 % | 81.0 % | 78.9 % | 87.2 % |
| | Once or Twice | 0 % | 5.0 % | 11.1 % | 14.3 % | 10.5 % | 6.7 % |
| | Occasionally | 2.4 % | 5.0 % | 11.1 % | 4.8 % | 5.3 % | 5.4 % |
| | Regularly | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0% | 5.3 % | 0.7 % |
| Used Any Other Drug | Never | 100 % | 97.5 % | 96.3 % | 100 % | 94.7 % | 98.0 % |
| | Once or Twice | 0 % | 0 % | 3.7 % | 0 % | 5.3 % | 1.3 % |
| | Occasionally | 0 % | 2.5 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0.7 % |
| | Regularly | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % |
| Had Sex | Never | 97.6 % | 85.0 % | 70.4 % | 52.4 % | 52.6 % | 77.2 % |
| | Once or Twice | 0 % | 7.5 % | 7.4 % | 14.3 % | 5.3 % | 6.0 % |
| | Occasionally | 0 % | 0 % | 11.1 % | 19.0 % | 15.8 % | 6.7 % |
| | Regularly | 2.4 % | 7.5 % | 11.1 % | 14.3 % | 26.3 % | 10.1 % |
| Had Unprotected Sex | Never | 97.6 % | 95.0 % | 88.9 % | 81.0 % | 78.9 % | 90.6 % |
| | Once or Twice | 0 % | 2.5 % | 7.4 % | 9.5 % | 0 % | 2.0 % |
| | Occasionally | 0 % | 2.5 % | 3.7 % | 9.5 % | 15.8 % | 5.4 % |
| | Regularly | 2.4 % | 0 % | 0 % | 0 % | 5.3 % | 2.0 % |

In addition to these risk measures, students also reported the death of loved ones, depression, losing friend/s, family problems (e.g. divorce, drug abuse, fighting, isolation), heavy workloads, physical injuries, and poor marks at school as events that have made their lives more difficult in the past year.

### Risk - In their own words
Youth also identified many of the risks they face during their interviews. All youth discussed the substance use which occurs in the community as a significant concern and barrier to maintaining healthy behaviours.

*"I'd say like more than half of this school is on, or at least tried, or is on something. It's crazy. I don't do it, people are like on weed, pot, and coke, and stuff like that... Most people are doing something... It's crazy, crazy. And underage drinking, oh my god, don't get me started on that. Underage drinking, I don't agree with it at all, like you shouldn't do it, I don't think you should drink at all ever, that's just me." (Male, 16)*

*"Well there's a lot of kids that smoke at young ages and it's crazy because it's like so odd to look at someone who just like came out of Kindergarten it seems like and now they`re smoking and they don't realize the harm it's doing to them." (Female, 18)*

*"I dunno they started doing drugs and I just got curious like and smoked my first joint, like you know, then I seen how it turns out and like some of my friends didn't get out of it. And some of my friends are still doing it and like it's horrible, it just grosses me out. But I feel as though its experience in my younger ages when I'm older and I'm like 20 I'm not gonna want to do it, you know, because I already experienced it. But I didn't slip through the cracks like a lot of people, like there's just so much stuff with it and I'm just the lucky one." (Female, 17)*

This youth went on to explain why she did not fall through the cracks like other people she knows:

*"I think it had a lot to do with my family because my family are completely against drugs and all of that together, and like it was just, I dunno, and all of my friends are usually in like basic courses or whatever whereas I'm in academic everything or advanced and like I have to keep up, you know, stuff like that. Ya, it had a lot to do with my upbringing too, me and my mom are really close, so, that too." (Female, 17)*

## Students' Opinions on School
### Educational Aspirations
Overall, students at Menihek have high educational aspirations, with 73.9% of students hoping to complete a university degree or higher and another 21.5% hoping to obtain a college diploma. Only 2.6% of students aim to just finish high school and the remaining 2% were unsure of their educational goals.

When asked to indicate on a scale of 1-5 whether getting an education was important to them, 66.4% of students indicated that this statement described them a lot; as compared to most of the time (25.5%), somewhat (4.8%), and rarely (2.0%). Only 1.3% (2 students) indicated that this statement did not describe them at all. Parents and educators can be reassured that students value the idea of education and are setting high goals for themselves in this regard.

This positive trend is mirrored in the qualitative data. When asked what was most helpful about their school, students wrote:
- "Being able to join sports teams and afterschool activities and when you need help with school, you get it."
- "If I need some extra help in school, the teachers that teach me can give me some extra help like work sheets, or some new or more understandable note."

- "The teachers have been most helpful at school because they have good teaching methods to help people understand."
- "Second chance policies: we can always get an extra opportunity to improve our grades."
- "Teachers changing dates if there were a lot of tests on one certain day."
- "Small school, have a lot of sports clubs and athletic opportunities. Can go to the guidance counselor/teachers for help and concerns."
- "The education, the right amount of freedom, and kindest teachers."
- "If you forget a lunch, they have free soup that they give out."

### Attachment to School

The majority of students (73.6%) report that they feel they belong at Menihek (Figure 2); and while 2.7% of students reported feeling like they did not belong at school, 23.7% felt that they only somewhat belonged or were unsure.

**Figure 2: I feel I belong at my school**
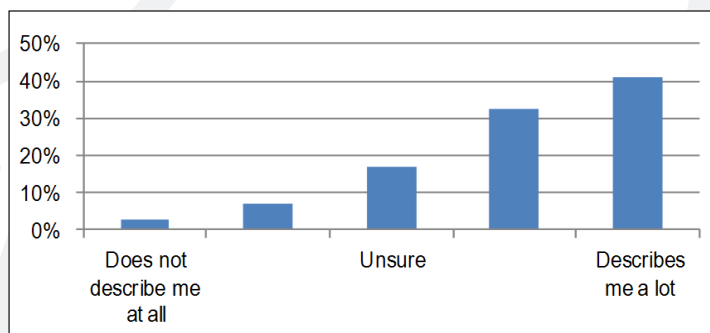


Students' sense of belonging at their school is possibly reflected by their attendance. About one quarter (27.5%) of students report skipping a full day of school in the past year. The frequency of skipping at least one day of school a year is lowest for Grade 9 (17.5%) and Grade 8 (21.4%) students and highest for Grade 11 (47.6%) and 12 (36.8%) students.

## Bullying

When asked about being bullied, 25.5% of students report being bullied, but only 3.4% of students report bullying others. Youth discussed both the physical, emotional and psychological bullying that occurs at school.

*"More severe consequences. I mean, if you can get suspended for swearing in this school, you should, at least, be able to be suspended for beating up someone." (Male, 17)*

> *"It's not the stereotypical 'take your lunch money put you in the locker stuff' anymore, it's more like rumors and psychological bullying with everyone now. But there's fights… behind the school there's always fighting like that but it's not like you know, you see the bully take his money, like it's not that stereotypical stuff they say it is. It's mostly that psychological stuff and then there's these few jerks I suppose, that just want to punch people out." (Male, 16)*

Sometimes students were comfortable standing up to bullies either by interfering themselves, or by seeking help from school staff.

> *"I've never really actually been bullied. I've watched it a couple of times. But like when I see it, like especially with the younger people, I try to be like "that's not nice, you're not supposed to do that" sorta thing."(Female, 18)*

*"If I got a few text messages, like nasty ones, and you just go to the Principal and he'll sort it out if he can, so it's fine like that. But there's a lot of that going on that doesn't get reported cause I suppose some kids are scared I suppose, it's like, 'I'm not going to tell anybody because they'll hurt me more kind of thing'." (Male, 16)*

Other students felt seeking help from others did not help remedy the situation, instead made it worse. For example a 17 year old female commented, "I don't find they really do anything about it, especially being in high school they don't really do anything, and if you go to the [school staff] it usually just makes things worse."

Youth also discussed the repercussions and response of the school staff to bullying.

*"You could … always do more with it because it's just something that's there, sort of like it's, it's not going to stop and sometimes it gets too far and sometimes it's just people just joking around and they don't really mean anything by it but it hurts other people but yeah, it just, it, it's- our school's not too bad. Like we don't have people like fighting and all that." (Female, 16)*

*"Usually the school don't know about it because uh, people don't really bring it up. You would hear like some of your friends, cause I have a lot of friends you know, they do talk and uh, I'd be there for them as much as I possibly can but uh, the school I don't think really knows, I think it's just physical what they know, not emotional." (Female, 16)*

*"We have pink shirts and uh, it's because of this little boy um, actually who is probably our age and he wore a pink shirt to school one day and he was bullied a lot. So now we do wear pink shirts every second Friday… And we have our own shirts that says, 'I won't stand violence, I'll stand up'." (Female, 16)*

One youth discussed a bullying program in the school and how it impacted the school:

*"I think it made a real big difference. You know, you don't see as much bullying now. Obviously there's been a lot of fights in past years, like emotional as in school fights but this year there's probably one or two, that's it." (Female, 16)*

### *School Environment*
Overall, students appear to feel that Menihek is a good place to be (Figure 3). More than half (66.9%) of students feel that their family's religious and spiritual beliefs are respected (9.4% feel that they were not, and 23.7% were unsure). The proportions of student responses are similar when asked whether staff are sensitive to their cultural and ethnic background. Additionally, 83.9% of students think that staff speak in a way that they can understand, with 3.3% disagreeing and 12.8% unsure.

**Figure 3: How would you describe your school?**
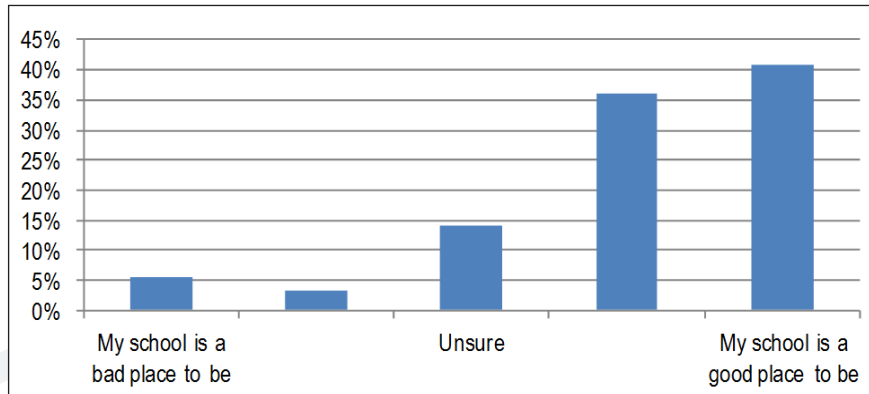


Students have mixed views on their school and classes. Many students identified the support that they received from their teachers as being helpful. Other positive things that were identified include: the second chance policy, sports, freedom at school, and individual teachers.

- "Teachers are good at helping us get the courses required for your preferred college courses. E.g. needing Physics for electrical engineering."
- "Being able to learn French and play sports."
- "Being in a basic math course. I understand a whole lot better, so next year I can be in an academic course."
- "Programs offered outside the school, example: Medquest."

Youth also spoke of the positive aspects of Menihek in their interviews. The students commented on the benefits of caring school staff, extracurricular activities, freedom within their school, and free soup at lunch.

*"We can pretty much talk to any teachers about anything and I don't know, it's just, it's good. We have a lot of freedom, like we get to do basically whatever we want, like we can go wherever we want for lunch."*
*(Female, 16)*

*"[The free soup] is good for some kids who don't have a lunch, there's some kids here who don't have enough money to get a lunch… Like I know one of them and he doesn't have much, like I've been to his house a few times, he doesn't have much food in there and stuff. He's living in like, what's it called, like ah… like is it welfare? So it's good for those kinds of people who, who need it and stuff, that's good." (Male, 16)*

*"We offer Europe trips every year, so that was really cool. This year and last year I got to go to Eu-rope with school which was amazing. Like with EF tours and I learned a lot which was nice." (Female, 17)*

*"You know, kids are getting older and you have different responsibilities and the teachers are watching you more and they, you know, they respect you more and they trust you more. And I think that… you know, if your cell phone does go off, it's no big deal like yeah." (Female, 16)*

## Extracurricular Activities

Youth were conflicted about the extracurricular activities offered in the school; some youth commented there were plenty of extracurricular activities for all students, while others identified there were not enough.

*"There's definitely not enough like chess club, stuff like that not just sports. If you're not into sports you don't do any extra circular activities."(Male, 16)*

*"I think it's really, it's a good school because they have a lot of sports teams which is my interest."*
*(Female, 16)*

*"Maybe more art activities, like just expressional art. I dunno, we need something to help the town in a way like clean up or whatever like that. Something like that." (Female, 17)*

*"There's probably like ten sports' teams, there's band, there's choir, there's art, like classes after school, there's student council, grad committee, there's almost anything for anybody, and there's like a fly tying group for boys who like going fishing." (Female, 18)*

When asked how having extracurricular activities offered in the school affects students, a female, aged 18 responded, "I think it keeps people out of trouble to be honest."

## Experience with teachers

The majority of students surveyed at Menihek are comfortable going to their teachers for advice, with 66.4% of students reporting they would certainly go to a teacher for advice (Table 7).

**Table 7.   Likelihood of approaching a teacher for advice**

|  |  | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Entire Menihek Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **If you needed advice would you go to your teacher?** | Agree | 59.8% | 65% | 63% | 85.7% | 68.5% | 66.4% |
|  | Disagree | 40.5% | 35% | 37% | 14.3% | 31.5% | 33.6% |

Teachers were another theme which emerged from the interviews. Students discussed the qualities of the teachers who stand out to them such as caring, ability to answer questions, and being strict.

*"He's just like, he explains things better and he makes sure everyone, like everyones gotta understand before he moves on. And he's kind of chill, a cool guy, he's not like one of those teachers who's really strict like crazy, he's like, he's kind of like chill, like I like that." (Male 16,)*

*"Someone who actually cares about what they are teaching and like if you do bad on something, they'll actually try to like help you other than saying 'it's like your own fault'… And to keep like your class under control 'cause sometimes people just let, well some teachers just let you do whatever you want and that's not really good either." (Female, 18)*

*"She was dedicated to her students, she would stay whenever they need them. Like we used to come back from sports at like six o'clock and she'd still be here doing her lesson plans and stuff."*
*(Female, 18)*

*"Caring for their students and like being able to help them and not just being like, 'Oh go and do it yourself' and all that stuff and, you know. Being nice obviously but not being a push over." (Female, 16)*

*"Nice, funny, strict. Strict has to be there. Uh… understanding. He's gotta be intelligent. He's gotta know his material… because he needs to answer some questions." (Male, 17)*

*"He was really really strict but he got the work done and I understood everything which was a good thing. So I learned from him that strictness is necessary sometimes." (Female, 16)*

Youth who were involved in extracurricular sports also commented how getting to know a teacher outside of the classroom helped their relationships. An 18 year old female stated that it "strengthens it yeah because you know more about them. They're not just a teacher that you know at school every day."

## Experience with other school staff

Students not only have contact with their teachers at school, they also have relationships with their principal, vice principal, guidance counselor, and other school support staff. Positive relationships with these individuals can have a significant impact upon youth's engagement and enjoyment of school.

*"He understands. I find he's more open to a lot of things, and I know he's young too, which might help, we just grew up together, but I dunno, he's more relaxed, laid back." (Female, 17)*

*"She's nice and calm, she knows where she's at, you know, she's good. [She's] always available, you go knock on her door at anytime and if she's not there, you go to the office and they'll find her and go get her no problem, she's always there." (Male, 16)*

*"She's like really good. She's nice and she'll like, sometimes if you're having like a really bad, like you're going through a lot of troubles, she'll send you to the - like if you're getting bullied or some-thing, she'll send you to the office and you can talk to the Principal or Vice-Principal about what's going on and if there's anything like, they can take it further."(Female, 16)*

*"She knew exactly how I was feeling and how to help me with that, and I don't know, it's good, I liked it." (Male, 16)*

*"She'll like always say, 'hi' to me in the hallway and like ask me how I'm doing and all that, so she's really good...It makes me feel more comfortable in the school and stuff like that, knowing I have someone to go to talk to." (Female, 16)*

*"He'll like always ask me how I'm doing in the hallways but he does that to everyone, so he's, he's good... it just, well it still makes me feel comfortable in school. Like he's a, he's nice.... and like he can be like strict in situations that he needs to be strict in but he can still be like funny in a different way." (Female, 16)*

## Barriers to School

In the questionnaire, youth were asked about barriers to their education. Students replied:
- "Detentions for being late even if you were with another teacher (unless they excuse you)."
- "We don't have Advanced Placement courses or other advanced courses that could be very helpful to me."
- "Kids who are disrespectful."
- "Lack of funding for the Arts programs such as music/arts class. Because most money goes to sports programs."
- "School starts way too early. I would much rather go to school at 9am and end at 3:30pm instead of going in at 8am and ending at 2:25pm."
- "The bullying issues, not only students but some teachers."

During the qualitative interviews, youth also commented about some aspects of school needed to be changed to improve upon their experience at school. Some comments were directed to the technology in the school, while others concerned the school environment.

*"You can walk in to most of the bathrooms and either some things in there are broken, there's graffiti on the walls... Stuff like that."*
*(Male, 17)*

*"If you go out there and like, maybe half of them [computers] might work... and in the computer room, not even half of them work kind of thing. None of the disk drives, none of those work. We need new computers." (Male, 16)*

*"I think there should be more advanced classes. Like, you're still in advanced math, but that's not like your university math that you'll do, and then if you did that in grade twelve, then that's some-thing you'll know how to and you'll get stuff done faster." (Female, 18)*

*"The teachers don't have a clue how to use them [Smart Boards] so like, what I've been saying for a long time is that, "Teach teachers how to use the Smart Board and then give them one." Cause...you can do all this cool stuff on it...So if you teach teachers how to use it first...and then give them one. And we'll learn better." (Male, 16)*

*"If you're in a clique then you're stereotyped first of all, and then like people, they look at you and they just assume things about you right away. Like in school there's all different kinds of cliques and stuff like that and people don't get to know you. They just assume stuff about you and then they go and talk about you. And like, it's high school, so it's expected but it's still hard, like the people thinking you're really mean and stuff like that and they just don't know you." (Female, 16)*

*"Well, first of all there's bullying. And second of all, there's just … fights… galore…." (Male, 17)*

*"I got suspended for a day. And the part that sucked about it the most was that I had a perfect at-tendance until that day… I wanted to get perfect attendance cause at the end of the year if you get perfect attendance your name gets said and you get a prize. And I didn't get the perfect at-tendance and I started missing a lot of school and that… After I got suspended, after a while I missed a day and then another day and another day. You know like I didn't care anymore." (Male, 15)*

## Academic Versus Basic Courses

Most students who participated in the interviews were in academic courses. When asked why they chose to go in academic over basic courses, youth responded their decision was based largely on their marks; if they had the marks for academic they took academic courses. When further prompted why, despite their marks they would take academic courses students discussed the impact academic or basic courses have on university.

*"An academic graduation, you can get into more universities and colleges or whatever. With basic one you can do less, but you can still do enough."*
*(Male, 16)*

*"If you want to go anywhere in university, everybody wants academic. Basic you'd have to do an upgrade if you want to go to university."(Female, 18)*

*"I just think basic, you can't really get in, you, you graduate with basic status, so you wouldn't, like you would probably get into a university or a college but it'd still be like harder to get in I think. Something like that, I don't know, you just wouldn't really want to graduate with basic status." (Female, 16)*

*"With the whole, go get a trade ideal, like that's like the big thing here. Like 'oh I can just quit high school, go get my GED and then go get a trade.' Like everyone's so limited I find, like 'oh I'm just going to go to MineTech. I'm gonna get a job with the Mine.' But then they're gonna, they can't get a job anywhere else. Like that's it, if they shut down you're going to be out of a job." (Female, 17)*

*"For the most part, most of my friends are in basic and stuff. Just to talk about the basic thing, I find it sucks though, cause some kids are actually going to try really hard and just get clumped into basic, and then they're stuck with the students that don't care about it, who eventually just make them not to care, you know it's just like a clump." (Female, 17)*

*"I had the grades for it and well, I also do what the university do, so they don't do basic courses too so yeah, I try my best to keep up with that… I think the academic is faster than basic, I've never experienced basic before but, it's a lot slower then academic. So academic and advanced would still keep you going and if get good at something, you keep going so, I guess you don't let yourself down at all." (Female, 16)*

## Service Use

Students were also asked about their service use history. All students at Menihek have accessed health services (100%) and most have used educational support services (91.9%) at some point in their lives. Less than one quarter (22.8%) of students have had contact with corrections and 32.9% of students have accessed mental health services. About one fifth (21.5%) have accessed Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS). Cultural and religious services are the least likely to have been used, with only 6.7% of students having spoken to a cultural or spiritual advisor, leader or elder. When asked about participation in community programs, a large number of students identify sports as well as church, drama clubs, theatre, dance, LGBTQ (Pride meetings), youth groups, cadets, and Girl Guides.

An overall index indicating the number of services students have used in their lives was created and compared to overall levels of risk and resilience. Youth who are more at risk are more likely to use multiple services. There were also significant and positive interactions between total risk score and health service use, school service, mental health service and criminal justice service use. This means that students who are more likely to access these services are also more likely to have high overall risk scores. There were also positive interactions between the total resilience score and school service (i.e. extra supports at school) and mental health service use. This means that youth who use those services are more likely to demonstrate higher resilience scores than those who do not.

## Community

Students at Menihek have mixed feelings about their community. Only 2.7% of students feel their neighbourhood is very safe; 36.9% feel it is somewhat safe and 60.4% believe that it is not safe at all. When questioned about whether their neighbours would act if they saw a youth skipping school, 76.8% of students believe that neighbours would be unlikely to intervene and 23.2% of students

believed that they would intervene. When asked whether they believe that their neighbours would report a child or young person being abused, 87.1% of students thought this likely to occur. Students who believe that neighbours would report abuse are also less likely to consider their neighbourhood safe.

About four fifths (81.8%) of students report being treated fairly in their community and 59.8% believe that they know where to go in their community to get help. However, only 47% of the students feel that it is important to serve their community (Table 8). Despite this, 81.9% of students at Menihek report having volunteered their time at least once in the past year.

**Table 8. Youth opinions on their neighbourhood**

| | Does not describe me at all | Doesn't really describe me | Unsure | Sort of Describes me | Describes me a lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I think it is important to serve my community | 4% | 9.4% | 39.6% | 33.6% | 13.4% |
| I know where to get help in my community | 6.6% | 7.4% | 26.2% | 21.5% | 38.3% |
| I am treated fairly in my community | 0.8% | 6% | 11.4% | 31.5% | 50.3% |
| I enjoy my community's traditions | 13.4% | 8.8% | 22.1% | 28.9% | 26.8% |

As mentioned previously, students place great importance on recreational programs including sports and the arts. Limitations to participating in such programs include not having transportation (50.3%), parents telling the youth that they cannot participate (38.3%), not feeling comfortable participating (41.6%), not having enough money (32.9%), having too many responsibilities at home (34.9%), and being busy working at a paying job (36.2%).

## Conclusion

The staff and parents of Menihek are doing a wonderful job of supporting their youth. The 149 students sampled are well connected to their school and appreciate the efforts that are being made to make their education meaningful. The majority of students are engaged in learning, value education, and are avoiding serious problems, despite concerns about the safety of their communities. Furthermore, students at Menihek are accessing services when they are needed, in particular extra help offered by teachers. However, findings presented here do not necessarily mean that service providers are building youth's strengths as much as controlling crises and stopping problem behaviors (For more information in this regard, please refer to our report "Research Update: Results from Phase One" [www.resilienceresearch.org]).

The young people themselves show a high number of strengths, scoring slightly higher than youth who are known to be using a lot of services. In other words, Menihek students appear to be coping well, even though they face some challenges. Our results suggest that the support students get from their teachers

and friends contributes to them doing well, although the analysis reported here does not account for the role that parents and caregivers may also play in the lives of these students. This high level of coping Menihek students display may also be because they are connected to the services they need.

There is much in this brief report to suggest that as a school community, Menihek is giving its students what they need to grow up well. The research team looks forward to future opportunities to speak with these students and watch how they develop over time.

## Acknowledgments

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