

Appendix II: Stay-in-School Poster

Kids are inundated with powerful images on television, in print, and online, not to mention on the packaging of everything from cereal to shoes. There are posters hanging in every classroom, library, community centre, and health clinic. There are posters in every government office in the country. There are posters for everything (e.g., Don't Smoke, Fight Diabetes, Don't Drink and Drive, Say No to Drugs!, and Join the Canadian Forces!). There are motivational posters to inspire people to try harder, reach further, and go for their dreams. Many of these posters are stunningly beautiful and the text can be compelling, but people tend to see only what they already know and it is difficult for posters to make a personal and emotional connection.

The Stay-in-School poster in the tool kit is different. This poster places the emphasis where it belongs—on the student. It is a one-of-a-kind, customizable poster that can be personalized for each student, by each student. It reminds students of their commitment to their own educational path and celebrates the talent of the individual. These posters will be seen by the students who created them, their friends and families who care about them, and the teachers and other adults who are committed to supporting them on their educational journey. Here are some ways teachers can incorporate this into their classroom:

- Have a discussion about education and the benefits of staying in school.
- Have the students reflect on their personal reasons for staying in school.
- What challenges and barriers must First Nations students overcome in order to pursue their educational goals?
- Explore why staying in school is important in terms of employment, career flexibility, income, social stability, and options.
- Discuss ways that students can access programs and services to support their education.
- Brainstorm ways that family, school, and the wider community can help support students and help students define the specific kinds of support they need.
- Discuss the barriers and challenges that students may face at home and in the community. Brainstorm solutions.
- Display the posters in the classrooms or in the public areas of the school to remind students, teachers, visitors, parents, and families that every student is an individual person and each one has a dream, a story, and a personal journey.
- Encourage students to hang the poster in their school lockers or in a suitable place at home.
- Use the posters as part of a stay-in-school conference or in a community-building exercise.

- Share the personal messages on the posters with chief and council, as well as with local, provincial, and national governments.
- Invite into the classroom speakers who can share their personal education stories and discuss their feelings, insights, and perspectives on the importance of education. It is important that students hear directly from those who have been there and done it—speakers who can acknowledge the inevitable challenges and hardships of committing to a path of education and can, perhaps, share some strategies for success.
- The posters could also be displayed in the classroom throughout the school year. Each week/month, a new student can be displayed on the Stay-in-School poster with a few of the reasons why that child considers school to be important.
- Use the poster as a mechanism for a commitment that students can make to themselves, their school, and their family. Use the poster as a reminder that school, community, and family have also made a commitment to help the student stay in school and have pledged to support the student. Revisit the posters throughout the school year to recommit to the journey and help stay on task. Use the poster as a check-in when a student is struggling.