Promoting secondary school retention in Latin America and the Caribbean

Lessons from Mexico and Chile

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CAF DEVELOPMENT BANK OF LATIN AMERICA

Contents

Abbreviations

ABCs	Attendance, behavior, and course-based performance
ABE	*Aulas de Bien Estar* (Classrooms of Prosperity)
BARE	*Beca de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar* (School Retention Support Scholarship)
CCT	Conditional cash transfer
CORE	*Consejo Regional Metropolitano* (Regional Metropolitan Council)
CSO	Civil society organization
EWS	Early warning system
GDP	Gross domestic product
JUNAEB	*Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas* (National Board of School Assistance and Scholarships)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LPT	*Liceos para Todos* (High School for All)
MINEDUC	*Ministerio de Educación de Chile* (Ministry of Education of Chile)
NiNi	*Ni estudian, ni trabajan* (Youth who are not in education, employment or training)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PARE	*Programa de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar* (School Retention Support Program)
RCT	Randomized controlled trial
SEMS	*Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior* (Mexico Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education)
SENAME	*Servicio Nacional de Menores* (National Service for Minors)
SENDA	*Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol* (National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Consumption)
SEP	*Subvención Escolar Preferencial* (Preferential School Subsidy)
SEREMI	*Secretaría Regional Ministerial* (Regional Ministerial Secretariat)
SINAE	*Sistema Nacional de Asignación con Equidad* (National System for Equitable Assignment)
SPR	*Subvención Pro-Retención* (Retention Support Subsidy)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Foreword

In Latin America and the Caribbean, more students than ever are entering secondary school — but too many of them never complete this level and successfully graduate. While over 90 percent of children in the region now transition from primary to lower secondary school, only 59 percent complete upper secondary school (UNESCO, 2017; UIS, n.d.). In school, many students are often unsupported, do not learn, and do not see how their education will prepare them for the future. Outside of school, teen pregnancy and poverty continue to be significant hurdles. These obstacles, which together push and pull students out of school, have enormous implications: youth who do not complete secondary school earn lower incomes, face lower rates of employment, and are more likely to use drugs or be engaged in criminal activity. More broadly, these challenges mean that countries in the region struggle to build productive workforces with the skills necessary to generate economic growth in the 21st century.

Promoting secondary school retention in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lessons from Mexico and Chile explores the causes of dropout and investigates specific policies that work to keep at-risk youth in school. In particular, we try to understand the different reasons why young women and men drop out, and whether interventions are sensitive to those differences. Through a comprehensive review of existing evidence, expert consultations, and in-depth country case studies, we attempt to answer the following questions:

→ What are the main factors that contribute to secondary school dropout, and how do these differ by gender?

→ What education policies and programs in the region have worked to promote school retention?

→ How do contextual and institutional factors contribute to both successes and challenges in designing and implementing effective retention strategies?

Case studies of four promising initiatives in Mexico and Chile explore strategies to identify at-risk youth, support school leaders and teachers, and foster students' socioemotional skills. Based on these insights, we offer recommendations for decision-makers throughout the region to consider when designing and implementing strong and coherent school retention strategies. Incorporating a gender perspective when designing interventions, improving coordination between complementary school-related initiatives, and building strong early warning systems are some of the recommendations that emerged from our case studies in Chile and Mexico, which are applicable elsewhere in the region.

CAF, the Development Bank of Latin America, and Results for Development (R4D) are delighted to present the findings that emerge as a consequence of our close collaboration on this study. The study contributes to the strategic guidelines of the CAF 2017-2022 Education Agenda: to increase access to and completion of secondary education and to strengthen the quality and relevance of education, so every child and youth acquires the necessary skills for life and work in the 21st century.

This report builds on our joint expertise related to youth skills and employment and leverages CAF's regional leadership and R4D's deep experience conducting action-oriented research and analysis. It is our hope that these findings and recommendations guide and influence policymakers, researchers, and practitioners working to achieve universal secondary education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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Executive Summary

Most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have reached universal primary education and have made significant strides over the past 25 years in expanding access to secondary education. More than 90 percent of children (96 percent of boys and 94 percent of girls) now transition successfully from primary to lower secondary school with nearly 80 percent completing the first cycle of secondary education (UNESCO, 2017a). However, despite being mandatory in many countries in the region, the upper secondary education completion rate is only 59 percent and varies significantly by country as well as gender (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.). Young women continue to complete secondary school at higher rates than young men and the gap between these two groups widened between 1990 and 2010, from 6 to 9 percent (Bassi et al., 2013). The high level of secondary school dropout is concerning and has significant economic short- and long-term implications for the region. Students who drop out of school may not obtain the relevant skills to contribute productively to the economy, and are more likely to engage in crime and violence, substance abuse, and risky sexual activity that can pose threats to both their individual well-being and the economic growth in their countries (Adelman & Székely, 2016; Cunningham et al., 2008; Kattan & Székely, 2015).

This study explores lessons on reducing secondary school dropouts from Mexico and Chile and provides recommendations on how decision-makers in the region can counter this challenge. The analysis employs both primary and secondary research. It begins with a literature review to identify both endogenous and exogenous factors that contribute to dropout and shares evidence of different approaches that have been implemented as a response by education systems in the region. Four initiatives currently tackling dropout were then selected for case studies: the Construye T program and *El Movimiento Contra el Abandono Escolar, "Yo No Abandono"* (The Movement Against School Dropout, "I Do Not Drop Out") in Mexico, and a national targeting system and the Aquí Presente program in Chile. Through a document review, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with more than 75 stakeholders in Chile and Mexico, we analyze how contextual, methodological, and institutional factors contribute to both success and challenges in addressing dropout. Based on our analysis, this report provides lessons and recommendations to decision-makers and practitioners – including policymakers, development partners and implementers – working to reduce dropout in the region. These include an exploration of how country responses can take a gender-sensitive or gender-transformative approach.[1]

We summarize the key findings from Mexico and Chile below. More details on the programs studied and findings from these case studies can be found in the full report.

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1. **Gender-sensitive** approaches recognize the distinct realities youth face based on their gender but may not take actions to respond appropriately. **Gender-transformative** approaches go further by seeking to transform institutional practices and social or cultural norms in an effort to promote greater gender equity (Barker & Aguayo, 2012).

Mexico: *Construye T* **and** *Yo No Abandono*

Mexico has a near universal transition rate from primary to lower secondary school, and nearly 90 percent of students complete a lower secondary education.[2,3] High dropout rates in upper secondary school pose the most significant bottleneck to completing compulsory education in Mexico: 15 percent of young people drop out every year at this level with young men more likely to dropout than young women (17 percent versus 14 percent, respectively) (INEE, 2017). Over the last decade, several reforms have attempted to strengthen the compulsory education cycle, which includes upper secondary school since 2012, and culminated with the recent introduction of a new education model *Nuevo Modelo Educativo* [New Education Model] in 2017 that aims to disrupt outdated pedagogical practices and make education content more engaging and relevant.

Construye T, overseen by the *Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior* [Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education] (SEMS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), began as a risk prevention program in 2007 and has since undergone both process and impact evaluations that spurred it to alter its model to increase its effectiveness and relevance. *Construye T* has evolved significantly over the last decade and is now a national curricular program, implemented through the new education model, that trains school directors and teachers to develop students' socioemotional skills so that they can successfully overcome academic and personal challenges. At the time of this study, *Construye T* has reached more than 4,000 schools and aims to ultimately cover all public upper secondary schools.[4] Meanwhile, *Yo No Abandono* is a broad and flexible national strategy encouraging and supporting schools, especially school directors, to prevent and respond to dropout. Schools receive a set of manuals that provide guidance on 12 suggested actions for reducing dropout (including communicating with parents, tutoring, promoting better study habits, and improving student decision-making), and activities can be molded to fit the contexts of different states and school systems. The strategy is also overseen by SEMS, and reaches all public upper secondary schools.

Key Lessons from Mexico

Attitudes and behaviors toward dropout are evolving and there has been a shift in the way that the education system in Mexico perceives dropout. Previously perceived as risky behavior, dropout is now perceived as a symptom of more comprehensive change needed within secondary schools. Rather than focusing only on at-risk students or vulnerable youth, *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono* both take broader, more positive approaches. At the same time, scholarships and other financial support for low-income students remain an important complement to school-based solutions in order to address dropout because poverty remains a significant obstacle for students completing upper secondary school.[5]

Despite a strong policy narrative in Mexico regarding the importance of gender equity, an examination of the design and implementation of both initiatives reveal that neither intentionally considers gender. Similarly, education officials and school actors struggle to identify ways in which they could respond to the different needs of young women and men to tackle dropout. Cultural norms and traditional gender roles are key barriers, especially in rural communities.

Schools inconsistently implemented both initiatives, selecting certain activities and tools as they deem appropriate. This inconsistency could be due in part to overburdened school staff, inherent variation between school systems and limited coordination at the national level. Both *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono* started as large-scale initiatives. Neither program conducted rigorous pilots to test implementation and effectiveness of program activities, which has complicated their ability to scale up effectively.

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2. Both the transition rate to lower secondary and lower secondary completion rates have achieved near gender parity. In 2014, the transition rate from primary to lower secondary was 96 percent for girls and 97 percent for boys, while lower secondary completion was 86 percent and 85 percent, respectively (UNESCO, 2017a).

3. After completing lower secondary school, students must sit for a national entrance exam for upper secondary. While students do not actually fail or pass this exam and all students are guaranteed a place in a public school, individual school subsystems determine what scores they will admit (Ceneval, 2016).

4. There are more than 11,000 public upper secondary schools in Mexico, employing some 200,000 teachers and serving over four million students (INEE, 2017).

5. Across the region, poverty and extreme poverty interact with gender, and tend to affect women more than men (CEPAL, n.d.).

Findings show that state-level champions can improve the implementation and sustainability of initiatives by improving coordination and communication among government officials, generating buy-in from subsystem representatives,[6] and ensuring resources and attention are sufficiently directed toward appropriate activities. School-level champions can help build local ownership over these initiatives, which can stimulate more intensive implementation and create a greater likelihood of sustainability. These champions can be either self-appointed or intentionally selected by the program. Thus, the presence of effective and engaged champions is a key ingredient of success.

Lastly, engaging parents [7] remains an ongoing challenge for school actors in reducing dropout. Often, it is not explicit who holds the primary responsibility for reaching out to parents. Teachers are often too busy to do this and, while guidance counselors may do this in some small schools, this can be challenging in very large schools with thousands of families supported by only one or two guidance counselors.

Chile: JUNAEB's targeting system and Aquí Presente

Chile has shown remarkable progress in improving access and completion rates at the secondary education level for all students. Between 1990 and 2013, the proportion of youths between the ages of 20 and 24 who completed secondary school increased from 54 to 85 percent (JUNAEB, 2015). Importantly, the lowest-income groups experienced the greatest gains in enrollment over this period; however, economically and socially vulnerable youth still experience much higher rates of school repetition and early exit. The Chilean government has thus executed policies and programs to expand resources to the most vulnerable schools and students. For example, equity-oriented initiatives provide a high amount of funding to schools based on the enrollment of vulnerable students. Similar to Mexico, female students in Chile are more likely to complete secondary education than males (88 versus 82 percent, respectively) (CEN, 2014; JUNAEB, 2014).

The national early warning targeting system is implemented by the *Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas* [National Board of School Assistance and Scholarships] (*JUNAEB*), a national body that administers a wide variety of scholarships and school assistance programs. JUNAEB uses an equity-based index, which measures student and school vulnerability to assign scholarships and other interventions. It assigns students into three levels of vulnerability, with a suite of programs and interventions accordingly targeted, including a scholarship and a psychosocial support program that both aim to improve retention.

In contrast, *Aquí Presente* is a sub-national program that focuses on the detection and prevention of dropout, improving the school environment and collaborating with community networks. *Aquí Presente* was initially a pilot program in 52 schools in the Santiago metropolitan region between 2015 and 2016. A pair of psychosocial professionals – one psychologist, and one professional with a background in social work, teaching, or sociology – was assigned to each school to implement the program full-time. A 2015 evaluation of *Aquí Presente* found some positive impact, and found that targeted students increased their attendance by an average of 10 percent; however, this evaluation had notable limitations. In 2017, the program was folded into *Aulas de Bien Estar* (ABE), a multi-sectoral initiative for management and decision-making designed to help municipalities and schools choose among existing interventions to implement the programs that best fit their needs. Under this model, however, schools that choose to implement *Aquí Presente* do not receive additional resources to do so.

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6. Subsystems are administrative clusters or chains of public schools that can be financed by the federal government, state governments, or public, autonomous universities. Subsystems have historically had significant independence in how they manage individual schools. Directors of subsystems play a key role within the education system, and each subsystem may have its own curriculum and governing structure.

7. Throughout this report, we use the term "parents" to broadly encompass the role of primary caregiver. We recognize that other members of a student's household, such as grandparents, may play this critical role.

Key Lessons from Chile

Similar to Mexico, dropout in Chile is increasingly seen as a symptom of broader systemic challenges and interventions increase their focus on improving school environments and tackling multiple dropout factors. Program staff in both JUNAEB and *Aquí Presente* also recognized that young women and men leave school early for different reasons and emphasized the importance of gender sensitivity in reducing dropout. However, neither program intentionally considers gender in its design, implementation, or evaluation.

Our consultations also revealed that there is insufficient communication at a national level between various departments at the Ministry of Education, as well as between ministries, which has resulted in the implementation of separate programs that provide similar psychosocial support to students to reduce dropout. This is coupled with a multitude of actors and programs that intervene in schools, which overburden school administrators who do not have the human or financial resources to navigate and implement all of them effectively.

Interestingly, the case studies highlight the distinct strategies used by different early warning systems to target at-risk students. *Aquí Presente* and JUNAEB use different variables and data sources, and their distinct approaches have important implications for cost, response rates, and scalability. *Aquí Presente* can quickly respond to student needs: more than just identifying when a student is at risk, it can understand why, and develop a personalized response. In contrast, JUNAEB is unable to quickly respond to changing student circumstances, though it is better positioned at a national scale to identify students who are at risk of dropout years in advance and assign resources and interventions to mitigate their risk accordingly.

Lastly, in Chile's current education governance structure where municipalities operate schools with significant autonomy from the national government, the "outsider" status of *Aquí Presente*'s psychosocial professionals sparked initial distrust among teachers and staff.[8] Eventually, however, this external perspective allowed them to cause disruptive change and gave them more latitude to speak and act freely than other school actors. The effectiveness of *Aquí Presente* was also seen as attributable to the full-time nature of these professionals, whose sole task was to reduce dropout and improve school conditions. With the 2017 transition of *Aquí Presente* to *ABE*, it remains to be seen whether municipalities and schools will use existing resources to hire similarly dedicated staff.

Recommendations

Reflecting on common successes and challenges in these two countries, we offer recommendations for decision-makers in the region to consider when designing, implementing, evaluating, financing or otherwise supporting an initiative to improve retention in secondary schools or broadly transform secondary education. Our study has highlighted a significant deficit in the attention that dropout-reduction programs pay to gender. Therefore, we highlight ways to take a gender-sensitive or gender-transformative approach throughout our discussion.

Case studies from Mexico and Chile also highlight different approaches to scaling. While the case studies did not crystalize around a cohesive, recommendable path toward scaling, they did demonstrate the importance of a set of enabling factors: high-level partnerships to align and coordinate initiatives, systems for collecting student and program data and triggering an appropriate response, sufficient financing and resources to support school-level implementation, and school and classroom practices that support the integration of new program activities. Finally, we note tension between the roles of central government and the autonomy of local school leaders. While we suggest ways to strengthen both, the relevance of and ability to apply these recommendations will depend on a country's education governance structures and the balance of power between central and local authorities.

Our recommendations fall under five topics: the quality of learning environments, inclusive and participatory approaches, data and targeting, coordination and investing in school capacity.

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8. The 2015-2016 Aquí Presente model placed employees of the Ministry of Education in participating schools. Some teachers and staff initially feared that these individuals would serve to supervise the school on behalf of the Ministry of Education, monitor school performance, or file complaints against the school.

1. Quality of learning environments

→ **Improve the school environment to promote a sense of belonging.** Schools and classrooms are the center of both the dropout problem and its solution. Dropout-reduction efforts should focus on making schools more inclusive of and responsive to students' diverse needs, which requires built-in identification of these needs and flexibility in how to respond. A few potential strategies for improving the school environment include developing school improvement plans, providing sensitization training to teachers (including around gender), ensuring at-risk students receive individualized attention, and grouping together students who face similar challenges and providing them with targeted support.

→ **Improve the relevance of curriculum and quality of pedagogy to increase the attractiveness of education over labor market entry.** In the long-term, curricula and pedagogy can be strengthened and made more relevant to youth (e.g., by considering student interests and labor market needs), and teachers must be supported to see that addressing dropout and improving learning go hand in hand and are both central to their job. In the short-term, remedial education or tutoring opportunities should be provided for students who arrive to secondary school without foundational skills in place to succeed at this level. One way that education systems are beginning to improve relevance and quality is by incorporating socioemotional learning into some aspect of secondary education which begins to address a worrisome mismatch between what students learn in school and the socioemotional skills that are sought by employers. Socioemotional learning can also help youth to overcome challenges they face inside and outside of school.

2. Inclusive and participatory approaches

→ **Incorporate a gender perspective into the design of dropout reduction initiatives to respond to the distinct needs of young women and men.** Frequently, initiatives incorporate gender only through data disaggregation and attention to pregnancy or parenting. A gender-sensitive approach must consider and question how and where gender can influence the participation of different actors and program effects. Strategies for incorporating this approach include conducting gender impact assessments to build local evidence on why different groups drop out and help schools to identify concrete ways to respond and adapting gender-sensitive evaluation frameworks.

→ **Enhance parent and family engagement in ways that are appropriate for youth at the secondary level**. Effectively engaging parents and families in students' learning in secondary education is critical, but faces challenges unique to this level of schooling. It is far less common in LAC for parents to have completed secondary education, which can affect their attitudes and values toward the benefits of school at this age. Families may also have different expectations for young men versus young women. Programs to reduce dropout could consider different approaches for engaging parents and families including a mix of general, more preventive activities (e.g., annual meetings between teachers and parents) as well as targeted responses (e.g. text messages or home visits) for families with lower levels of engagement. Engaging parents can take place at school, at home and in the broader community.

3. Data and targeting

→ **National and local early warning systems should form a foundation for dropout response to identify risks and target interventions.** Early warning systems should include identification and response components, since both elements are vital to ensuring that the right students receive the necessary support to stay in school. Identification should use available secondary data (e.g., attendance, behavior, and course-based performance), while responses should include outreach to the student and their families, personalized approaches and long-term follow-up. Effective systems should also operate at both the national and local levels. At the national level, they serve to guide programming and resources to regions and schools at highest risk. At the local level, they can direct an individualized response to at-risk students and can similarly direct program engagement and resource use. School-level actors may also be better placed to detect gender-specific needs or risk factors.

→ **Strengthen data on implementation, effects and costs in order to identify and spread best practices and improve implementation with scale.** Dropout-reduction programs need rigorous, timely and reliable sex-disaggregated data on how activities are implemented, their effects and what they cost to improve their models and effectively scale. Appropriate monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies should thus be integrated into program models from the design phase and should include developing an evidence-based gender-sensitive theory of change, collecting and assessing process data, identifying and tracking appropriate indicators, and collecting cost and cost-effectiveness data.

4. Coordination

→ **Strengthen coordination between different, yet complementary, initiatives at national and state levels.** Dropout is affected by diverse and interconnected factors. Strategies that work in isolation may see limited impact. Formal communication and coordination among initiatives that directly and indirectly work to reduce dropout rates must be improved. There is a need to recognize the shared objectives of what may be considered distinct initiatives or teams and find ways to complement and amplify one another, in order to create a more unified policy narrative and provide consistent guidance to school actors. Once aligned at the national level, initiatives should work closely with and support state or regional education officials to facilitate local implementation. State-level champions can help to drive programs forward, generate buy-in across different departments or institutions and provide more contextually-relevant support to schools.

5. Investment in school capacity

→ **Provide appropriate resources and guidance to support school decision-making and reduce over-intervention at the school level.** Within crowded education landscapes, schools are commonly the target of dozens of interventions seeking to effect change, which can lead to duplication of effort, an inefficient use of resources and overburdening of school actors to coordinate activities. While better coordination among these initiatives at national and regional levels can help, these challenges could also be alleviated by ensuring schools understand both their needs and potential solutions, have autonomy to decide how to best respond and receive ongoing resources and support to execute selected interventions effectively. Interventions may involve establishing a single school-wide diagnostic tool to build local evidence around which students drop out and why, building coordination into new interventions to align with existing efforts, offering schools a menu of different strategies and tools they can implement based on their needs and providing ongoing support to school actors to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

→ **Invest in dedicated human capital at the school level to relieve burden on staff and achieve substantial, long-term reductions in dropout.** School actors have the greatest proximity to students and can identify, support, and monitor those at risk of dropping out in ways that are contextually relevant. However, these activities often require substantial time and effort. Additional investment in human capital – whether new or existing personnel – is needed to achieve long-term impact and effectively leverage program trainings, tools and additional inputs. Importantly, initiatives should be careful to select both men and women to champion and implement activities, since these individuals may also serve as role models or mentors for students.

Dropout is a challenge with serious implications for youth, their families and societies across Latin America and the Caribbean and one that will require solutions at scale as greater numbers of students gain access to and progress through lower secondary education. We hope that these recommendations are useful for decision-makers in designing and implementing strategies that contribute to the achievement of universal secondary education.

01

01
Introduction

The next decade presents a significant opportunity for growth in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). With nearly half of the region's population under the age of 25, a growing workforce relative to the dependent population has the potential to create a demographic dividend and lead to elevated economic productivity in the region before the growing dependency ratio flattens out (Sucre, 2016; CAF, 2016).[9] However, this depends on youth acquiring the skills necessary to enter the workforce and contribute productively to their communities and the broader economy. Consequently, Latin America's low secondary completion rate presents a substantial challenge with only 59 percent of the students completing upper secondary school in 2015 (Kattan & Székely, 2015; UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.).

Much progress has been made in LAC over the last 20 years in expanding access to secondary education, with gross enrollment rates in upper secondary increasing from 68 percent in the mid 1990s to 79 percent in 2015 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.). Enrollment rates have consistently been higher for young women.[10] Secondary completion rates have also improved over this period by substantial amounts in many cases (Figure 1). Young women continue to complete secondary school at higher rates than young men. The gap between these two groups widened between 1990 and 2010, from 6 to 9 percent (Bassi et al., 2013). These changes have been driven primarily by improved expected returns to education, increased public education spending, and an increase in primary enrollment and transition rates in lower secondary school (Bassi et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2014). Equity in outcomes along income and geographic lines has also improved. Nevertheless, nearly half of all students in LAC still do not complete the full cycle of secondary school.

9. The region's demographic window of opportunity, or period in which the dependency ratio is decreasing, will begin to close around 2027. Chile's dependency ratio has flattened out and is expected to begin growing again in 2018. Brazil's window will likely begin to close around 2025, whereas those of Mexico and Honduras are predicted to last until 2033 and 2044, respectively (CAF, 2016).

10. In 1997, gross enrollment rates (GER) in upper secondary school were 68 percent for women and 60 percent for men. In 2015, the GER was 83 percent for women and 75 percent for men (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.)

FIGURE 1— Secondary completion rates in LAC, early 1990s and late 2000s[a]
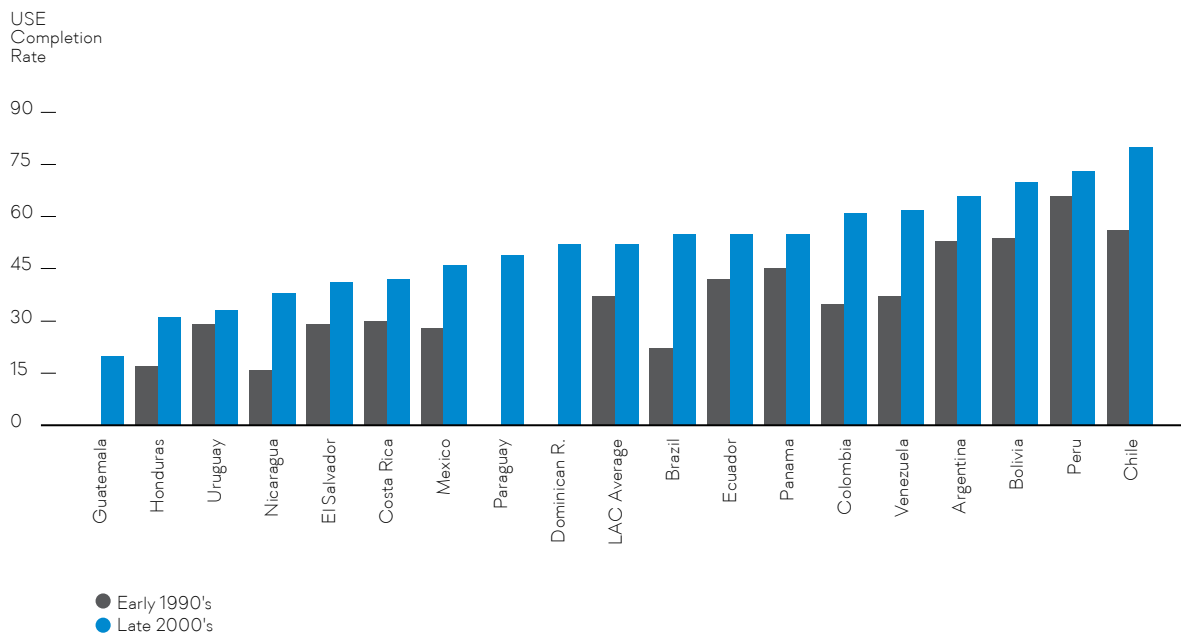
a/ Data from the 1990s is unavailable for Guatemala, Paraguay, and the Dominican Republic.

Source: Adapted from Bassi et al. (2013)

High levels of dropout have significant short- and long-term consequences for a country's productivity and for the economic wellbeing of individuals affected. Students who drop out of school to enter the workforce generally have fewer skills and are more likely to enter the informal economy than those who complete secondary education (Adelman & Székely, 2016). Those who work in the informal sector – disproportionately women – do not pay taxes, have diminished access to social safety nets and earn lower wages throughout their lifetime (Cruces et al., 2012; ILO, 2016). Early school leavers also spend more time unemployed (Adelman & Székely, 2016). Increased levels of unemployment among dropouts is caused, at least in part, by a lack of transferrable skills and reduced ability to adapt to changes in labor market demands. Additionally, socioemotional skills, such as planning, organizational, and decision-making skills, may not be fully developed in youth who leave school before completing the full cycle of secondary education (Kattan & Székely, 2015).

In addition to producing unfavorable economic outcomes, school dropout correlates with other adverse behaviors including increased likelihood of engaging in crime and violence, substance abuse and risky sexual activity (Cunningham et al., 2008). Relatedly, youth who drop out are far more likely to be out of school and out of work. These youths are known as those that *ni estudian, ni trabajan* [neither study nor work] or *NiNi*. Throughout the region, one in five youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are *NiNi*, a rate that has changed little in recent years. This amounts to roughly 19 million youth. Despite higher secondary school graduation rates, young women are historically twice as likely to fall into this group. This is primarily due to very low participation in the workforce, as only half of women participate in the labor market compared to three-quarters of men (ILO, 2016). Importantly however, 70 percent of all female *NiNis* in LAC are classified as such even though they spend significant time on unpaid care work, such as running a household and taking care of a family, that nevertheless contribute to the economy (OECD, 2017d). Despite a significant *NiNi* gender gap, this disparity is declining: more than one-third of women were considered *NiNis* in the early 1990s, while this fell to one in four by 2015. In comparison, the share of young men who are considered *NiNis* has hovered around 11 percent and even increased slightly over the last 20 years (CAF, 2016).

Dropout is rarely the result of a singular event; rather, it is more often a cumulative effect of several factors throughout a student's personal life and schooling. Many students who drop out therefore already arrive to secondary school on a path to early exit. As students enter adolescence, they are also faced with new challenges and difficult life choices within and outside of school that they need the skills to navigate. Effective dropout-prevention interventions delivered at the secondary level can help motivate students to remain in school, reduce some of the gaps that appear earlier in schooling or home life, and give students resources to address the challenges and changes that arise during and after their education.

Young women and men encounter different obstacles that can hamper their ability to complete a secondary education, and dropping out can impact these groups in different ways. Too often decision-makers do not consider this perspective and instead implement policies or programs that take a gender-neutral approach, assuming interventions will affect all youth equally when, in fact, they may unintentionally benefit one group over the other in ways that further compound gender gaps (OECD, 2017c). Throughout this report, we consider how dropout and gender intersect and explore, to the extent possible, how strategies can take a gender-sensitive or gender-transformative approach to reducing dropout.[11]

This study seeks to answer five central questions:

1. What are the main factors that contribute to dropout at the secondary level in LAC, and how do these differ by gender?

2. What education policies and programs in the region have worked to reduce dropout?

3. What are the main challenges to designing and implementing effective education policies and programs to reduce dropout? What are examples of success?

4. How do education policies and programs consider gender in their design and implementation, and how can a gender-transformative approach be more fully integrated?

5. What lessons do these experiences offer that can be useful for other policymakers in the region?

We begin with an explanation of our methodology in Section 2. In Section 3, the report begins to answer the above questions through a literature review that focuses on identifying factors that contribute to dropout within secondary schools in LAC and examine how they differ by gender. Section 3 also includes a short overview of existing evidence of approaches in reducing dropout, and we identify examples of successful interventions in the region. Sections 4 and 5 present four case studies on specific initiatives in Mexico and Chile to analyze how contextual, methodological, and institutional factors contribute to both success and challenges in addressing dropout. Lastly, Section 6 presents a discussion of recommendations for decision-makers in the region to consider in the design and implementation of dropout-reduction strategies within their countries.

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11. **Gender-sensitive** approaches recognize the distinct realities youth face based on their gender but may not take actions to respond appropriately. **Gender-transformative** approaches go further by seeking to transform institutional practices and social or cultural norms in an effort to promote greater gender equity (Barker & Aguayo, 2012).

02
Methodology

Identification of Dropout Factors and Case Study Selection

This study used a mix of primary and secondary research methods. We first conducted a review of Spanish and English language literature from the region from the last decade to identify factors leading to dropout.[12] The literature review formed a framework for understanding how both push and pull factors can increase the likelihood of dropout.

While much has been written about solutions for reducing dropouts that target exogenous factors, current literature focuses to a lesser extent on the role of policies and interventions that work within the school system to improve student retention. An important exogenous factor to consider is the role of cash transfer programs and other demand-side interventions (Saavedra & Garcia, 2012; Fiszbein et al., 2009). We therefore identified initiatives, policies and programs implemented in formal secondary schools since the mid-1990s that have explicitly sought to prevent dropout or otherwise target principal dropout-related factors identified in the literature review.[13] This exercise identified 49 programs and policies in 12 countries implemented by national ministries of education, state- or city-level governments, non-governmental organizations and public-private partnerships (see Annex 1 for full list). Using rapid analysis, we compared initiatives according to various components including approach (e.g. information campaigns, tutoring, early warning systems), reach, and evidence of effectiveness. Following the mapping, we selected four initiatives to study in-depth: the *Construye T* program and *El Movimiento Contra el Abandono Escolar, "Yo No Abandono"* [The Movement Against School Dropout, "I Do Not Drop Out"] in Mexico, and a national targeting system and the *Aquí Presente* program in Chile (Box 1).

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12. Literature was identified by searching publications and related background reports by key research institutions in this region and topic, such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and UNESCO. This was supplemented with targeted Internet searches using relevant terms like "secondary school", "completion", "retention" and "dropout" in both English and Spanish.

13. Initiatives were primarily identified through literature review, the Center for Education Innovations program database (www.educationinnovations.org/programs), the Graduate XXI map of innovations (http://www.graduatexxi.org/en/mapa-de-innovaciones-educativas/), and supplemented by targeted country searches.

BOX 1— Selection of Initiatives in Mexico and Chile

In recent decades, Mexico and Chile have made significant progress toward expanding access to secondary education and reducing dropout. Both countries remain at different stages regarding enrollment and completion levels, with Chile further along than Mexico. Still, their relative experience in this space can offer important lessons to other countries in the region around what does and does not work.

In Mexico, *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono* both focus on public upper secondary schools nationwide and work to build school capacity to reduce dropouts. *Construye T* seeks to strengthen students' socioemotional skills, which is an area of growing interest in the field of secondary education and youth skills development and one that is tied to many individual student factors that affect dropouts. Meanwhile, *Yo No Abandono* presents a flexible, low-touch strategy for equipping schools with tools and methods for preventing dropout.

Two early warning systems (EWS) were selected for study in Chile. Despite a lack of rigorous evaluations of these models, EWS are an invaluable component of a dropout prevention system (Almeida et al., 2015). Analyzing two different EWS approaches in Chile allows for in-depth comparison of a traditional, national system (JUNAEB's targeting system) used to target students as a basis for other dropout prevention programs, as well as a newer, innovative sub-national system (*Aquí Presente*) that goes beyond tracking key indicators and intervenes directly with schools and families, via psychologists or social workers, to prevent dropout.

In selecting these initiatives, efforts were made to include a diversity of approaches, geographic balance, a mix of dropout factors being addressed, and some demonstrated evidence of positive impact on dropout rates. However, we omitted programs which had been extensively evaluated in order to produce case studies that add considerably to the global knowledge base. We have therefore included some initiatives that do not yet have evidence of impact but whose promising models warrant further investigation.[14]

Regional and In-Country Data Collection

Interviews were first conducted with 10 regional education experts to validate case selection, contextualize the selected programs to experiences in the region, identify key themes for investigation, and explore principles of effective national strategies for dropout reduction.

Next, data collection in Mexico and Chile commenced in collaboration with in-country partners[15] and consisted of two primary activities: document review and in-depth interviews including focus group discussions with actors at multiple levels of the education system (Annex). We reviewed relevant literature on education systems, policies, and trends in secondary enrollment and achievement pertaining to each country. Policy documents for each of the four selected programs were also reviewed in detail. Interview and focus group discussion protocols addressed local context, program design, implementation and lessons learned. In Mexico, data collection included more than 45 participants, including consultations with education representatives from two states – Estado de México [State of Mexico] and Jalisco – to compare experiences across

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14. Initiatives were primarily identified through literature review, the Center for Education Innovations program database (www.educationinnovations.org/programs), the Graduate XXI map of innovations (http://www.graduatexxi.org/en/mapa-de-innovaciones-educativas/), and supplemented by targeted country searches.

15. Ricardo Vernon, PhD, and Estela Rivero, PhD, with Investigación en Salud y Demografía (INSAD) in Mexico and Eduardo Candia and Daniela Barrera (independent consultants) in Chile.

different geographies, local economies, and education contexts, among other differences. Data collection in Chile included approximately 30 participants at the national level and within Santiago. Following data collection, we reviewed all interview notes and transcripts and systematically organized information by stakeholder type, program, and key themes by country. The key themes include:

→ Context and factors leading to dropout
→ Program origin and evolution
→ Program structure, governance and financing
→ Program activities and how these may vary
→ Program coverage and scale-up
→ Monitoring and evaluation, and program results
→ Gender

Finally, we synthesized data across these themes to identify areas of convergence and divergence and highlight successes, challenges, and other relevant lessons by country. Findings from both Mexico and Chile informed the development of policy recommendations for the region.

Limitations

Given the finite resources and focused scope of this study, there are important limitations to the study's findings. Firstly, the purpose of this study was to analyze the design and implementation of promising initiatives to reduce dropout within secondary schools, rather than to assess impact. Our intent is to share lessons and experiences from Mexico and Chile. Therefore, sampling of interview and focus group participants was not a random process. Our main purpose was to identify key stakeholders and understand their perceptions and experiences with the programs. We included schools in our sample with the goal of understanding the breadth of experiences under each selected program, but the schools were also subject to availability and approval by program leadership and education ministries.

Secondly, this study limits its scope to initiatives implemented in formal secondary schools. This focus thus excludes interventions such as early childhood education, which has a well-demonstrated effect on reducing school dropout but takes place outside of secondary education. Similarly, the study focuses only on interventions operating within the education system and excludes initiatives such as conditional cash transfers or community health clinics, which may directly or indirectly result in a reduction of secondary school dropout. Finally, programs that seek to reintroduce students who have already left the formal school system were likewise not considered.

Thirdly, Chile and Mexico are both large, upper-middle-income countries that have made notable progress in reducing dropout in lower secondary school and, to some extent, upper secondary school. Programs implemented in each country are situated in contexts that are very dissimilar from small Caribbean or Central American countries, which face continued challenges in ensuring access before focusing on retention. However, these lessons may be applicable when such countries shift greater attention toward secondary completion. Currently, lessons may resonate more with countries making similar progress to Chile and Mexico, such as those in South America.

Finally, several of the initiatives selected for in-depth review are currently undergoing significant revision and transformation. These changes are incorporated in the study as much as possible; however, their evolution is ongoing and difficult to capture comprehensively.

03
Review of the literature

Despite the inspiring progress that has been made across the region, only 59 percent of youth complete an upper secondary education (UNESCO, 2017a), falling short of the average (84 percent) across the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Kattan & Székely, 2015). There is also significant variation within the region. Chile's upper secondary completion rate in 2014 is on par with the OECD average at 84 percent. Other countries lag much further behind: 63 percent in Brazil, 40 percent in Honduras, and only 35 percent in El Salvador graduate from upper secondary school (UNESCO, 2017a).

Across LAC, the timing of dropouts has shifted toward later in the education cycle as more students enroll and stay in school longer. Between 2000 and 2010, dropout rates in lower secondary school decreased and increased in upper secondary school (Kattan & Székely, 2015). However, this timing also differs from country to country. Kattan & Székely analyzed regional dropout trends and grouped countries according to three significant moments of dropout: while a relatively larger share of dropouts occurs during lower secondary in Honduras, Peru, and Guatemala, dropouts during the transition from lower to upper secondary school are slightly more common in Bolivia, El Salvador, and Venezuela. Countries with higher upper secondary enrollment have the largest share of dropouts occurring in at this level (e.g., Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil) (Kattan & Székely, 2015).

A student's decision to continue or abandon his or her education is driven by various factors that may push or pull students out of school. Some of these factors are endogenous to the education system, such as the perceived relevance of the curricula or hostility within the school environment. Others, like poverty and inequality, are exogenous to the education system, yet can still impact an individual's ability to benefit from his or her schooling experience. These factors are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, closely influence one another. Students who leave school early often experience interrelated economic, scholastic and personal challenges (Cunningham et al., 2008).

Understanding both of these endogenous and exogenous factors leading to dropout is key to designing and implementing effective dropout-reduction initiatives that respond to student needs. Drawing particularly from the work of Almeida et al. (2015), Figure 2 presents some of the factors most prominent in LAC, as well as several types of interventions that have been implemented to address these challenges. While these interventions often seek to address several challenges simultaneously, Figure 2 matches interventions with a single main factor they may target.

FIGURE 2— Factors contributing to dropout in LAC and illustrative interventions.

Endogenous factors

Limited student support
Bullying and mistreatment, lack of connectedness, difficulty adjusting to secondary school, etc.

Poor school quality/capacity
School structure/organization, school environment, poor teacher quality, insufficient capacity to absorb more students, etc.

Weak education relevance
Disconnect between curricula and world of work, student perceptions of relevance, language of instruction/materials, etc.

Individual student factors
Lack of interest, behaviors/attitudes, poor, attendance, low academic achievement, grade repetition, overage enrollment, etc.

Interventions

Mentoring and counseling, transition support

School-based management, compulsory schooling, full-time or extended schooling, teacher training/ incentives, vouchers, infrastructure improvements

Bilingual education and culturally-adapted materials, information campaigns, online/virtual education, flexible or accelerated learning, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) track, college/career readiness programs

Early warning systems, non-material awards, tutoring, cognitive-behavioral therapy/ socioemotional learning, extracurricular activities

Exogenous factors

Teen pregnancy/parenting

Poverty and economic pressures
"Pull factor" of employment

General risk factors
Race/ethnicity, drug use, crime/violence, household/family situation, parental education, family engagement in education, geography

Sexual health education, family planning centers, and childcare

Conditional cash transfers, scholarships

Drug and violence prevention, transportation support

Note: The factors and interventions included in this figure are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

These factors differ in their degree of causality: some may directly lead to dropout (e.g. pregnancy), some create adverse conditions that impede students' ability to succeed (e.g. limited student support), and others are predictive indicators (e.g. poor attendance and/ or achievement). Importantly, gender is conceptualized as a crosscutting issue that interacts considerably with each endogenous and exogenous factor. Young men are consistently more likely than women to leave school prematurely. School completion among young women is nine percentage points greater than among young men (Bassi et al., 2013; SEP, 2012). Each dropout factor affects young men differently than young women, and examples of the differential effects are included in the descriptions of dropout factors below.

The following review of literature provides an overview of these different factors and existing evidence regarding the effectiveness of some interventions at reducing dropout. These overviews aim to summarize existing evidence and to contextualize the case studies included later in this report. These overviews do not compare the effects and effect sizes of a comprehensive list of interventions. As noted, some of the interventions have been rigorously evaluated and have demonstrated positive or mixed results, while others have been the subjects of less-rigorous evaluations that are suggestive but not conclusive.

Endogenous Dropout Factors and Potential Solutions

While much of the existing literature on enrollment and retention in LAC has historically focused on exogenous factors that prevent students from completing their education, several endogenous factors can also pose significant threats. However, due to limited data specific to LAC, it can be challenging to assess the magnitude of specific endogenous challenges on students' decisions to drop out. Evidence on the impact of factors within school systems on dropout is presented below along with a sample of interventions aimed at overcoming these challenges.

Limited student support: Students who feel unsupported or unsafe in schools are less likely to remain in school until graduation. Students can feel demoralized through mistreatment by teachers or bullying by peers (Cunningham et al., 2008). Students, particularly girls, may be exposed to gender-based violence from teachers or other students, which can affect school performance and enrollment decisions (Morrison et al., 2004). In one survey of individuals between the ages of 15 and 55 in 10 major cities in LAC, those who had dropped out of school were asked to provide reasons for why they had done so. The percentage of male respondents who gave poor treatment or bullying as the primary reason for dropping out doubled from 16 percent for the older cohort to 32 percent for the younger cohort (CAF, 2016). A lack of mentorship, guidance and sense of connectedness can also be a key contributing factor. When students feel connected to their school – often through an adult who demonstrates interest in and commitment to their wellbeing and success – students are less likely to repeat classes and drop out, and are also less likely to engage in violence, drug use and risky sexual activity (Cunningham et al., 2008; SEP, 2012). A strong sense of belonging to one's school has also been linked to stronger performance on standardized tests (Chaia et al., 2017).

The literature also emphasizes that a student's decision to drop out at the secondary level is not one that occurs at an isolated moment in time. Rather, it is often the culmination of a gradual process of social and academic exclusion, often beginning at the primary school level (Oviedo et al., 2010). Moreover, the transition from primary to secondary school – which can be associated with major changes for students such as increased academic rigor, different school culture, further distances, and new teachers – is a period associated with high risk of dropout (Román, 2013). This suggests that schools' and teachers' ability to support students and manage transitions from primary to lower secondary or from lower to upper secondary is an important factor in determining the likelihood of dropout.

Interventions that address limited student support

Mentoring and Counseling: Although evaluations of programs in LAC that provide students with mentorship and individualized support are scarce, there are many examples of mentorship programs in the United States that have successfully lowered dropout. Many of the successful programs are holistic in nature, in that the mentor assigned to the at-risk student monitors attendance and academic performance, provides academic support, performs outreach to families or helps students develop academic or graduation plans. While the evaluated programs have many differences in implementation, they share the characteristics of individualized attention and follow-through over time. Rumberger et al. (2017) identify eight rigorous studies of programs providing intensive, individualized support to students in the United States, half of which demonstrate strong, positive effects.

Poor school quality and capacity: School quality can be influenced by teacher quality, school management, curriculum, resources, teacher-student ratios and other factors. A low-quality education system reduces the value of each additional year of schooling, which makes continued education a less attractive option (Adelman & Székely, 2016). Low teacher quality, which may result from weak teacher training, outdated pedagogy or limited subject area expertise, can contribute to a lack of interest and confidence in the school system among youth (Sucre, 2016).

Limited school capacity also influences dropout rates. In most LAC countries, lower secondary enrollment has increased substantially since 1990 and includes lower-income populations. This movement has placed greater pressure on education systems to absorb large groups of marginalized students (Kattan & Székely, 2015). An increasing share of low-income youth at the upper secondary level has been linked to upper secondary dropout across the region, as students from more disadvantaged backgrounds may need extra support to ensure they do not drop out (Kattan & Székely, 2015).

While access to secondary school is no longer a primary reason for low school retention in LAC, it nonetheless remains a factor. Between 2 and 8 percent of students in Central America who left school early did so because of limited access (Adelman & Székely, 2016).

Interventions that Address Poor School Quality and Capacity

School-Based Management Programs: School-based management reforms grant greater decision-making power over budgets, staff and other resources to school directors, parents and other local stakeholders. This can promote local autonomy and accountability and has been shown to contribute to small learning gains and reductions in dropout. Still, relatively few evaluations of these interventions exist. Experiences in Mexico and El Salvador have demonstrated small but positive effects (Adelman & Székely, 2016; Skoufias & Shapiro, 2006).

Full-Time or Extended School Days: Extending the school day involves adding additional hours to some or all weekdays and, in the case of transitions to full-time schooling, moves from double or triple school shifts to single, full-day schools. This can allow for greater instructional time, especially to provide additional support to at-risk students, or extracurricular activities that interest students and reduce the amount of time youth would ordinarily spend unsupervised outside of school (Alfaro et al., 2015). Evaluations of this approach in lower or upper secondary schools in Argentina, Chile and Colombia have found some positive impacts on education and social outcomes such as lower repetition and dropout rates, higher math and language scores, and lower incidences of crime and teen pregnancy. However, this approach is extremely costly and not cost-effective (Alfaro et al., 2015; Chaia et al., 2017).

Compulsory Schooling: Policies that increase the number of years of mandatory schooling, which often accompany the abolishment of school fees and expansion of the supply of education, can symbolize the importance of education and encourage youth to stay in school longer (Kirdar et al., 2015; Angrist & Krueger, 1990). Although few evaluations of compulsory schooling laws have been conducted, several studies of such policies outside LAC have shown a strong positive impact of such laws on school completion (Adelman & Székely, 2016). Lower secondary education is now compulsory throughout most of LAC, with countries increasingly expanding compulsory education to upper secondary levels (UNESCO, 2017a; CAF, 2016).

Teacher Training and Incentives: Some education systems have attempted to improve teacher performance and attract more highly qualified candidates through teacher incentives in the form of bonus pay. These incentives may be tied to teacher behaviors, such as attendance, or be based on increases in student performance, as an approximate measure for teaching quality and effort. Few rigorous studies of these incentives have been conducted in LAC, although one study of teacher incentives in Mexico demonstrated no effect on student performance or dropout (Almeida et al., 2015). Studies in OECD countries suggest that incentives will be less effective when teachers are already performing near their potential. While one incentive scheme in Israel resulted in improvements in learning and a decrease in dropout, there are few other examples of teacher incentives that have successfully reduced dropout (Almeida et al., 2015).

Weak education relevance: Lack of interest is often tied to a student perceiving his or her education as irrelevant. This reason has a gender dimension. For example, in a study of dropout in Central America, lack of interest was the main driver of secondary school dropout for all secondary students; however, male students were more likely to report leaving school early for this reason (Adelman & Székely, 2016). A gap between what a student expects and what a school offers can be demotivating (Román, 2013). In fact, lack of interest and perceived education irrelevance was cited as the primary cause of dropout for one in three upper secondary school dropouts in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Paraguay, and accounted for more than 40 percent of dropouts in Nicaragua and Panama (Kattan & Székely, 2015). The capacity of the education system to equip youth with the skills valued by employers is critical to increasing secondary enrollment and retention, particularly at the upper secondary level (Kattan & Székely, 2015; Cárdenas et al., 2011). If upper secondary school is viewed as providing high economic value, youth stay in school longer (Kattan & Székely, 2015). Another important factor is the language of instruction or materials used within schools. If the language of instruction does not correspond to the students' first language or if educational texts and curricula are at odds with the students' language and culture, students may be more likely to leave school early (UNESCO, 2014).

Interventions that Address Weak Education Relevance

Bilingual Education and Culturally Adapted Materials: For students whose first language is not the primary language of instruction, bilingual education and culturally-adapted materials can be more relevant and improve learning, especially for indigenous groups. Most of this evidence, however, exists at the primary level. For example, bilingual education in Guatemala improved primary students' attendance, grade promotion, and dropout rates (Adelman & Székely, 2016).

Information Campaigns: These interventions are used to improve students' understanding of and perceptions of the benefits of staying in school and often involve providing information to youth about the actual economic returns to education. While information campaigns are generally inexpensive, evaluations of these interventions have shown mixed results both inside and outside of LAC. For example, a randomized controlled trial in the Dominican Republic showing increased educational attainment only benefited middle-income students instead of the most at-risk youth. Another randomized controlled trial in Mexico showed less promise: the intervention improved students' perceptions of returns to their education and even learning outcomes among female students, but had no effect on dropout (Adelman & Székely, 2016; Almeida et al., 2015).

Individual student factors: Low or inconsistent attendance is highly correlated with dropout among secondary school students in Mexico and Chile (SEP, 2012). Low academic achievement is related to grade repetition, which is also highly predictive of dropout (Oviedo et al., 2010; Román, 2009; SEP, 2012; Román, 2013; UNESCO, 2014). Students who repeat one or more grades can lose motivation and may feel uncomfortable alongside much younger classmates (Cunningham et al., 2008). The likelihood of dropping out or temporarily leaving school increases with each course and grade repeated (Román, 2013). Individual student behaviors and attitudes, such as low self-esteem among women or discipline problems, have also been linked to dropping out (Oviedo et al., 2010; SEP, 2012). Attitudes and mindsets are also closely related to achievement. One study found that student mindsets have double the predictive power of socioeconomic factors regarding PISA scores. The same study indicated that young women are more likely to be highly motivated but also more likely to experience test anxiety, which could be detrimental to performance (Chaia et al., 2017). While these behaviors may materialize as factors during secondary school, they are often connected to issues from during or even prior to primary school (Adelman & Székely, 2016; Oviedo et al., 2010). These highly predictive factors together – attendance, behavior, and course-based performance – are commonly known as the ABCs (Frazelle & Nagel, 2015).

Interventions that address individual student factors

Early Warning Systems (EWS): EWS collect and organize data around a set of indicators, often including the ABCs, to identify students at risk of dropping out before they reach the point of leaving school. Using this data, EWS often activate targeted interventions or responses for students seen as needing additional support (Rumberger et al., 2017). Additionally, targeting can improve the cost-effectiveness of programs since they are applied only to the most at-risk students (de Hoyos et al., 2016). EWS are generally low-cost themselves, as they often rely on secondary data. Ideally, monitoring and intervention should begin at earlier grades. While their importance seems intuitive, few rigorous evaluations have been conducted on the effects of EWS (Almeida et al., 2015).

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Socioemotional Learning: A growing recognition that socioemotional or soft skills, beyond traditional cognitive abilities, are necessary to successfully progress through secondary education has led to the development of cognitive-behavioral interventions. These interventions teach coping mechanisms for stress and other daily challenges and foster the development of skills such as self-control, anger management, problem-solving, forming positive relationships with others and decision-making. In the US and Canada, these interventions combined with tutoring have shown substantial results in dropout reduction (Almeida et al., 2015). An evaluation of a program in four countries outside of LAC that used cognitive-behavioral training also showed some positive effects (Adelman & Székely, 2016).

Exogenous Dropout Factors and Potential Solutions

Circumstances external to the education system can cause or significantly influence dropouts and continue to play a substantial role in interrupting the education cycle for secondary students in the region in many cases. This section describes some of these factors as well as some interventions targeted at their reduction.

Teen Pregnancy and Parenting: Across the region, about one in five adolescent women (15 to 19 years old) is pregnant or already a mother, which shows little improvement over the last few decades, and in some countries, such as Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, the pregnancy rate has even worsened. Teen pregnancy occurs much more among lower-income individuals (Figure 3). Among young women in the region between 15 and 25 years old, 36 percent of dropouts could be attributed to teen pregnancy or parenting (CAF, 2016). While teen pregnancy and parenting are most significant for young women, they have also been linked to dropouts for young men in Mexico (SEP, 2012).

FIGURE 3— Prevalence of pregnancy and parenting in LAC among 15-19 year olds, by income level

Percentage

● Poorest quintile
● Wealthiest quintile
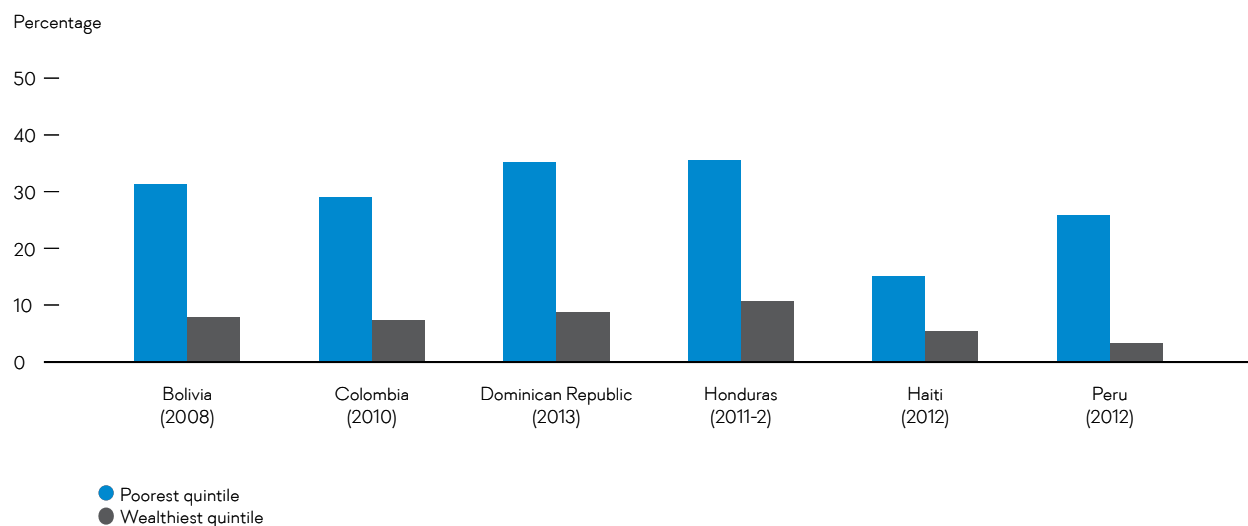
Source: CAF (2016)

Interventions that Address Teen Pregnancy and Parenting

Sexual Health Education, Family Planning Centers and Childcare: Interventions that attempt to prevent teen pregnancy include: school-based sex education programs, peer education programs and health center services. Pregnancy-prevention programs can differ in their approaches. While some emphasize abstinence, others encourage the use of contraceptives to promote safe sex and may even provide them. In several studies, comprehensive sexuality education programs have been deemed effective in reducing early pregnancy among adolescents (UNESCO, 2017b). Relatively few rigorous impact evaluations, however, have been conducted to measure these programs' effects specifically on dropout rates (Almeida et al., 2015). Conversely, a review of programs that attempt to keep teen mothers in school (e.g., by providing child care services) showed increased educational attainment (Adelman & Székely, 2016).

Poverty and Economic Pressures: Poverty consistently correlates with dropout, as students from families in the highest-income quintiles are much more likely to complete secondary education than those from the poorest income quintile (Cárdenas et al., 2011; Román, 2013; Adelman & Székely, 2016). In a study of 18 LAC countries using 2010 data, 78 percent of young adults between 20 and 24 years old from the most affluent quintile had completed secondary education, compared to just 22 percent of those from the poorest quintile (UNESCO, 2014). Educational disparities differ by country. For example, secondary enrollment among 17-year-olds from the highest-income quintile is 98 percent in Chile, compared to 89 percent in the lowest-income quintile. In Honduras, these figures are 70 percent and 20 percent, respectively (CAF, 2016). Across the region, poverty and extreme poverty interact with gender and tend to affect women more than men (CEPAL, n.d.). Despite this, young women across all income quintiles, including the poorest, still complete secondary education at higher rates than young men throughout most of the region (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4— Upper secondary completion rates for the poorest quintile (2014)
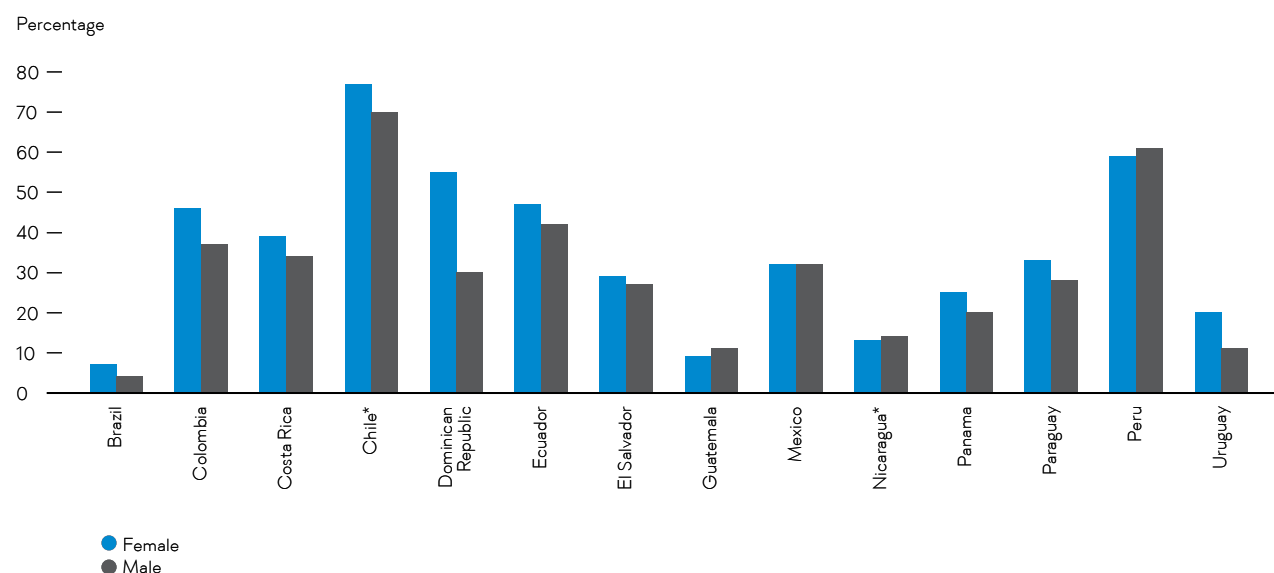
*Chile data is from 2013, Nicaragua data is from 2009.

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (n.d.)

Poverty can push youth toward the workforce, limit students' aspirations and self-confidence, and introduce excessive cognitive burdens which make learning and school more challenging and stressful (Adelman & Székely, 2016). Economic pressures and employment opportunities are frequently cited as pull factors that attract youth away from school – particularly young men (Román, 2009; Oviedo et al., 2010; Kattan & Székely, 2015; Sucre, 2016; CAF, 2016). In fact, this is the most common way for young men to become *NiNi* (see Box 2) (de Hoyos et al., 2016). This factor is inextricably tied to both education relevance and poverty: students may choose to forgo their education to support their households in times of financial need, especially if they are unconvinced of its value for their future economic prospects. Dropout rates generally rise with economic shocks and fall when inflation rates decline (CAF, 2016; Cárdenas et al., 2011; Kattan & Székely, 2015).

Poverty, like gender, is intimately connected to other factors and can magnify the effects of living in a rural area, coming from an indigenous background, drug use or exposure to violence, among other factors (Cárdenas et al., 2011; Román, 2013; Adelman & Székely, 2016).

Interventions that Address Poverty and Economic Pressures

Conditional cash transfers (CCTs): CCTs are anti-poverty programs that provide poor families with cash contingent on complying with certain health and education requirements, such as attending regular health check-ups and enrolling children in school. CCTs have been implemented and evaluated in dozens of countries worldwide, and in many cases have shown significant, positive effects on increasing enrollment, attendance, and retention, with larger effect sizes at the secondary level than at the primary level (Saavedra & Garcia, 2012). CCTs have also helped to reduce gender gaps in education, often by targeting girls (Fiszbein et al., 2009). However, programs in LAC have generally been less effective at improving secondary enrollment and retention than those in other regions (Saavedra & Garcia, 2012).

Scholarships: Several scholarship programs designed to reduce dropout in upper secondary students in LAC have been subject to evaluations. Results have been mixed but there is evidence that tweaks in program design may improve results. For example, scholarships that delay payment until a student has reached certain benchmarks have shown greater effect sizes than traditional scholarships (Almeida et al., 2015).

Other General Risk Factors: More than half of youth in LAC face one or more risk factors that can impact their ability or desire to remain in secondary school (Cunningham et al., 2008). Throughout the region, indigenous youth are consistently less likely to complete their secondary education (World Bank, 2015; Adelman & Székely, 2016; Oviedo et al., 2010; Román, 2009). For indigenous women, accessing and completing secondary school is even more challenging. For example, the educational attainment gap between indigenous men and women is wider than that between non-indigenous men and women in Ecuador and Peru (World Bank, 2015).

Students from rural areas are also about 20 percentage points less likely to graduate from secondary school than their urban counterparts (Bassi et al., 2013; Sucre 2016). In Guatemala and Honduras, this difference is even greater. The completion rate is nearly five times higher in urban areas than rural areas, which is to be expected given limited supply of secondary schooling (Oviedo et al., 2010). Indigenous youth in urban areas are often three or four times more likely to complete secondary school over their rural peers, such as those in Mexico, Peru and Bolivia (World Bank, 2015).

Indigenous status, geography and gender often have compounded effects on secondary education attainment. In Bolivia, while secondary completion rates for indigenous groups are relatively low, less than 10 percent of indigenous women who live in rural areas complete secondary school, compared to indigenous men in rural areas (19 percent), indigenous women in urban areas (29 percent), and indigenous men in urban areas (40 percent) (World Bank, 2015).

Low family commitment to or expectations of education can affect dropout rates as students may then place less value on their own schooling experience. Students may also lack critical support at home when challenges arise (Oviedo et al., 2010; Román, 2009). In Mexico, only 65 percent of those who dropped out of upper secondary school felt they could go to their father with a problem in school versus 80 percent of non-dropouts and 80 percent felt they could go to their mother versus 90 percent of non-dropouts (SEP, 2012). Children in single parent households also experience lower enrollment and completion rates (Román, 2009, 2013; Adelman & Székely, 2016). Educational attainment of household members, especially mothers, can be a key determining factor for completion (Román, 2013). Across the region, less than 10 percent of students whose head of household has fewer than six years of schooling finish secondary school (Oviedo et al., 2010

Other notable risk factors that can interfere with secondary education include drug use or addiction and exposure to violence or crime (Cárdenas et al., 2011; Oviedo et al., 2010; SEP, 2012). This also includes abuse and gender-based violence in the home, which may lead to lower student achievement (Larraín and Bascuñán, 2006) and delinquent behaviors (Morrison et al., 2004).

While violence and crime may not be among the most common factors cited regionally, in specific geographies they can play a significant role, such as in areas affected by drug cartels and gang violence in Colombia, Central America, and Mexico (CAF, 2016, Cárdenas et al., 2011; de Hoyos et al., 2016).

Interventions that Address Other General Risk Factors

Transportation: Improving the transportation options for students, especially in rural and remote communities, can reduce the time and financial resources spent traveling to school. Programs in Brazil, Colombia, and Nicaragua, for example, have provided students with bicycles, public transportation subsidies, and more school buses to improve attendance and retention rates in primary and secondary schools (UNICEF, 2012; Barsanuf Campus et al., 2016; SED, 2014; "Entrega de bicicletas", 2013).

Collectively, the factors outlined above present serious barriers to completing education for students throughout LAC. The following sections present case studies in Mexico and Chile, which highlight several of the previously discussed types of intervention.

04
Mexico

National Context

Nearly half of the population in Mexico lives below the national poverty line, a figure that has stagnated in recent years (OECD, 2017a).[16] However, a large youth population[17] presents an opportunity to generate substantial economic growth if youth stay in school and are adequately prepared to transition into the workforce. The returns to education increase as students progress through the system in Mexico: adults with higher education earn twice as much as individuals who only complete upper secondary, and more than three times the income of those who complete only lower secondary (Kattan & Székely, 2014).

FIGURE 5— Net enrollment rates (2004-2015)
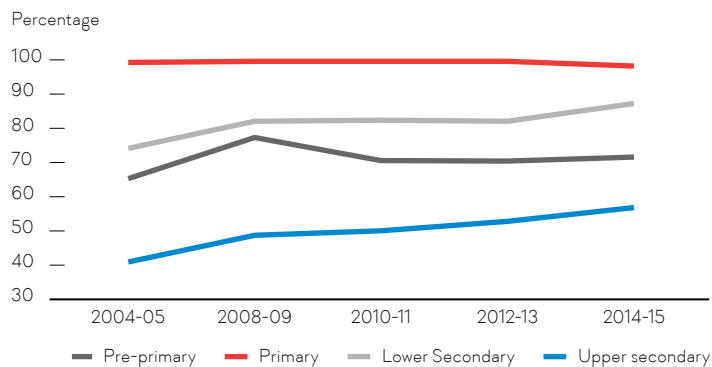
Source: INEE (n.d.)

16. Mexico's multidimensional poverty rate hovered around 46 percent between 2010 and 2014 (retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Mexico-2017-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf). In 2016, the monetary poverty rate was approximately 50 percent (retrieved from http://databank.worldbank.org/).

17. In 2016, about 34 million people belonged to the 15 and 29 age group, comprising 27 percent of the total population of 130 million. Retrieved from http://databank.worldbank.org.

FIGURE 6— Secondary completion rates by income quintile (2014)

Percentage

Lower secondary   Upper secondary

● 1st quintile
● 2nd quintile
● 3rd quintile
● 4th quintile
● 5th quintile
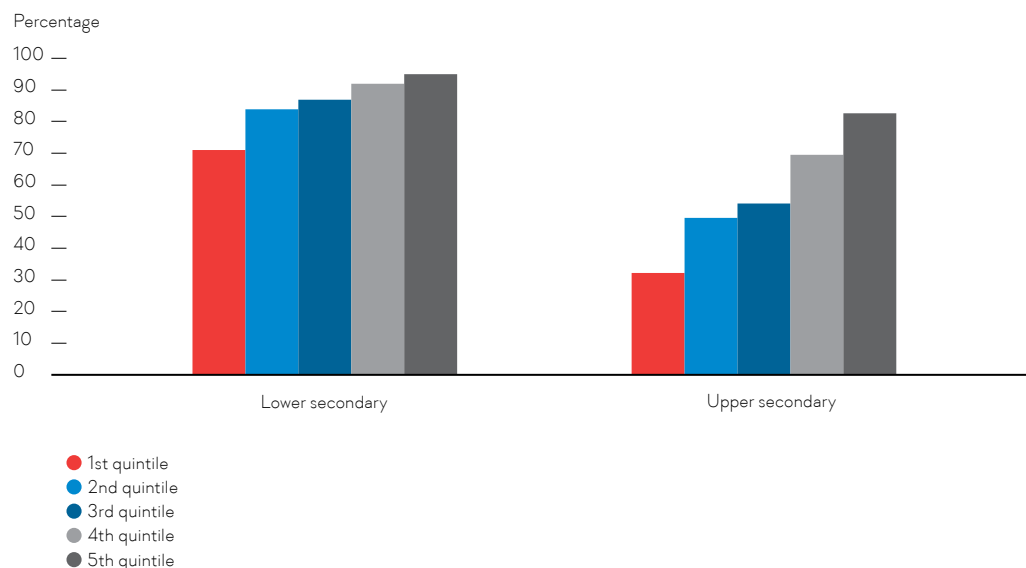
Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (n.d.)

Upward trends in enrollment rates at all education levels are promising (Figure 5) and a positive sign that children and youth are increasingly in school at the right time and have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to be successful. More than half of youth between 15 and 17 years old are now enrolled in upper secondary school, with young women slightly more likely to be enrolled at this level than young men, i.e., 59 percent to 56 percent, respectively (INEE, n.d.). Completion rates are relatively high at the lower secondary level (86 percent for women and 85 percent for men) but fall significantly in upper secondary (just over 60 percent for women and 56 percent for men). While completion rates do not vary substantially by gender, they do begin to diverge noticeably between youth with different socioeconomic backgrounds (Figure 6) (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.).

BOX 2— Gender and NiNis in Mexico

Young men and women in Mexico may find themselves out of school and out of work for different reasons and with very different consequences. Despite higher school completion rates, young women are three times more likely to be *NiNis* than young men. This is in part because many women get "lost" when transitioning between secondary school, and higher education or employment. In fact, 35 percent of all women ages 15 to 29 are *NiNis*, representing one of the largest gender gaps in OECD countries. However, while women make up most of the *NiNi* population, the overwhelming majority (90 percent) are not unemployed but rather do not particip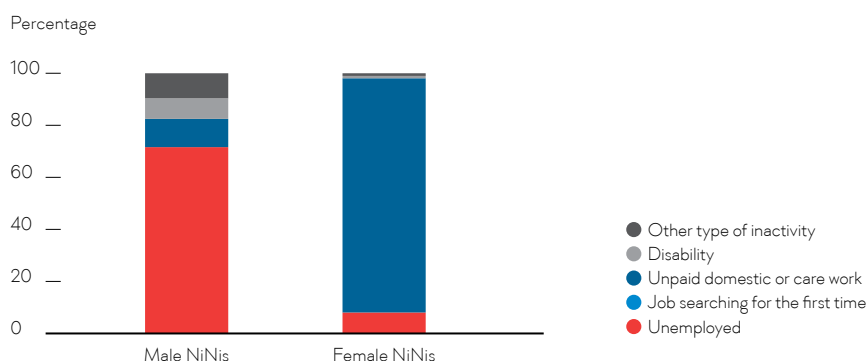ate in the workforce at all. They spend most of their time doing unpaid work that ultimately contributes to the economy, such as taking care of the household and family (Figure 7) (OECD, 2017d).

In comparison, nearly three in four male *NiNis* are unemployed. While only 10 percent of young men in Mexico are *NiNis*, this rate is increasing. Moreover, de Hoyos, Gutiérrez, & Vargas (2016) found a significant correlation between the rise in the share of male *NiNis* and a spike in violent crime. From 2006 to 2011, the share of young men between 19 and 24 years old in Mexico who were *NiNis* increased from 7 to 10.9 percent, which accounted for 3.8 more homicides per 100,000 inhabitants out of a total increase of 16 per 100,000 during this period. This relationship was strongest in states that border the United States, where both legal and illegal employers tend to hire unskilled male youth (de Hoyos et al., 2016).

FIGURE 7— How NiNis (15 - 29 year olds) in Mexico spend their time

Percentage

- ● Other type of inactivity
- ● Disability
- ● Unpaid domestic or care work
- ● Job searching for the first time
- ● Unemployed

Male NiNis   Female NiNis

Source: OECD (2017d)

However, it is concerning that one in five youth is a *NiNi* (Box 2).[18] A large *NiNi* population presents a considerable threat to long-term economic growth and can exacerbate existing inequalities. Those who drop out prior to completing upper secondary school tend to earn lower wages, have lower employment rates and are less likely to be employed in the formal sector than those who complete upper secondary school (Kattan & Székely, 2014).[19,20] Critical to reducing this *NiNi* population is supporting youth to complete compulsory education followed by successfully transitioning them into the workforce or higher education.

Dropout Trends

With nearly universal completion of primary school and a 97 percent transition rate from primary to lower secondary school,[21] the overwhelming majority of dropouts now take place during secondary education, especially during the upper secondary cycle (Figure 8).[22] A substantial portion of adults in Mexico have not completed an upper secondary education. In 2015, only half of young adults between the ages of 20 and 24 completed secondary education (INEE, 2017). While lower secondary completion rates still warrant attention, high dropout rates in upper secondary school pose the most significant bottleneck to completing compulsory education in Mexico.

18. In 2015, an estimated 22 percent of youth (ages 15 to 29) fit this description. This includes 19 percent of youth considered "inactive" and a little more than 3 percent of youth who were unemployed. In comparison, the average for OECD member countries is less than 15 percent (OECD, 2017a).

19. Kattan & Székely (2014) found that those who complete [only] upper secondary in Mexico earn about 62 percent more, on average, than those who complete [only] lower secondary. They were also more likely to be employed (60 percent, versus 45 percent for lower secondary graduates) and work in the formal sector (about 49 versus 37 percent).

20. As discussed in Section 1, women are far less likely to participate in the workforce than men, despite completing secondary school at consistently higher rates. Women who do work are disproportionately represented in the informal sector. In Mexico, women's participation in the workforce – less than half of women between the ages of 15 to 64 – is lower than that of other countries in the region, such as Peru and Colombia (OECD, 2017c).

21. The primary completion rate was 97 percent in 2014, and the transition rate from primary to lower secondary was 97 percent in 2013 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.).

22. Upper secondary dropout rate considers both formal and informal education. If considering only formal education, the dropout rate was 13.4 percent in 2013 to 2014 (INEE, 2017).

FIGURE 8— Average dropout rate each year, by education level and gender (2013-14)
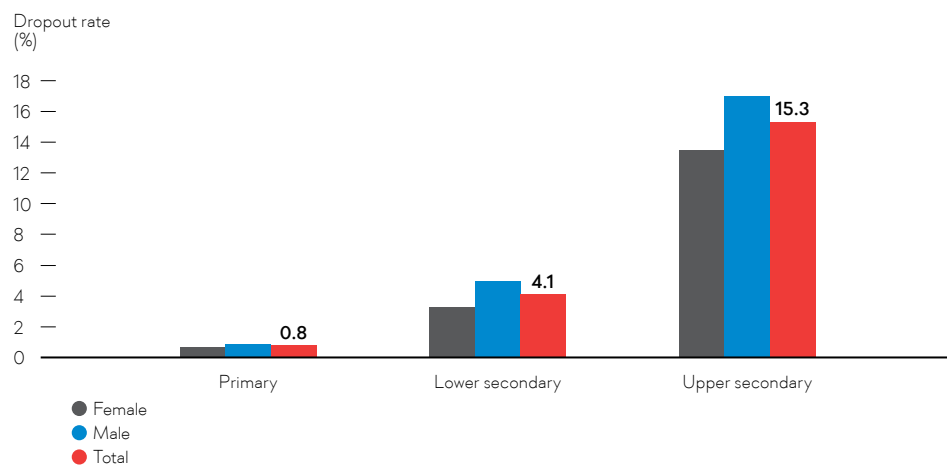
Source: INEE (n.d.)

On average, more than 15 percent of youth (roughly 600,000 students) drop out of upper secondary school every year, often during the first year of this level when nearly one in four students drops out (INEE, n.d., 2017). The dropout rate decreases to about 10 percent in the second year and is lowest during the final year of upper secondary at less than 7 percent (INEE, n.d.). Dropout rates differ by several factors such as gender (Box 3), location, and school characteristics. Dropout rates at the upper secondary level tend to be higher in urban areas, where youth are more likely to still be in school at this level. In contrast, dropout rates in rural areas tends to occur earlier during lower secondary school or in the transition to upper secondary school (Kattan & Székely, 2014). Across different states in Mexico, the annual dropout rate can be as low as 10 percent, which is often found in states with low overall enrollment in upper secondary, such as Guerrero and Puebla, while as many as one in five drop out in the states of Durango or Nayarit, which have relatively high upper secondary coverage. Mexico City enjoys the highest enrollment rates in the country but also has one of the highest dropout rates (INEE, n.d.).[23] Dropout can also vary by school provider or education track. For example, federally financed upper secondary schools had a dropout rate of over 16 percent in the 2013-14 school year, compared to 14 percent in schools financed by the state, and 12 percent in schools financed by autonomous universities. Among the three education tracks at this level of schooling, dropout rates are lowest at 14 percent for the general academic track. While as many as one in three drop out of vocational upper secondary schools, enrollment in these institution types is quite low, covering less than two percent of students (INEE, n.d.). These different structural aspects are further explored further explored in the following section, which, which provides an overview of the education system.

Dropout Factors

According to national surveys conducted in the last decade, students cite economic, academic and personal challenges as primary reasons for dropping out of upper secondary school (Kattan & Székely 2014):[24]

→ **Between 30 and 43 percent** of youth report dropout for school-related reasons, which include: boredom, lack of interest in school or studying, failure, difficulty understanding teachers or the content, and bullying. As discussed earlier, overage enrollment and poor academic performance are strong predictors of dropout. In Mexico, it is worth noting that many upper secondary

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23. In the 2013 to 2014 school year, Mexico City had enrollment rates in upper secondary school of 114 percent (gross) and 86 percent (net), and a dropout rate of 18.6 percent (INEE, n.d.).

24. The two surveys were the 2010 National Youth Survey and a 2011 national survey conducted by the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* [Secretary of Public Education] to better understand students' decisions to stay in or drop out of upper secondary school (SEP, 2012). Kattan & Székely (2014) analyzes data from both surveys.

students are lagging behind. More than 40 percent of students do not pass the first year of upper secondary school.[25] Relatedly, nearly 15 percent of all upper secondary students are two or more grades behind (INEE, 2016).

→ In general, **more than one-third** drop out due to financial constraints. This includes youth who cannot afford school-related fees (e.g., supplies and transportation fares) and those who drop out to work to contribute to household income.

→ **Between 10 percent and 20 percent** drop out for personal reasons, which overwhelmingly include marriage or pregnancy.

In addition to these self-reported reasons, other factors have been found to increase the likelihood of dropping out. Kattan & Székely (2014) estimate that certain characteristics, such as living in a rural area and speaking an indigenous language, can make it more likely that a student will drop out. Unsurprisingly, low socioeconomic status is also consistently linked to dropout; however, this effect is not as prominent as in past decades.

BOX 3— Gender and Dropout in Mexico

While dropout rates have historically been higher for young women, young men are now more likely to drop out of upper secondary school and fall behind academically (INEE, n.d., 2016). Gender was the most strongly correlated factor for dropouts in young women in the 1980s but is now reversed, with a 14 percent dropout rate for young women and 17 percent dropout rate for young men. Kattan and Székely (2014) suggest that these gains for young women may result from cultural shifts, greater employment opportunities and conditional cash transfers and scholarships that are higher for women to attend school.

Economic constraints are the most common reason for for young men to drop out, though other reasons include failing classes or disliking school (SEP, 2012). Young women tend to drop out for economic reasons, with marriage and pregnancy being the next most common causes. Mexico has the highest teen pregnancy rate among OECD countries exceeding that in Costa Rica, Peru, and Colombia (World Bank, n.d.). This rate has fallen only slightly over the last four decades. Young women who come from poorer households or from indigenous backgrounds are more likely to become teen mothers than their peers (OECD, 2017c).

Overview of Upper Secondary Education in Mexico

Compulsory education lasts 15 years in Mexico, stretching from pre-primary through upper secondary school (Table 1).[26] Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school collectively form the basic education cycle.

TABLE 1— Compulsory education in Mexico

PRE-PRIMARY (3-5 YEARS OLD)			PRIMARY (6-11 YEARS OLD)						LOWER SECONDARY (12-14 YEARS OLD)			UPPER SECONDARY a/ (15-17 YEARS OLD)		
1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Basic education														

a/ Upper secondary education lasts three years on average, though there are some programs that last as few as two or as many as five years.

25. In 2013-2014, only 45 percent of first-year upper secondary students passed by the end of the year. This increased to 58 percent by September 30, when some students can take an extra test after the school year has ended to be promoted on to the next level. Repetition rates fall substantially in the second and third years of upper secondary, presumably as students drop out (INEE, 2016).

26. Primary education became compulsory in 1934, lower secondary followed in 1993 and pre-primary was gradually made compulsory between 2004 and 2009. Upper secondary was made compulsory in 2012 with expansion expected through 2022 (INEE, 2013).

After completing lower secondary school (and thus basic education), students must sit for the national entrance exam for upper secondary school. The exam, known as the *Examen Nacional de Ingreso a la Educación Media Superior* [National Entrance Exam for Upper Secondary Education], is a standardized test with sections dedicated to mathematics, analytical thinking, language, reading and comprehension, and specific content areas like biology, physics and English. While students are all guaranteed a place in a public school regardless of their exam results, individual school subsystems determine what scores they will admit (Ceneval, 2016).[27] Therefore, students may not be admitted to their first, second or even third choice school, which can be demotivating (OECD, 2017a). Some youth cite being assigned to a different school than desired (school shift) as a reason for dropping out (Kattan & Székely 2014).

Governance

The Mexican education system is complex and highly decentralized with roles and responsibilities spread across federal, state, municipal and school levels:

→ **Federal Level**: The *Secretaría de Educación Pública* [Secretary of Public Education] (SEP) is the highest education authority in Mexico and consists of undersecretaries of basic education; upper secondary education; higher education; and planning, evaluation, and coordination. Main responsibilities at this level include: setting national education policy and curricula (including learning outcomes), evaluating the quality of education, authorizing textbooks, establishing teacher competencies and standards, and ensuring that education services are equitable (INEE, 2014).

→ **State Level:** Mexico is comprised of 32 federal entities, which are 31 states and Mexico City, an autonomous region. At this level, there are two main education authorities: a local secretary of education affiliated with the state government and a federal representative of the Secretary of Public Education, which is a decentralized institution affiliated with the federal government. In some states, these two authorities jointly oversee education services, while, in others, they have more limited interaction. Overall, state education authorities are responsible for providing pre-service and in-service teacher training, hiring teachers and monitoring the quality of education in state-financed schools as well as authorizing private education providers. State education authorities can also propose to the Secretary of Public Education context-specific content for the local curriculum (INEE, 2014).

→ **Municipal Level:** Municipal-level education authorities have limited roles, primarily around maintaining and improving infrastructure, though they may enjoy greater responsibility in rural areas of the country.

→ **School Level:** At the school level, directors are the highest authority and oversee all aspects of school management. In upper secondary school, directors may also be supported by assistant directors, especially in larger schools (INEE, 2014).

In addition to these levels of the system, groups of public upper secondary schools are managed by different *subsistemas* [subsystems], which are administrative clusters or chains of public schools that can be financed by the federal government, state governments or autonomous public universities (Table 2). Historically, subsystems have had significant independence in how they manage individual schools, which, in effect, grant directors of subsystems a key role within the education system. Each subsystem may have its own curriculum and governing structure.

It is also worth noting that substantial power is held by *El Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* [National Educational Workers Union]. This union is one of the largest in the world, having between 1 million to 1.5 million members who represent teaching and non-teaching personnel at all levels of the education system nationally (INEE, 2014). Under intense pressure from the union prior to midterm elections in 2015, the federal government suspended teacher performance evaluations, though they were later reinstated after elections (Oviedo, 2015).

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27. See Table 2.

Financing and Diverse Supply of Upper Secondary Education

Education is the largest expense of the federal government, amounting to more than 18 percent of total public spending and about 5.4 percent of Mexico's gross domestic product (GDP). While total spending is in line with the OECD average, per student spending remains the lowest among OECD countries (CIEP, 2016; OECD, 2017b). Upper secondary education accounts for about 15 percent of public education spending, less than that allocated to lower secondary or tertiary, at 17 percent and 21 percent, respectively (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.). Despite rapid expansion of upper secondary education since it was made compulsory in 2012, the share of education spending for this level has not increased (World Bank, 2016).[28]

The supply of upper secondary education in Mexico is incredibly diverse, with different providers, education tracks, financing sources and dozens of subsystems (Table 2).

TABLE 2— Variations in upper secondary provision and enrollment in Mexico

Public vs. private provision	The public sector dominates education provision in Mexico, where 88 percent of students in basic education are enrolled in a public school. Private provision plays a slightly larger role in upper secondary education, where nearly one in five students attends a private school (INEE, 2017).
Education tracks	There are three education tracks in upper secondary school: *bachillerato general* [**general**], *bachillerato tecnológico* [**technological**], and *profesional técnico* [**vocational**]. The general track is the most common and covers about 62 percent of the student population. It is academic in nature and aims to prepare students for further study at the tertiary level. The technological track serves 37 percent of students. It provides both academic and vocational education to prepare students for either a higher education or employment. The vocational track serves less than 2 percent of students. It has a strong technical and vocational focus and primarily prepares students for employment (INEE, 2017).
Financing sources	Public, upper secondary schools can be financed and overseen by three different actors: **federal**, **state**, and **autonomous**, which affiliated with public universities and other tertiary institutions. About half of students attend schools that are run and financed by states, though this can vary substantially. For example, one state may have primarily federal and state schools (e.g. Estado de México) while another may have a large presence of autonomous schools (e.g. Jalisco).
Subsystems	Across these three public financing sources are 33 subsystems in Mexico. Subsystems have historically developed their own curricula and operated independently, and there was little coordination among them to ensure students received a consistent, quality education until relatively recently with the comprehensive reform of upper secondary education (INEE, 2017). This differs significantly from basic education, where the curriculum is historically set by the Secretary of Public Education (INEE, 2014). This variation and autonomy has traditionally complicated students' ability to transfer between schools and even limited to what extent higher education institutions recognize different upper secondary school certificates. A 2008 reform began to address this challenge around transferring between institutions (see 4.2.3).

Education Policies and Reforms Impacting Upper Secondary

Following years of relatively uncoordinated growth in the supply and coverage of upper secondary education, a series of reforms over the last a decade has begun to gradually align and attend to the quality of this last stage of compulsory education:

→ **1997-present:** *Prospera*[29] is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program that seeks to improve nutrition, health and education for more than 6 million families living in poverty. Among *Prospera*'s available benefits, households can receive subsidies if children and youth are enrolled in and attending primary, lower and upper secondary school. Higher subsidy amounts are awarded for young women who are enrolled in lower and upper secondary school (Dávila Lárraga, 2016).

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28. Per student public spending at the tertiary level continues to dwarf that for upper secondary education: in 2015, the government spent MX $66,000 per tertiary student compared to MX $29,000 per general upper secondary student. Reported in 2012 Mexican pesos. Public spending per upper secondary student enrolled in the professional track is even lower than that for the general track, at MX $20,000 (INEE, 2016).

29. *Prospera* was formerly *Progresa* from 1997 to 2002 and renamed *Oportunidades* until 2014.

→ **2008:** The federal government launched the *Reforma Integral de la Educación Media Superior* [Comprehensive Reform for Upper Secondary Education] to improve coordination and consistency among diverse schooling options, reduce learning gaps between subsystems and provide flexibility for students to move between subsystems and tracks. This reform introduced a competency-based common curricular framework [*marco curricular común*] that defined the knowledge and skills a graduate of upper secondary school should have. This reform led to the creation of *Sistema Nacional de Educación Media Superior* [National System of Upper Secondary Education] formerly known as *Sistema Nacional de Bachillerato* [National System of High Schools] in 2009. Public and private schools can voluntarily join this system by complying with different components of the 2008 reform, including adopting the common curricular framework, implementing recommended school management mechanisms and hiring guidance counselors. Schools who wish to join the system are evaluated and ranked according to how well they comply with certain reforms (level I is the highest level of compliance and level IV the lowest) and can improve their rankings over time. More than 2,000 schools are now part of this system, but the vast majority (over 90 percent) are ranked in the lowest levels, III or IV (INEE, 2017).

One of the school management mechanisms recommended under the 2008 reform was the establishment of a tutoring program, where a small group of teachers is selected to serve as tutors throughout the duration of students' time in upper secondary school. Tutors work both individually with students and in small groups, providing remedial academic as well as psycho-pedagogical support according to students' inherent differences and needs (e.g., learning styles, motivations, social conditions). While this can vary by subsystem, tutors do not normally receive extra compensation for this work (SEMS, 2011).

→ **2012:** Mexico made upper secondary education compulsory, and created a 10-year timeline for achieving universal coverage. The Secretary of Public Education also set a six-year goal of reducing upper secondary school dropout to 9 percent by the year 2018, contingent on appropriate public policies put in place to support this. In 2013 to 2014, *El Movimiento Contra el Abandono Escolar, "Yo No Abandono"* [The Movement Against School Dropout, "I Will Not Drop Out"] in upper secondary school was launched to promote this objective. Further information on the Yo No Abandono case study can be found later in this section.

→ **2013**: Mexico enacted new legislation, the *Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente* [General Law for Professional Teaching Services], to standardize the teaching profession across public basic and upper secondary education. The law established processes and mechanisms around induction, promotion, tenure and recognition. The law also defined evaluation, continuous training and professional development as the key pillars for strengthening teacher performance and, ultimately, education quality (OECD, 2013b).

→ **2015:** A new incentives program was created for teachers of basic and upper secondary school, replacing previous programs, with explicit acknowledgement of socioemotional learning as critical for improving teaching practices. The new program included seven levels of incentives, where teachers can progress to receive higher wages; evaluation processes for ensuring that only high-performing teachers receive incentives; and clear professional development options (SEP, 2016).

→ **2017:** Following a two-year consultative process, the Secretary of Public Education introduced *un nuevo modelo educativo* [a new education model] that overhauled the curriculum for all compulsory education including both basic and upper secondary, among other aspects. The new model aims to disrupt outdated pedagogical practices and make education content more engaging and relevant. Some of the key changes include:

— Revised learning outcomes of what students should progressively achieve throughout the education system, including training for teachers to improve their capacity to develop desired competencies in their students.
— Reduced the amount of content in the basic education curriculum, to provide schools with greater autonomy and grant teachers more flexible instruction time with their students.
— Explicit incorporation of socioemotional learning into basic and upper secondary education.

The consultation process for the new model identified key challenges to address in upper secondary classrooms including: poorly structured courses, unengaging and overabundant content, limited focus on youth's socioemotional development, gap between what the common curricular framework stated and what happened in the classroom, and poor preparation of students for 21st century challenges. Under this new model, upper secondary education now includes an explicit focus on the development of socioemotional

skills by integrating *Construye T* into the curriculum. While socioemotional learning will become its own course in basic education, it is being introduced as a crosscutting area in upper secondary education where all teachers will be expected to teach short lessons on socioemotional skills each week (SEP 2017a, 2017b).[30]

Initiatives to Address Dropout Challenges in Mexico

The following sections highlight two national initiatives that work to reduce upper secondary school dropout. Each case study includes an overview of the initiatives' origins and evolution to date, structure and activities, governance and financing model, and any evidence of effectiveness. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the two initiatives.

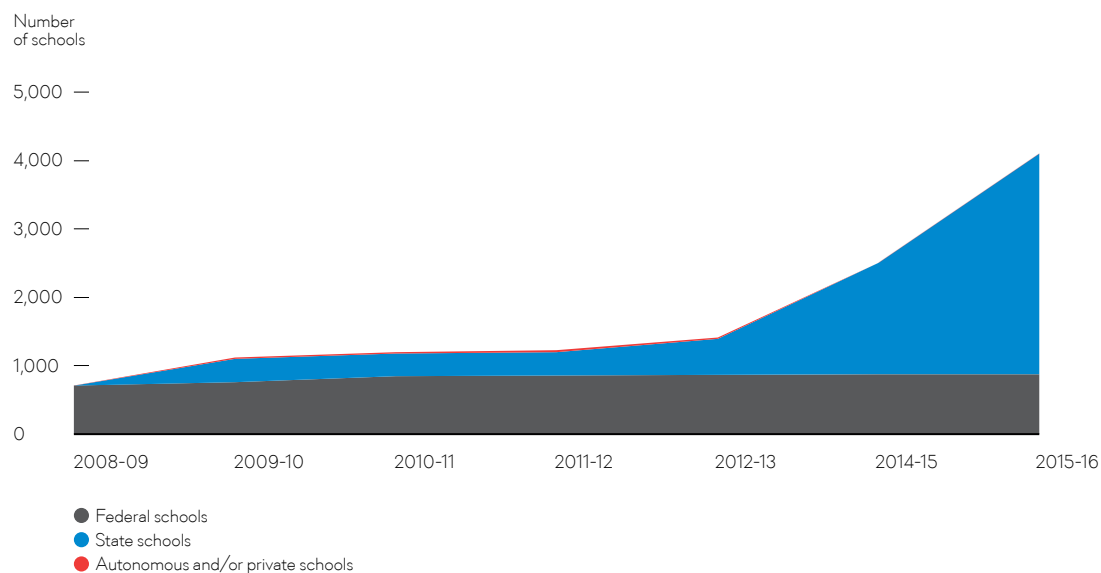**TABLE 3—** Overview of initiatives highlighted in this report

	CONSTRUYE T	**YO NO ABANDONO**
Summary	A national curricular program training school directors and teachers to develop students' socioemotional skills so that they can successfully overcome academic and personal challenges.	A national strategy encouraging and supporting schools, and especially school directors, to prevent and respond to dropout.
Years	2007 to present	2013 to present
Main activities	All teachers spend 20 minutes per week on a lesson dedicated to developing students' socioemotional skills, in total exposing students to about two hours of this content each week. Each semester focuses on one of six principal skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, collaboration, decision-making, and perseverance.	Schools receive a set of manuals with guidance around 12 suggested actions for reducing dropout. These are not mandatory, and any activities implemented are done at the discretion of school directors and using existing resources.
Structure	Overseen by *Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior* [Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education] (SEMS) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and implemented in partnership with *Universidad Iberoamericana* and *Atentamente*, a national civil society organization (CSO).	Overseen by SEMS, in coordination with by state education authorities.
Reach	4,000+ public (primarily federal and state) upper secondary schools	All public upper secondary schools (11,000+ in total)
Financing	Financed entirely by SEMS. Budget has steadily declined from US$9 million in 2014 to US$3 million in 2017.	No dedicated budget. Implemented with resources from the SEMS general operating budget.

Construye T

Jointly overseen by the *Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior* [Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education] (SEMS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Construye T* was originally conceived as a program to prevent risky behavior, like dropout, among youth in upper secondary schools. In the decade since it was first designed, *Construye T* has undergone several changes to its objectives, approach and activities, structure, and reach; and has transformed into a curricular program working to develop youth's socioemotional skills. More than 4,000 public upper secondary schools currently participate in the program (Figure 9).

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30. See Construye T case study later in this section for more information.

FIGURE 9— Construye T coverage (2008-15) by financing source

Number
of schools

Legend:
- ● Federal schools
- ● State schools
- ● Autonomous and/or private schools

Source: SEMS (n.d.) and interviews with program staff. Data unavailable for 2013-14 school year. In some cases, the breakdown by subsystem type is approximate.

Origin and Evolution of the Program

2007-2013: In 2007, SEMS designed *Programa de Prevención de Riesgos en la Educación Media Superior* [Risk Prevention Program in Upper Secondary Education] to reduce school dropout and other negative behaviors, such as drug use and bullying, in order to reform upper secondary schools. The program, which became known as *Construye T*, originally sought to make school environments more inclusive, equal and participatory to help youth overcome diverse challenges they faced in completing an upper secondary education (INSP & PNUD, 2013; SEMS, n.d.). *Construye T* was organized as follows:

→ At the **federal level**, SEMS and UNDP jointly designed and oversaw the program.
→ At the **state level**, a committee was formed to coordinate program implementation. Each state committee consisted of both federal[31] and state[32] education officials, a partner civil society organization (CSO), and subsystem representatives. State-level committee members carried out initial trainings of school directors and teachers.
→ At the **school level**, the director, teachers and other staff, student and family representatives, and an external facilitator[33] formed a committee to conduct a yearly school-wide diagnostic of the program's focus areas (including school violence, drug use, and family engagement) and related challenges, as well as an inventory of available resources. Based on the results of the diagnostic, the school committee then decided on a series of activities to address identified challenges. The external facilitator provided ongoing support to school actors to design, implement, and monitor these activities (INSP & PNUD, 2013).

After a few years of implementation and rapid growth, *Construye T* did not achieve its intended results with dropout reduction and other indicators of risky behavior (Box 4). SEMS thus decided to redesign the program in 2014.

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31. The representative of federal SEMS in each state.

32. Representatives of the local secretary of education.

33. The external facilitator is employed by the CSO of that state.

BOX 4— Results of *Construye T* Impact Evaluation (2013)

A quasi-experimental impact evaluation used results from the 2007 and 2009 national survey on exclusion, tolerance and violence in upper secondary schools as baseline and endline data for *Construye T*, which was further supplemented by school administrative data from those years. In effect, this setup allowed us to study the program's first year of implementation. As federal subsystems joined the program first, the study compared federal schools (the "treatment" group) with state schools (the "control" group). Positive findings from the study included:

→ While all schools saw an increase in the share of students who missed class frequently or were suspended, this increase was smaller in federal schools. Similarly, while school violence increased in all schools, the increase was slower in federal schools.
→ The prevalence of depression among students, while decreasing in all schools, declined more significantly in federal schools.

However, the study also found some limited effects and other unintended results:

→ Negative attitudes toward gender equality declined in all schools but more so in state schools.
→ Contraceptive use increased in state schools but decreased in federal schools.
→ Failure and dropout rates increased in federal schools but decreased in state schools.

These mixed results should be considered with caution. The impact evaluation cited inconsistencies in school administrative data causing concerns over whether it was possible to see intended attitude and behavior changes after just one year of implementing *Construye T*.

Source: INSP & PNUD (2013).

2014-2016: Given the results of the impact evaluation and the launch of the new *Yo No Abandono* strategy in 2013, SEMS and UNDP shifted *Construye T* from a risk prevention program to a more positive, holistic program dedicated to developing youth's socioemotional skills in ways that would better prepare them for success in school and life. Inspired by a pilot program in Peru called *Escuela Amiga* [Friend School], the program identified a set of 18 different socioemotional skills, clustered around three core dimensions: *Conoce T* (intrapersonal skills) [34], *Relaciona T* (interpersonal skills),[35] and *Elige T* (decision-making skills) (SEMS, n.d.).[36]

This version of the program placed greater emphasis on school autonomy by primarily investing resources in training a director and one tutor (often a teacher, but occasionally a guidance counselor) from each school. The director and tutor in turn then trained a small team of five to six teachers to develop students' socioemotional skills. As part of this redesign, SEMS and UNDP interviewed numerous teachers about their needs and identified that teachers felt challenged by an overabundance of materials and needed simpler, more concrete resources. In response, the program introduced succinct, one-page activity cards with step-by-step instructions for carrying out short, 20-minute activities dedicated to developing a different socioemotional skill (e.g. deep breathing exercises, active listening, anger management).

During this period, the involvement of CSOs in each state began to decline, focusing largely on training staff from new participating schools, and paying fewer visits to schools already implementing *Construye T*. Additionally, while the program ceased to focus on dropout reduction as an explicit outcome of its model, it recognized the long-term effects that developing socioemotional skills could have on dropout, particularly by improving students' decision-making skills.

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34. Specific skills included self-awareness, motivation to succeed, self-efficacy, recognizing emotions, managing stress, tolerance for frustration, managing emotions, perseverance, and delayed gratification.

35. Specific skills included empathy, interpersonal conflict management, active listening, pro-social behavior, perspective-taking, and assertiveness.

36. Specific skills included option generation, critical thinking, and analysis of consequences.

In 2016, SEMS and UNDP began to introduce an in-person orientation at the state level for directors and tutors from new schools, an online training course, and new materials. That same year, a process evaluation found inconsistent, and at times limited, implementation of the program (Box 5).

BOX 5— Findings of *Construye T* Process Evaluation (2016)

An external process evaluation of the redesigned program found that, while most teachers were familiar with *Construye T* and its objectives, only half of the students were aware of the program. Teachers generally used activity cards as they saw fit rather than following the program's recommended sequence or frequency. Unfortunately, less than half of schools carried out program activities at all. Teachers felt either pressed for time to teach the lessons or they did not feel they had the capacity to respond to students' emotional challenges. While the activities were designed to last 15 to 20 minutes, some teachers dedicated most of the hour to them. Additionally, teachers from specific subject areas (e.g., mathematics or science) found it more difficult to integrate these activities into their instruction and they did not receive tailored guidance on how to adapt the content. The evaluation noted that well-motivated directors contributed to better program implementation and results.

Source: Interviews with program staff; SEP & PNUD (2017b).

The Construye T Model in 2017

The 2016 process evaluation revealed that many teachers saw *Construye T* activities as a burden rather than tools to improve the classroom and school environment. Teachers did not clearly understand the link between socioemotional skills and the competencies they worked to develop with students. With the introduction of a new national educational model in 2017 that included a strong, explicit emphasis on developing socioemotional skills, SEMS and UNDP leveraged the opportunity to integrate *Construye T* into the core curriculum. At the time of this study, several important changes were underway:

→ **Shift in approach and simplified framework of socioemotional skills:** Socioemotional learning is now emphasized as critical for better academic performance as well as improved school environments, taking a stronger pedagogical approach than what was employed in previous phases of the program. The program consolidated the complex framework of 18 socioemotional skills into six principal skills and three crosscutting skills that could be understood and applied more easily. These skills are developed sequentially, with students in all grades learning the same skill each semester between 2017 and 2020 (Table 4).

TABLE 4— Socioemotional skills for upper secondary school in the new education model (2017)

DIMENSION	SKILLS	SEQUENCE	CROSSCUTTING SKILLS
Conoce T - Intrapersonal	Self awareness	2017-2018 (1st semester)	
	Self regulation	2017-2018 (2nd semester	
Relaciona T - Interpersonal	Social awareness	2018-2019 (1st semester)	Attention, clarity and emotive language
	Collaboration	2018-2019 (2nd semester)	
Elige T - Decision-making	Responsible decision-making	2019-2020 (1st semester)	
	Perseverance	2019-2020 (2nd semester)	

Source: SEP (2017b).

→ **Required and Increased Implementation of *Construye T* Activities**: All teachers in upper secondary school and across disciplines (e.g., mathematics and language) will now be expected to regularly dedicate time to developing students' socioemotional skills. Each teacher will carry out one 20-minute lesson each week so that, across an average of six classes, students will be exposed to about two hours of socioemotional learning. *Construye T* lesson plans will vary slightly by subject area so that students take part in a set of complementary, mutually reinforcing lessons each week. Teachers will work to develop one socioemotional skill each semester by doing weekly sequenced lessons for 12 weeks that build toward this goal. After three years of upper secondary, students will have developed the six principal socioemotional skills (SEP & UNDP, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

→ **New Materials:** At the time of this study, the program was designing new instructional materials for directors and teachers including didactic guides for each lesson, accompanying worksheets for students, instructional videos for teachers and manuals for how socioemotional skills can be applied to or strengthened in distinct subject areas. While the program will retain some activity cards from the former program model, it will also adapt and design additional cards.

→ **Changes and Scale-Up of Teacher Training:** With less than a year remaining in the government administration at the time of this study, *Construye T* was working quickly to develop and implement program changes and scale to an additional 2,000 schools to reach more than 6,000 in total.[37] This was planned to be done through a blended training model with three main activities:

— **In-person and online training** for a selection of *Construye T* directors and tutors around the new approach and how to implement it in the school and classroom. Directors and tutors are expected to onboard and support remaining teachers in their school.

— **Online training** for all teachers to learn how to teach *Construye T* activities in the classroom, with support around how this can be done in different subject areas.

— **Virtual support** for school directors and tutors.

→ **Structure and Governance:** *Construye T* no longer partners with CSOs in each state, which the program recognized as partly contributing to inconsistent implementation. However, two new national partners now collaborate with SEMS and UNDP: *Universidad Iberoamericana* and *Atentamente*, a national CSO. Together, these new partners develop new materials and training courses, design an evaluation of the program and oversee a group of national-level facilitators to conduct in-person trainings with school actors. The responsibility of state-level education officials in this new model varies but will center on coordinating these in-person trainings. At the school level, the director and tutor facilitate the implementation of new activities and provide ongoing support to teachers, while teachers lead the development of socioemotional skills directly with students.

→ **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The program aims to conduct a longitudinal study of socioemotional skills development and to determine the precise outcomes to measure and the exact instrument, or combination of instruments, to use at the time of this study.[38]

Financing

Construye T has historically been financed with resources from SEMS that are transferred to UNDP. Most of the budget funds external organizations to implement the program (e.g., state-level CSOs in previous models and new national partners since 2017). The budget has decreased over time, despite significant scale-up of the program: US$9 million (2014), US$4 million (2015), US$5 million (2016) and finally US$3 million (2017).[39]

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37. At the time of this study, the program prioritized training individuals from schools that had not yet participated in Construye T with the goal of reaching all federal and state subsystems.

38. This will likely include secondary data on student performance as well as direct data from a representative sample of schools.

39. These budget figures were provided in interviews with SEMS and UNDP, as well as INEE (2017).

Consideration of Gender in Construye T Programming

Gender is not an explicit focus of the materials or training content around socioemotional skills development. However, there is evidence that youth's socioemotional skills can vary according to their gender. For example, a sizeable study in Argentina and Chile found that men exhibited stronger socioemotional skills among young adults who had completed only primary or secondary education, while women's socioemotional skills were relatively stronger among young adults with complete postsecondary and university education. Across all levels, women generally scored higher in task-planning skills, while men scored higher in self-efficacy and social skills (Bassi et al., 2012). The opportunities around considering gender in socioemotional learning are explored further in the recommendations of this report.

Yo No Abandono

Overview of the Initiative and Main Activities

In 2013, SEMS launched the *Yo No Abandono* strategy to stimulate action by schools to prevent, monitor, and respond to dropout at the upper secondary level (SEP, n.d.). This followed the results of a 2011 national survey on dropouts (SEP, 2012) and the 2012 expansion of compulsory education to include upper secondary education.

The design of the *Yo No Abandono* movement builds directly on the results of the survey on dropouts, experiences in other countries such as Chile, and the growing understanding that dropout can be better addressed within schools. Beyond financial constraints that youth may face, the strategy considers other important factors, such as poor academic performance, failing a class or grade, low student motivation, and a lack of support at home. The types of activities the strategy promotes are based on local needs and evidence of what works.

Yo No Abandono is a flexible, overarching strategy, rather than an individual program, that can be molded to fit the contexts of different states and subsystems. One of *Yo No Abandono*'s goals is to shift the conversation around dropout, by emphasizing both the autonomy and responsibility of schools, especially school directors, to take on this challenge and see dropout prevention as a key component of their jobs. Any activities carried out under the strategy are implemented at the discretion of school leaders (often directors) and must make use of existing resources. Under the basic framework of *Yo No Abandono*, SEMS provides three types of support:

TABLE 5— Topics of Yo No Abandono toolkit manuals

Manual 1	Preventing and addressing risks related to the ABCs
Manual 2	Welcoming new students
Manual 3	Promoting better study habits
Manual 4	Peer tutoring
Manual 5	Supporting student decision-making
Manual 6	Supporting students to create a life plan
Manual 7	Guidance counseling
Manual 8	Communicating with parents
Manual 9	Tutoring [a]
Manual 10	Using social networks as tools
Manual 11	Developing socioemotional skills
Manual 12	Participatory planning to identify, address causes of dropout

a/ Tutoring here refers to actions carried out by teachers to provide remedial academic support to students, either individually or in groups.

→ **Toolkit**: SEMS designed a toolkit with 12 manuals for school directors. Since 2013, SEMS has distributed 18,000 hard copies to all public upper secondary schools in addition to sharing them online (SEP, n.d.).[40] The manuals are short (approximately 40 to 50 pages each), use accessible language, and address a variety of topics and approaches (Table 5). Each manual quickly summarizes why that topic is important and provides guidance on practical actions that schools can take. The actions described in these manuals are examples or suggestions for schools to consider, but are not mandatory. SEMS originally developed and distributed six manuals and later produced an additional six after two years of implementation and feedback from school directors. It is important to note that the manual on socioemotional skills, while sharing the same focus as Construye T, makes no mention of the program or its activities but does use Construye T's framework of 18 socioemotional skills developed and used between 2014 and 2016.

→ **Annual Workshop for School Directors:** Annually, often during the beginning of the academic year, SEMS hosts half-day workshops at the state level that bring together school directors from public schools.[41] These workshops include an overview of the dropout problem, both nationally and within the specific state; and provide an opportunity for schools to share experiences and best practices for reducing dropout and set individual goals and a plan for addressing dropout over the next year. Workshop participants include directors of public schools and subsystem representatives in that state. On some occasions, directors will send assistant directors, guidance counselors or a head teacher in their place. These individuals often change from year to year. The size of different workshops can vary by state and year, ranging from small groups to as many as 600 to 800 people. According to program staff, about 10,000 people on average have attended the workshop each year since it began in 2013.

→ **Scholarships:** During the 2013 to 2014 school year, SEMS introduced a new scholarship under its National Scholarship Program specifically focused on reducing dropout in upper secondary school. School directors and teachers identify students at risk of dropping out and nominate them at any point during the school year for the scholarship. The scholarship amount ranges from MEX$650 to MEX$875 per month (approximately US$34 to US$46), with higher amounts awarded to women and students in the second and third years of upper secondary school (INEE, 2017).[42] In 2013 to 2014, youth who were at risk of dropping out were were 216,891 scholarships, increasing to more than 300,000 scholarships for the 2015 to 2016 school year (INEE, 2017). While this scholarship is strategically linked to the *Yo No Abandono* toolkit and workshops, it is managed by a different team within SEMS and financed separately from the initiative and is not included in the scope of this case study.

Finance and Governance

Yo No Abandono does not have its own budget nor does it provide financial resources to state or school actors to carry out any activities. SEMS produces materials and conducts workshops using its general operating budget.

Within SEMS, the *Coordinación Sectorial de Desarrollo Académico* [Sectoral Coordination of Academic Development] oversees *Yo No Abandono*. They oversee designing materials, conducting workshops and monitoring activities. State education officials play a supportive, coordinating role in helping distribute toolkits and arranging logistics for annual workshops (e.g., finding a location and inviting participants). The main point of contact at the state level is often the representative of federal SEMS in each state but this team may also work closely with local secretaries of education and subsystem representatives (Box 6).

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40. All Yo No Abandono manuals are available online at https://www.gob.mx/sep/documentos/manuales-yo-no-abandono.

41. Whether workshops include directors from federal schools only, or federal, state, and autonomous may vary by state.

42. For the 2017-18 academic year, male students could receive monthly amounts of MX$650 in year one, MX$725 in year two, and MX$800 in year three of upper secondary school. Female students could receive MX$725 in year one, MX$800 in year two, and MX$875 in year three, respectively (INEE, 2017).

Monitoring and Evaluation of Yo No Abandono and Evidence of Effectiveness

SEMS tracks dropout rates at the federal and state levels but does not monitor *Yo No Abandono* activities in schools or their results, though individual states or school subsystems may carry out their own monitoring and evaluation. In 2015, however, SEMS conducted a retrospective cohort study using data from a survey of directors, teachers and youth in 147 schools across 12 states and five subsystems on both federal and state levels. The study aimed to measure relationships between implementation of the strategy and dropout during the 2014 to 2015 school year. In surveyed schools, SEMS randomly selected 12,693 youth, including 11,477 still in school and 1,216 who had dropped out between the first and second semester (SEP, 2015).

Ninety-three percent of these directors reported having received the *Yo No Abandono* manuals. After controlling for students' socioeconomic status, grade average, age, gender, subsystem and state, the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between having these manuals and dropout: students in schools having manuals were 38 percent less likely to have dropped out in the previous year than those in schools without manuals. Directors were also surveyed about which recommended strategy actions they had implemented in their schools. Compared to students in schools that implemented no recommended actions, students were 81 percent less likely to have dropped out in schools where directors reported carrying out all six of the following[43]:

1. Organizing sessions between teachers, parents and students around implementing a dropout reduction plan in the school,

2. Applying a mechanism for identifying and tracking at-risk students,

3. Promoting healthy coexistence among students,

4. Hosting a workshop for students on decision-making skills,

5. Having a peer tutoring program, and

6. Having a socioemotional skills development program.

Overall, the findings are promising, but should be considered with caution due to the small size of the comparison group, which included only those schools where directors reported not having received manuals, or not having implemented any actions. These schools may also have inherent differences that make students more likely to drop out that were not controlled for including school size and locality (e.g. rural or urban). Additionally, we do not know which of these six activities has the most impact. The data on

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43. This correlation is statistically significant.

implementation of certain activities primarily relied on self-reporting from directors. There were noticeable discrepancies between what directors and teachers reported.[44] In addition, the study only analyzed dropout between the first and second semester of the 2014 to 2015 school year and does not consider students who leave school between academic years or students who drop out for one semester and reenroll (SEP & INSP, 2015; SEP, n.d.).

BOX 7— *Yo No Abandono* Survey of School Directors (2015)

SEMS developed an online survey for school directors that asked specific questions about each of the 12 manuals. More than 6,000 school directors across 17 subsystems completed this survey. Responses revealed that among responding schools:

→ 92% implemented the strategy
→ 70% of schools developed an action plan but 58% did not monitor it
→ 27% of schools did not frequently monitor attendance
→ 25% of schools had not defined a dropout reduction goal
→ 86% of schools held tutoring activities once or more each week
→ More than 90% of directors promoted socioemotional skills development among students, especially around teamwork and empathy
→ The main reported actions related to improving communication with parents were individual and group meetings and invitations to extracurricular events

It is important to note that the data is drawn from a non-representative sample, and there may be a bias in which directors chose to complete the survey. Therefore, these results cannot be applied nationally to the entire strategy.

Source: SEP (n.d.).

SEMS has also solicited additional ad hoc feedback from school-level actors to adjust the *Yo No Abandono* strategy. In 2014, during the initiative's second year of operation, SEMS held focus groups with school directors and conducted an online survey, which led to the creation of six additional manuals for the toolkit that addressed topics directors had requested. In 2015, SEMS carried out another, similar online survey of more than 6,000 school directors (Box 7).

Findings

Drawing on a review of program documents, interviews and focus group discussions with federal, state and school-level stakeholders, this section presents seven key findings on Mexico's experience in reducing dropout.

1. **There has been a shift in the way the education system in Mexico perceives dropout, from a risky behavior to a symptom of more comprehensive change needed within secondary schools.**

When *Construye T* was first designed in 2007, its narrower focus on risk prevention echoed the broader system's approach to dropout, which was treated as a reflection of individuals' irresponsible choices and behaviors. Today, dropout is increasingly recognized as a symptom of systemic education issues, such as hostile school environments, an irrelevant curriculum and poor teaching quality.

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44. For example, while 93 percent of directors reported having received the manuals and 92 percent reported having carried out sessions to implement the strategy, only 60 percent and 69 percent of teachers, respectively, reported these same results.

This transformation at both national and local levels has been bolstered by large studies that provide local evidence on the issue, initiatives that take a holistic approach to youth development and greater recognition of the responsibility that schools have in addressing dropout.

Large-scale, national surveys in 2010 and 2011 presented strong evidence that students do not just drop out of upper secondary school because they are poor or irresponsible, but because they also encounter significant yet preventable challenges while enrolled in school. The results of these surveys created an important foundation for reforms to upper secondary education and the design of *Yo No Abandono*.

In addition, *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono* both take broader, more positive approaches, rather than focusing interventions on at-risk students or vulnerable youth only. *Construye T*'s work has shifted from preventing negative behaviors to creating positive change in all youth through socioemotional learning. *Construye T*'s work to date has helped teachers across the country to recognize the importance of holistic youth development and successfully influenced national education policy to weave socioemotional learning into the upper secondary curriculum and regular instruction time. While *Yo No Abandono* still focuses on reducing dropout as a singular objective, its trainings and manuals heavily emphasize broader school-related causes of dropout and outline diverse, endogenous solutions that school leaders can employ to make upper secondary schools a more supportive place for youth (e.g. tutoring, parent engagement, participatory planning).

Mindset change is increasingly evident at the local level, supported by the education system placing greater stress on schools to take responsibility in preventing and responding to dropout. Historically, most efforts to reduce dropout involved external support (i.e. scholarships and cash transfers) or external actors to bring about change in schools, as *Construye T*'s civil society partners did in the first few years of implementation. Now, *Construye T*'s increasingly pedagogical approach to socioemotional learning and emphasis on building capacity among school directors and teachers encourages schools to drive change in their own institutions. Similarly, *Yo No Abandono* emphasizes the strong leadership role that school directors should play in addressing a multitude of dropout-related causes.

2. Financial support for low-income students remains an important complement to school-based solutions to address dropout.

While education system actors increasingly recognize that changes within schools are needed to improve retention, poverty remains a significant obstacle for students in completing upper secondary school. Scholarships and other forms of financial support offer incentives for youth to stay in school and counter the pull factor of employment (as well as the push factor of high school-related fees). Scholarships can help communicate the importance of an education, particularly for women who receive higher awards than men. Some individuals at the local level described that family members, in addition to students, also see the symbolic value of the scholarship. Evidence of positive effects that *Prospera* has on the retention of poor students also supports these perceptions (Kattan & Székely, 2014).

However, not everyone supports scholarships as a means to reduce dropout. A small number of respondents described scholarships as creating negative incentives. For example, they describe that scholarships may make students dependent on financial support to see value in their education and that schools may see scholarships as the solution rather than take responsibility for trying to keep youth in school.

3. Broad support for gender equality is not matched by inclusion of gender in the design or implementation of efforts to reduce dropout; moreover, entrenched cultural norms remain a challenge.

There is a strong policy narrative in Mexico around the importance of gender equity. The country often leads the region when it comes to the generation of sex-disaggregated evidence. The 2006 Gender Law on Equality between Men and Women spurred new federal gender equality policies, established a central authority to coordinate efforts across government and led to legal requirements that a gender lens be considered in budgeting processes (OECD, 2017c). Moreover, taking a gender perspective in all programs across the federal public administration is one of three crosscutting strategies included in the National Development Plan for 2013 to 2018.[45] However, programs often do not leverage the tools at their disposal, like sex-disaggregated data, to put these policies into practice (OECD, 2017c).

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45. Retrieved from http://pnd.gob.mx/.

When asked how gender may affect dropout and how programs could consider this, respondents universally agreed that gender equity is critical. Yet, when discussing causes or factors influencing dropout, both education officials and school actors tended to highlight teen pregnancy as a key issue and the need to support young women's education –despite strong evidence that young men are actually more likely to drop out.

Consultations revealed several suggestions on how *Construye T, Yo No Abandono*, or other programs could consider a gender-sensitive approach. Gender was either seen as a factor implicitly considered in program activities or something to be contemplated in the future. Despite both initiatives having either a central or partial focus on socioemotional skills development, they rarely address gender explicitly in related training or materials. Addressing gender explicitly includes the different socioemotional needs of young women and men. For example, there is only one page in the *Yo No Abandono* manual on developing socioemotional skills that broadly encourages educators to recognize students' diversity in terms of gender, race and other aspects of their identities, and "promote" gender equality but does not provide guidance beyond that. In fact, respondents tended to see other programs' work in this area[46] as sufficient to address the issue. However, multiple respondents did highlight the use of both masculine and feminine articles –"*los*" and "*las*"– when speaking to or about youth as one way in which initiatives try to be gender-sensitive.

One persistent challenge to incorporating a gender-sensitive or gender-transformative approach in dropout reduction includes cultural norms and traditional gender roles, especially in rural communities. In Mexico, young men may feel pressured to leave school to work and support their families, while young women may drop out to take care of the household or raise a family. Respondents discussed how these deeply entrenched ideas can present obstacles, particularly for school actors, to engage families and the broader community around reducing dropout (Finding 7).

4. Neither Construye T nor Yo No Abandono conducted a rigorous pilot to test implementation and effectiveness of program activities, which complicates their ability to scale up effectively.

Neither initiative carried out a rigorous pilot program to test implementation or effectiveness of program activities. This type of data is critical for understanding what does and does not work and under what conditions. This data will also inform plans for eventual scale-up.

The original development of *Construye T* did not include an evaluation design, creating significant limitations for determining its effectiveness; the 2013 impact evaluation, consequently, had to use secondary data. Meanwhile, when *Construye T* shifted its focus to socioemotional learning in 2014, it became one of the first large-scale programs of its kind in the region and a pioneer in determining how best to measure these skills at scale. However, the program did not conduct a pilot to test different measurement options. The *Construye T* model has undergone numerous changes over the last decade. These modifications can be difficult to introduce to thousands of schools already operating the program, especially since they span different states and subsystems.

Similarly, *Yo No Abandono* did not initially pilot its activities. Instead, it started off being implemented on a large scale. The initiative distributed manuals to all public schools and held workshops for more than 8,000 school leaders without a plan in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy. School leaders' autonomy and flexibility to determine which activities to carry out has also made it difficult to isolate the effects of *Yo No Abandono* from the influence of numerous other school activities and interventions across the country.

5. Schools implement the two initiatives inconsistently, selecting certain activities or tools as they deem appropriate, depending on local needs and capacity.

Limited coordination at the central program levels, overburdened school staff and inherent variation between different subsystems in Mexico contribute to uneven or weakened implementation at the local level.

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46. For example, scholarships for young women and projects to reduce gender-based violence in school.

Firstly, despite both sitting within SEMS, *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono* have been designed and implemented by different program teams. These teams communicate informally but do not systematically coordinate the two initiatives, in part because they see their efforts as distinct and do not consider one program to affect the other.

Secondly, at the school level, *Yo No Abandono* and *Construye T* are two of many strategies and interventions. This can create a burden for school staff who must understand, coordinate, and implement numerous activities, often in addition to their busy schedules. For teachers, who must often allocate extra time for these activities with limited support or incentives, this can contribute to poor coordination or a reluctance to implement new programs. For example, the process evaluation of *Construye T* in 2016 found that teachers were confused about how to prioritize the program activities. Additionally, the sequence, frequency and intensity of activities were highly inconsistent across the program. In fact, implementation was often not taking place at all. *Construye T*'s recent integration into the new education model may improve consistency by making socioemotional skills development a uniform responsibility across all teachers in upper secondary school. The explicit inclusion of socioemotional skills development in the curriculum may also help teachers to see skill building activities as central to their jobs instead of as an extra task.

Finally, fragmented authority over upper secondary schools and inherent diversity in the supply create an unfavorable environment for consistent program implementation. Federal, state and autonomous schools report to different authorities to whom state and autonomous subsystems may not feel as obligated to implement a federal program or strategy, especially without additional incentives. For example, federally financed subsystems have been more nimble and responsive when asked to make changes to the way the *Construye T* is implemented. Other key differences, like school size, also affect how well a program can be introduced, implemented or adapted across hundreds or thousands of schools. One respondent emphasized that, when working in both small schools with a few hundred students and large schools with 3,000 students, it can be impossible to apply the same *Yo No Abandono* strategies given their different contexts.

These factors altogether influence where programs are implemented and to what degree. School staff often coordinates or integrates initiatives organically by taking bits and pieces from different programs and tools to respond to local challenges. While this complicates the program's ability to measure impact, some respondents viewed this in a positive way, as flexibility allows them to tie together different interventions in a way that makes sense for institutions on an individual basis. Overall, there is a tension between the need to rigorously pilot, implement, and monitor activities, and a relatively decentralized program approach that emphasizes local autonomy and decision-making power.

6. State and school-level champions can improve coordination, implementation, and sustainability of initiatives to reduce dropout.

Given various strategies and programs introduced to schools and relative autonomy of subsystems (Finding 5), a "champion" at the state level can improve coordination and communication among state officials, generate buy-in from subsystem representatives, and ensure resources and attention are sufficiently directed toward these activities. For example, the representative of federal SEMS has initiated close collaboration with the local Undersecretary of Upper Secondary and Higher Education in Estado de México. Recognizing the similar objectives of both initiatives, the representative created a joint committee to oversee both *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono*. This committee holds monthly meetings with federal and state subsystem representatives who often oversee both initiatives in their institutions as well. These actions consolidate communication across multiple levels of the system and many subsystems and allow schools to more easily navigate the presence of different, yet complementary strategies. This show of strong leadership also demonstrates a clear commitment that both *Yo No Abandono* and *Construye T* are education priorities in the state.

At the school level, champions –whether self-appointed or intentionally selected by the program– can help build local ownership over these initiatives. They can stimulate more intensive implementation and create a greater likelihood of sustainability. Champions are those individuals who are motivated and enthusiastic to take on an initiative, have availability, have the right professional profile and are well-positioned to connect with the diverse stakeholders who must be involved when tackling dropout (e.g., teachers, parents, students). Both *Construye T* and *Yo No Abandono* identify directors as the primary leaders at the school level, though these individuals may not always have the availability or level of motivation to do this well. For example, several respondents highlighted cases where guidance counselors could more easily connect with students and reach out to parents.

7. Engaging parents is important but remains an ongoing challenge for school actors in reducing dropout.

There is general agreement that involving parents is important to reducing dropouts.[47] Indeed, *Yo No Abandono* explicitly focuses on this topic in one of its twelve manuals. Respondents frequently cited the following factors that can heavily influence whether a student stays in school: a lack of support at home, low expectations that parents have for their children, cultural norms (e.g., family expectations that differ between young men and young women) (Finding 3) or limited value placed on an upper secondary education by families.

However, it is still unclear how upper secondary schools can best address this. Some actions taken by schools include posting student information online, texting parents when a student misses school, or hosting meetings for parents, especially in the very first semester. Some schools found that these activities may work, at least initially, but not reach the most disengaged parents while ongoing activities, such as texting parents, may require more time than dedicated school staff have available. Often, it is not explicit which school actor holds the primary responsibility for reaching out to parents. Teachers are often too busy to do this and, while guidance counselors may perform parental outreach in some small schools, this can be challenging in very large schools with thousands of students and only one or two guidance counselors.

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47. Throughout this report, we use the term "parents" to broadly encompass the role of primary caregiver. We recognize that other members of a student's household, such as grandparents, may play this critical role.

05

05
Chile

National Context

Dropout Trends

Over the last 25 years, Chile has shown remarkable progress in increasing access to secondary education. This trend reflects an increase in both the proportion of students entering secondary school and the proportion who remain in school until graduation. Between 1990 and 2013, the proportion of youth between the ages of 20 and 24 who had completed secondary school increased from 52 percent to 82 percent for men and from 56 percent to 88 percent for women (Figure 10) (JUNAEB, 2015). This expansion in access has taken place in a context of declining poverty. The proportion of the population living in poverty fell from 29 to 12 percent between 2006 and 2015 (MIDES, 2016).

FIGURE 10— Secondary completion by sex (20 to 24 year olds)
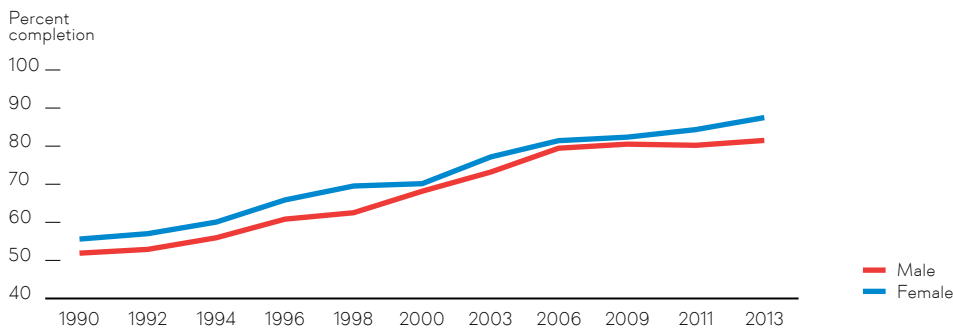
Source: JUNAEB (2015)

These gains have been supported by a decrease in the dropout rate over the same period. The proportion of 20 to 24 year old students who had dropped out of school decreased from 44 to 16 percent between 1990 and 2011 (CEN, 2014).

The greatest gains in enrollment over this period were seen in the lowest-income populations (Figure 11). Though the secondary completion rate for 20 to 24 year olds in the highest-income quintile increased from 85 to 95 percent between 1990 and 2013, the completion rate for the lowest-income quintile dramatically increased from 28 percent to 75 percent over the same period. While there remains a sizeable gap in the completion rate between income groups, the gap in completion rates between the lowest- and highest-income quintiles decreased from 57 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 2013 (JUNAEB, 2015).

FIGURE 11— Secondary completion by income quintile (20 to 24 year olds)
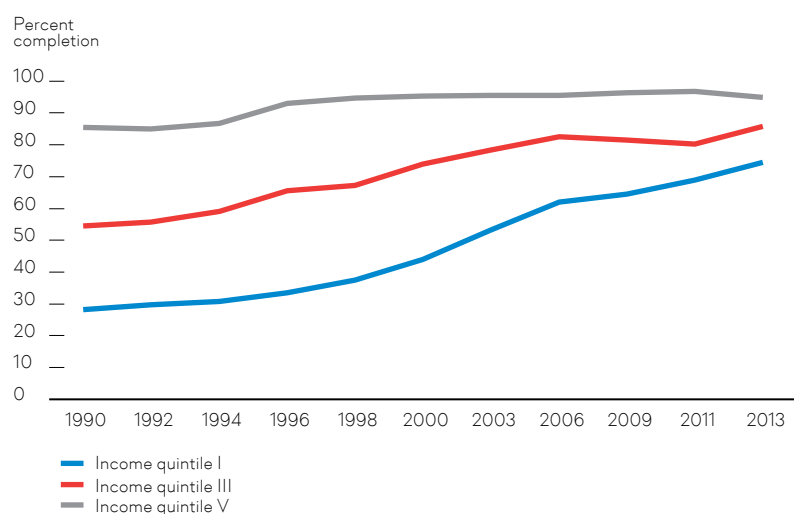
Source: JUNAEB (2015)

Dropout Factors

Dropout is a complex phenomenon and is linked to large number of factors at the individual and school levels. In this section, we first discuss exogenous factors related to dropout. We then present research on factors endogenous to school systems.

Although the gap in school completion rates between high- and low-income groups has markedly closed, socioeconomically vulnerable groups still face school repetition and early exit at much higher rates. Lower-income students have much higher dropout rates than high-income students. In 2011, among 15 to 19 year olds, 2 percent in the highest income quintile had dropped out of school, compared to 12 percent in the lowest-income quintile (CEN, 2014). A longitudinal study tracking the cohort graduating secondary education in 2016 from fifth through twelfth grade found that 19 percent of students classified as vulnerable had left the formal education system before graduating. Meanwhile, just 6 percent of students classified as not vulnerable (Opazo, 2017).[48] The same study identified vulnerable students as being more likely to repeat a grade or temporarily leave school. Only 42 percent

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48. The vulnerable cohort in this study is composed of those who were classified under the highest level of vulnerability under the SEP law every year between 5th and 12th grade, totaling 10 percent of the cohort. The "not vulnerable" cohort was composed of students who were never considered vulnerable under SEP between 5th and 12th grade, accounting for 51 percent of the cohort (Opazo, 2017).

of vulnerable students consecutively enrolled in the subsequent year of school between fifth and twelfth grades, compared to 67 percent of non-vulnerable students. Students in rural areas are more likely to drop out of school than their urban counterparts. In 2011, among the 15 to 19 year olds, 13 percent of rural students had dropped out of school, compared to 9 percent of urban students (CEN, 2014).

Gender also affects the likelihood of leaving school early. Female students are six percentage points more likely to complete secondary school than male students (JUNAEB, 2015). Motivations for dropping out also differ between young women and men (CEN, 2014):[49]

→ Young men are more likely to drop out because of a lack of interest, which accounts for 19 to 26 percent of dropouts, compared to 6 to 15 percent among young women.

→ While 15 to 24 percent of female dropout is attributed to pregnancy or motherhood, less than 1 percent of male dropout is attributed to fatherhood.

→ Economic factors[50] account for between 18 and 30 percent of dropouts among young men, compared to between 12 and 15 percent among young women.

→ Young men are more likely to leave school because of poor academic performance, which accounts for 9 to 18 percent of dropouts, compared to between 2 and 4 percent of dropout among young women.

→ One survey suggests that 12 percent of dropout among young women is caused by the need to perform household tasks, compared to just 1 percent among young men (CEN, 2014).

Dropout is much higher in secondary education than in primary education. The dropout rate spikes at transition points. Dropout is significantly elevated between the last year of basic and the first year of secondary education, as well as between the second and third years of secondary education (CEN, 2014). Low attendance, low grades and problems with discipline have all been identified as correlating with dropout. A 2001 study found that average attendance rates, repetition rates, and the mother's level of education account for 48 percent of the variation in dropout between schools (Marshall & Correa, 2001). Students who are older than average for their grade[51] are more likely to drop out. In 2011, among 16 to 17 year old students, 93 percent who were not older than average remained in school, compared to just under 80 percent of students who were older than average (CEN, 2014).

Dropout is also related to the type of school that students attend. Students that attend municipal schools are much more likely to drop out than those who attend subsidized private or paid private schools.[52] The average annual dropout rate in municipal schools is 4 percent, compared to 2 percent in subsidized private schools, and just 0.3 percent in paid private schools (BCN, 2014). Differences in dropout rates are more likely driven by differences in student background caused by selection bias rather than differences in school environment, management and pedagogy. Low-income and rural students are more likely to attend municipal schools, while higher-income students attend subsidized and paid private schools. Student background has not been controlled for when comparing dropout rates between schools, but differences in student achievement on standardized tests between municipal and subsidized private schools disappear after controlling for student background (ACE, 2015).

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49. The two surveys considered in these comparisons are a 2011 *Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional* [National Socioeconomic Characterization] (CASEN) survey of parents of school dropouts aged 16 and 17, and the Sixth National Youth Survey, conducted in 2009, which directly asked out-of-school 15 to 17 year olds for their reason for not studying (CEN, 2014).

50. These include labor market entry and personal or family economic needs.

51. This is often because students repeat a grade or have spent time out of school.

52. A description of these school types can be found on pages 58-59.

Overview of Secondary Education in Chile

In Chile, compulsory education currently includes one year of kindergarten, eight years of basic education and four years of secondary education (Table 6).

TABLE 6— Compulsory education in Chile

KINDERGARTEN (5 YEARS OLD)	BASIC (6-13 YEARS OLD)								SECONDARY (14-17 YEARS OLD)			
1st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th

The *Ministerio de Educación de Chile* [Ministry of Education of Chile] (MINEDUC) is responsible for developing educational policy, setting performance standards, developing curricula and financing municipal and subsidized private schools. Various independent bodies coordinated by MINEDUC enforce compliance with regulation, supervise the use of resources in schools and evaluate student learning (MINEDUC, 2016b; MIDES, 2013). In each of Chile's 15 regions, a *Secretaría Regional Ministerial* [regional ministry secretariat] (SEREMI) represents MINEDUC and is responsible for coordinating MINEDUC's support to schools and regulating school operations (MINEDUC, 2016b).

MINEDUC is not directly responsible for education provision. Instead, municipalities and private actors serve as school owners and administrators. Private schools operate with almost full autonomy, and municipal schools are empowered to take nearly every decision either at the school or the municipal level, within generous constraints set by MINEDUC (OECD, 2013a). The public or private school administrator determines resource allocations between the schools they oversee, which includes hiring teaching staff and maintaining school infrastructure. Education in public schools in Chile's 345 municipalities is managed by municipal corporations or municipal education departments, in 15 percent and 85 percent of municipalities, respectively. Each municipal body manages the group of schools in the corresponding area with a median of 13 schools. Private schools may either be managed individually or in groups, though only 11 percent of private administrators manage more than one school (MINEDUC, 2016b).

Education Provision and Administration

Four kinds of schools provide basic and secondary education in the Chilean formal education system:

1. **Municipal**: public schools that are owned and operated by municipalities and funded by the state;

2. **Subsidized Private**: schools that are owned and operated by non-profit individuals or entities and are funded by the state;

3. **Paid Private**: schools that are privately owned and operated, and are principally funded through school fees charged to families; and

4. **Delegated Administration**: schools that are owned and funded by the state, but are operated by private, non-profit entities.[53]

In addition to these formal schooling models, many students – particularly those who are vulnerable – see entry into the adult education system as preferable to completing a traditional education (Box 8).

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53. Only a small number of these schools operate at the secondary level. They are not discussed in depth in this report.

BOX 8— Adult Education

In the adult system, a certificate of completion of secondary education can be completed in two years – two years shorter than in the secondary system. This is achieved through evening classes, which allow for concurrent employment (Espinoza Díaz et al., 2014). In 2016, 36 percent of the cohort of vulnerable students had dropped out of secondary school, but 17 percent of the cohort was enrolled in adult education. For the non-vulnerable cohort, 15 percent were no longer in secondary school and 9 percent were enrolled in adult education (Opazo, 2017).

In recent years, subsidized private schools have seen continual growth in enrollment, while enrollment in municipal schools has declined (Figure 12). In 2014, municipal schools accounted for 37 percent of basic and secondary enrollment, compared to 54 percent in subsidized private and 8 percent in paid private schools. Schools with delegated administration only account for 1 percent of basic and secondary enrollment (MINEDUC, 2016b).

FIGURE 12— Proportion of enrollment in basic and secondary school
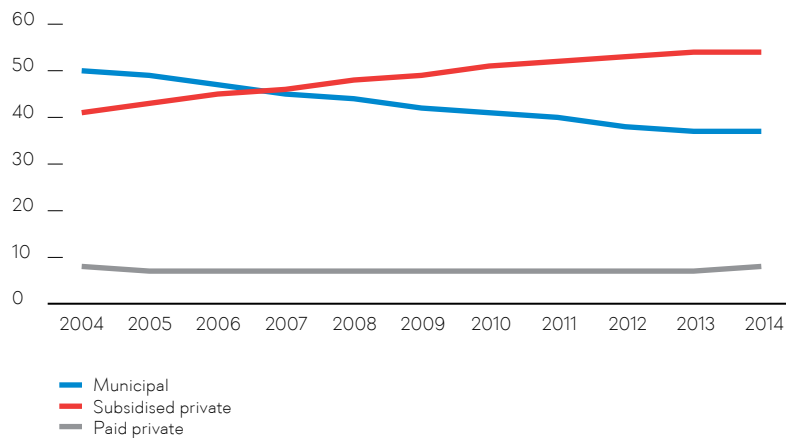
Source: MINEDUC (2016)

Virtually all enrollment in paid private schools is drawn from households in the highest-income quintile. Higher-income students are also more likely to attend subsidized private schools than lower-income students. Nevertheless, nearly half of students in the lowest two income quintiles attend subsidized private schools (Figure 13).

MINEDUC and municipal or private school administrators share responsibility for ensuring children successfully complete 12 years of schooling. MINEDUC is responsible for distributing funding and developing curricula, policy frameworks and standards necessary to ensure that schools provide adequate conditions for equitable schooling. School administrators for both municipalities and private schools are responsible for providing education and implementing strategies to ensure that favorable conditions exist such that children can complete secondary education and must respond to both educational and socioeconomic factors that could prevent the completion of secondary school (FONIDE, 2011).

FIGURE 13— Enrollment rate in secondary schools by provider and income quintile (2011)

- ● Municipal
- ● Subsidized private
- ● Paid private
- ● Delegated administration
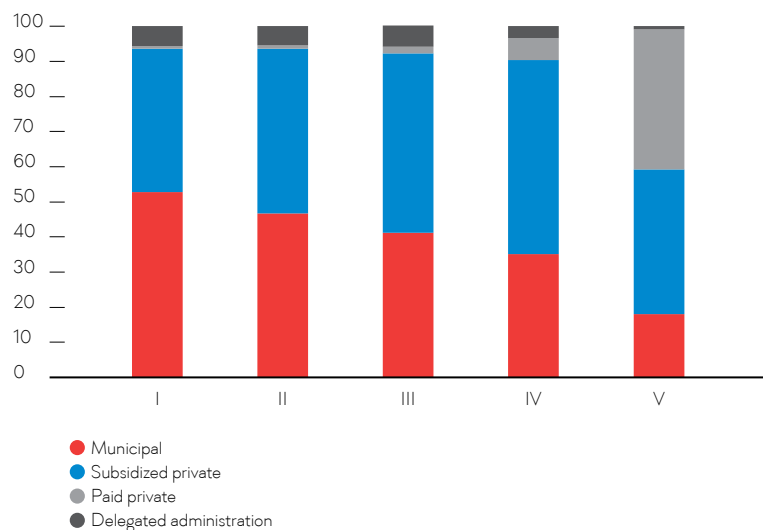
Source: MIDES (2013)

Education Finance

The proportion of Chile's GDP allocated to education increased from 5 percent in 2004 to nearly 9 percent in 2013, with 3 percent coming from private sources and 6 percent coming from public sources. In real terms, public education spending grew by an average of 9 percent each year between 2004 and 2013. Education as a proportion of government spending has also grown over this period, increasing from 13 to 20 percent of total government spending. Between 2004 and 2013, spending on tertiary education has grown most quickly, increasing from 14 to 23 percent of the education budget, while allocations to secondary have remained roughly constant, changing from 21 to 20 percent. In actual spending, however, this translates to an increase in per-student secondary expenditures of 64 percent between 2005 and 2012, reaching 1.6 million Chilean pesos, or US$3,300 in constant 2013 dollars (MINEDUC, 2016b).

Municipal and subsidized private schools use the same financing modalities. Municipal and subsidized private schools are given a subsidy based on the school's average monthly attendance, an indicator that is sensitive to student absenteeism and dropout. Additional funds are allocated to schools based on the number of enrolled students with economic or social vulnerability. Roughly 71 percent of school funding is allocated based on average monthly attendance, 15 percent is based on the number of enrolled students with vulnerability and the remainder is based on other factors (MINEDUC, 2016b).

This system of school financing is designed to create market competition between schools. Schools are given a rating based on standardized test scores, and progression and retention rates. These ratings are designed to guide school choice and enrollment, which affects the levels and types of funding that schools receive (MINEDUC, 2016b). However, the promotion of school choice, school selection practices and high-consequence standardized tests have resulted in some unintended adverse consequences. Some schools may emphasize covering tested curricula over learning, student interest or student needs. The incentive structure may induce schools to exaggerate student attendance.[54] The financing structure has also reinforced economic segregation between

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54. Interview participants noted that some schools have both official and actual attendance rates. Official rates may be exaggerated and outwardly reported, while actual rates are used to guide internal responses.

school types, with higher-income students more likely to attend subsidized private schools and lower-income students more likely to attend municipal schools. Recent policy initiatives have been directed at reducing achievement and resource gaps between economic classes, and between public and private schools.

Education Reforms Impacting Secondary Education and Dropout

In the first years of the 21st century, MINEDUC executed policies and programs with a focus on expanding resources to the most vulnerable schools and students. Beginning with the *Liceos para Todos* [High School for All] (LPT) program in 2001, the MINEDUC began implementing large-scale programs that targeted the most vulnerable schools, with the explicit objective of reducing dropout. LPT targeted schools where students had the highest dropout and repetition rates, the lowest scores on standardized tests and whose families were low-income. The program reached more than one quarter of all secondary schools. It provided additional financial and material resources to the schools as well as additional training for the teachers and a retention-oriented scholarship for at-risk students. This is known as the *Beca de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar* [School Retention Support Scholarship] (BARE). Shortly thereafter, compulsory education was expanded from 8 to 12 years in 2003, giving the state a legal mandate to ensure access to secondary education. The same year, MINEDUC introduced *Subvención Pro-Retención* [Retention Support Subsidy] (SPR), which provides an additional per-student subsidy to school administrators for each enrolled student facing socioeconomic vulnerability and is intended to be used to provide those students with greater institutional support.

In 2009, the *Ley General de la Educación* [General Law of Education] was passed, which superseded the educational structure established under the military dictatorship and mandated the transition of compulsory education from 8 years of primary and 4 years of secondary to 6 years of both primary and secondary (MINEDUC, 2016b). MINEDUC is currently managing a gradual transition to this structure to be completed by 2025; as of 2017, most schools retain the 8-4 organization. One outcome of moving the transition to secondary education two years earlier may be to reduce secondary dropout by easing the transition between cycles and familiarizing students to the more rigorous secondary environment at an earlier point. The General Law of Education also created independent bodies under MINEDUC with the purpose of monitoring and enforcing regulations[55] and ensuring education quality.[56]

Equity-oriented initiatives continued with the *Subvención Escolar Preferencial* [Preferential School Subsidy] (SEP), which was introduced to primary schools in 2008 and secondary schools in 2011. Similar to SPR, SEP provides an additional subsidy to school administrators, based on the number of vulnerable[57] students they serve, with a higher level of funding allocated to schools enrolling above a certain proportion of vulnerable students. SEP funding is conditioned upon the development and execution of holistic school improvement initiatives, including plans directed at improving learning for at-risk students. All municipal schools and roughly 66 percent of subsidized private schools participate in SEP (OECD, 2013a), which represents 15 percent of funding received by schools (MINEDUC, 2016b).

The 2014 *Política Nacional de Convivencia Escolar* [National Policy of School Wellbeing] introduced changes to the processes of school management and introduced individuals and teams dedicated to improving the school environment at the school, municipal and regional levels.[58] These changes were accompanied by adjustments to curricula and pedagogy designed to create a more inclusive school environment (MINEDUC, 2015b).

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55. *Superintendencia de Educación* [Education Superintendence].

56. *Agencia de Calidad de la Educación* [Agency of Education Quality].

57. In the Chilean context, students are considered vulnerable if they belong to households in the lowest income quintile, or if they are beneficiaries of certain social assistance programs. See the discussion of SINAE on page 65 for additional detail on the classification of vulnerability.

58. *Convivencia escolar* [school wellbeing], is defined by MINEDUC as "a dynamic, complex, everyday phenomenon that is expressed and built in and from the interaction that exists between the different actors that make up the educational community, which share a social space and create and remake the school culture unique to that establishment" (MINEDUC, 2015b).

The 2015 Inclusion Law mandates that all subsidized private schools be not-for-profit, prohibits subsidized private schools from charging any additional fees for enrollment and prohibits private schools from selectively admitting students based on prior achievement or income. These reforms are intended to ensure equal opportunities to students regardless of socioeconomic class and to decrease educational gaps between classes (Karim et al., 2016).

Initiatives to Address Dropout Challenges in Chile

The rest of this section highlights two initiatives that use early warning systems to both identify students at risk of dropping out and activate interventions to help retain at-risk students. Table 7 summarizes information for each program, and the following sections outline their origins, evolution, structure, activities, governance and outcomes.

TABLE 7— Overview of initiatives highlighted in this report

	JUNAEB TARGETING SYSTEM	AQUÍ PRESENTE
Summary	A national early warning system used to assign interventions to help ensure school completion.	A regional intervention using psychologists and social workers within schools to improve the school environment, identify students at risk of dropping out, and develop personalized interventions for at-risk students.
Years	2001 to present	2015 to present
Main activities	Maintains a database of all students and identifies dropout risk based on factors such as income, attendance, school performance, and pregnancy. Assigns interventions (BARE and PARE[a/]) to students identified as at risk for dropout.	A pair of professionals diagnoses school needs and conducts customized activities to improve the school environment. The professionals monitor student attendance as a proxy for dropout risk, and develop action plans for improving attendance based on student needs, and incorporating community resources.
Structure	Overseen by MINEDUC (2001 to 2007) and JUNAEB (2007 to present).	Overseen by Santiago SEREMI of Education (2015 to 2016); individual municipalities (2017).
Reach (2016)	All students in municipal and subsidized private schools.	23,410 students in 52 municipal schools in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago.
Financing	Financed through MINEDUC; collection of primary and secondary data comes at minimal cost to JUNAEB.	2015 to 2016 pilot funded by the Santiago Regional Metropolitan Council; currently financed through municipal SEP funds.

a/ The *Programa de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar* [School Retention Support Program] (PARE) is a psychosocial intervention targeted at students with a high level of dropout risk. The program is described in greater detail in Box 10.

JUNAEB Targeting system

The *Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas* [National Board of School Assistance and Scholarships] (JUNAEB) falls within MINEDUC and is a national body that administers a wide variety of scholarships and school assistance programs. It has the mission of ensuring that all students successfully complete 12 years of schooling, and seeks to promote greater equity in education outcomes between socioeconomic classes.[59] The organization focuses on the most vulnerable students and manages a suite of programs and interventions primarily directed at students with socioeconomic or educational vulnerability. Interventions exist for students between pre-kindergarten and the last year of secondary school and are designed to accompany vulnerable students throughout their educational trajectory and ensure school completion. JUNAEB's department of planning is tasked with appropriately targeting interventions to vulnerable students.

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59. While JUNAEB has existed since 1964, it began to have a profound effect on education access among marginalized populations in the early 1990s. In the decade following the fall of the dictatorship, JUNAEB's budget doubled, resulting in the expansion of the school feeding program, an increase in student health services and the introduction of programs to grant students school inputs such as uniforms and free transportation. Together, these policies had a profound impact in expanding education access among low-income and marginalized students (JUNAEB, 2017d).

Identification of Vulnerable Students

JUNAEB uses a system called *Sistema Nacional de Asignación con Equidad* [National Equitable Allocation System] (SINAE) to assign scholarships and other interventions. SINAE began operation in 2004 and was developed by JUNAEB in order to incorporate multidimensional measures of vulnerability. Using an array of primary and secondary data covering all students in municipal and subsidized private schools between pre-kindergarten and the fourth year of secondary school, SINAE assigns students into three levels or priorities of vulnerability (Figure 14).

The allocation of a suite of JUNAEB programs and interventions is structured around this SINAE framework, although each intervention has its own targeting methodology. These interventions range from a school-feeding program to allocation of free school materials and disbursement of various scholarships. The strategy to assist second priority students who face a high risk of dropping out is composed of two primary interventions – BARE and PARE (Boxes 9 and 10). While these programs are specifically designed to address dropout risk, other JUNAEB interventions that provide school lunch, free transportation and school materials overlap with the same population and may also help promote retention in students at risk of dropping out (MINEDUC, 2015a). JUNAEB maintains a holistic vision regarding intervention. While a set of programs may specifically target dropout reduction at the secondary level, there is a broader understanding that JUNAEB interventions at all levels serve to ensure that students successfully complete 12 years of education.

FIGURE 14— SINAE Classification of student vulnerability

First Priority
Students in extreme poverty (5 percent with highest socioeconomic vulnerability)
Beneficiaries of social assistance programs such as *Chile Solidario*[60] or *Red SENAME*[61]

Second Priority
Students in the most socioeconomically vulnerable 20 percent of households, and are either:
- 1st basic to 4th secondary: The student has low attendance, or low academic achievement.
- 7th basic to 3rd secondary: The student has a high risk of dropout, based on student household income (from MIDES), attendance and age for grade (from MINEDUC), and the school's level of vulnerability (percentage of students given a SINAE vulnerability classification).

BARE and PARE

Third Priority
Students in the most socioeconomically vulnerable 20 percent of households, but who do not meet the other risk factors outlined for first or second priority.

Source: JUNAEB (2017a)

60. *Chile Solidario* is a multidimensional poverty assistance program, which provides households with psychosocial support via personalized mentoring and guaranteed access to subsidies, including for safe drinking water, for elderly or chronically sick individuals, and for school retention through BARE (Hoces de la Guarda et al., 2011).

61. *Red SENAME* is the network of programs operated by the *Servicio Nacional de Menores* [National Service of Minors], which are concerned with protecting the rights of children and youth.

Data Sources

Data used by JUNAEB to indicate dropout risk comes from a variety of primary and secondary sources and relies extensively on external networks. Primary data is collected each year through surveys distributed by teachers to all students in the first and fourth years of basic education and the first year of secondary. An additional survey is distributed to all students identified as pregnant, mothers or fathers. However, this relies on self-identification by students, which does not always happen. A teacher or staff member in every municipal and subsidized private school is responsible for making sure that students fill out the surveys. Teachers are also responsible for entering the survey data into a database. Data accuracy and completeness therefore depend heavily on teacher cooperation. All student-level data used by JUNAEB is sex-disaggregated, but beyond an incorporation of pregnancy and parenting, gender is not considered during data collection or determination of dropout risk. In 2013, 57 percent of BARE recipients were young women (JUNAEB, 2015).

Student-level secondary data is received by JUNAEB from a variety of MINEDUC departments, and from ministries outside of MINEDUC. Attendance, enrollment and student achievement data is received from MINEDUC. For example, data on student participation in interventions managed by other ministries is received from social protection programs operated by the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Health programs targeting children and youth.

The data collection and targeting process comes at a very low cost to JUNAEB. The only costs incurred by the program are for central personnel, IT and printing surveys. JUNAEB does not pay teachers to distribute surveys, which nearly eliminates the cost of data collection. However, this adds another responsibility to already-overburdened teachers. Receiving shared secondary data also comes at no cost to JUNAEB.

An outcome of this method of targeting and data use is that the system is unable to quickly respond to changes in student need. Because much of the data is only received on an annual basis there can be a lag of a year or more in responding to detected risks. Similarly, decisions regarding which students are to be awarded the BARE scholarship are made annually, during the first months of the school year, rather than on a rolling basis. While this method can effectively identify the students most likely to drop out in the long run, it is unable to address this risk in the short term. JUNAEB therefore targets its dropout reduction interventions – BARE and PARE (Boxes 9 and 10) – at students with characteristics indicating risk for eventual dropout. To date, no evaluations on PARE's impact on dropout have been conducted, and evaluations have shown mixed results on BARE's impact on dropout (JUNAEB, 2015).

BOX 9— BARE Scholarship

Like the JUNAEB targeting system, the *Beca de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar* [School Retention Scholarship] (BARE) began under LPT as a cash transfer to help vulnerable secondary students stay in school and to close the gap between socioeconomic classes. The program, inspired by other conditional cash transfer programs throughout Latin America, was established in 2000 and was administered under LPT until it was transferred to JUNAEB in 2007.

The BARE scholarship provides eligible students with an annual payment of approximately US$300, divided into four installments (JUNAEB, 2017c). To keep the scholarship, students must maintain at least 85 percent attendance, with this requirement being lifted for mothers (JUNAEB, 2015). Recipients of the scholarship are preselected from high-priority schools using JUNAEB targeting data. First, schools with the highest average levels of dropout vulnerability are selected and deemed priority schools. Second, the students with the highest dropout risk within the priority schools are awarded the BARE scholarship.

In 2015, the BARE scholarship was distributed to 19,110 students across 956 schools. The number of recipients is fixed by law, and the list of the priority schools has remained fixed since 2007. Several studies have been conducted with the purpose of identifying the effect of BARE on dropout. While the evaluations indicate that the scholarship is successfully targeting students with the highest risk of dropout, its direct impact on dropout reduction is questionable – BARE recipients are no less likely to drop out than similar students who do not receive BARE (JUNAEB, 2015). Its lack of success in relation to similar successful cash transfer programs such as *Prospera* in Mexico should be targeted for additional study.

BOX 10— PARE

The Programa de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar [School Retention Support Program] (PARE) provides psychosocial support to vulnerable students in targeted secondary schools. In 2016, 3,840 students participated in PARE (JUNAEB, 2017b). The program introduces psychologists and social workers into targeted schools that conduct a variety of individual, group and school-level activities. NGOs and universities are contracted by JUNAEB to operate the program in selected schools. Program staff provide psychological support to at-risk students, and help targeted students develop psychosocial capacity and soft skills. Staff also conduct activities aimed at improving the school environment (MINEDUC, 2015a) and strengthening the ability of local networks to address student needs and provide social services (JUNAEB, 2016). In all cases, intervention is tailored to the needs of students and the school, and consequently varies considerably from school to school.

PARE is targeted using a similar mechanism to that of BARE. Program staff are placed part-time in a selection of the priority schools identified under BARE that have the highest rate of dropout and the highest numbers of students who are pregnant or parents. Participation in PARE programming is voluntary for students. All BARE recipients are invited to participate. PARE also distributes surveys, generally through teachers, to identify additional students that may benefit from program participation, incorporating measures of commitment to school and school environment. In recognition of the large number of programs being conducted in schools and the ongoing challenge of over-intervention, PARE has introduced efforts to coordinate with other school actors so as to not duplicate activities. PARE has not yet been the subject of a rigorous impact evaluation, and the extent of the program's influence on dropout reduction is unclear.

Aquí Presente

Aquí Presente is a dropout-reduction program that focuses on three activities: detection and prevention of dropout, improving the school environment, and working with community networks. The program evolved from a local dropout early warning system in the community of Peñalolén, incorporated additional program components, and was implemented as a pilot by the Santiago SEREMI of Education in 52 schools in the Santiago Region between 2015 and 2016. Its primary activities are presented in Box 11. In 2017, the program was folded into the program *Aulas de Bien Estar* [Classrooms of Prosperity] (ABE), which preserved these core activities but significantly altered its funding and administration.

Origins and Pilot Period (2010-2016)

In 2010, the municipality of Peñalolén in the region of Santiago initiated a dropout prevention early warning system, which monitored student attendance as a means of detecting at-risk students. In this system, attendance was measured monthly, and program staff followed up with students who missed more than 15 percent of the school days. An evaluation of the local pilot indicated promising results on improved attendance, lowered dropout risk and retention (Guitierrez et al., 2012). In 2015, an expanded version of the early warning system, now called *Aquí Presente*, was implemented in 52 schools throughout the Region of Santiago as a pilot.

Initially, the pilot sought to implement the program in one municipal school in each of Santiago's 52 municipalities; the program did not target subsidized private schools. The SEREMI proposed targeted schools to municipal governments based on school size and the severity of the dropout problem, and in most cases the proposals were accepted by municipal mayors. In the end, 52 basic and secondary schools were selected across 49 municipalities. [62]

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62. In three municipalities, schools did not meet program selection criteria. However, the program was implemented in more than one school in three municipalities, leading to 52 schools being selected in total.

Aquí Presente placed a pair of psychosocial professionals in each school selected for implementation. The pairs consisted of one psychologist, and one professional with a background in social work, teaching, or sociology. They are referred to by the program as a *dupla* [pair]. The two professionals were charged with implementing the program full-time at the school level. *Aquí Presente* attempted to reach a gender balance with its assignment of *duplas* to schools, though this was only possible in half of the schools given that 74 percent of the professionals hired were female (MINEDUC, 2016a).

BOX 11— *Aquí Presente* Activities

The activities carried out by *duplas* from *Aquí Presente* in targeted schools fall into three pillars:

School Wellbeing: *Aquí Presente* is anchored by a commitment to develop a school environment that is participatory, inclusive, respectful, peaceful, tolerant, and that promotes gender equality and affirms the rights of students. This line of work supports the National Policy of School Wellbeing and frames the underlying objectives of the *Aquí Presente* program. While the primary objective is creating a school environment that is conducive to student learning and wellbeing, it carries the underlying assumption that students are more likely to remain in school if the school environment embodies the aforementioned characteristics.

Duplas conducted an initial diagnostic to identify primary challenges facing the school, including problems leading students to miss school or drop out; patterns of behavior, school culture and administrative policies; and opportunities for collaboration with school and community actors. Following the diagnostic, the *dupla* develops an action plan that identifies the primary problems to address, objectives, activities, responsibilities, available resources and dates for implementation. *Aquí Presente duplas* were responsible for tailoring their activities to the needs of the school, which resulted in a wide heterogeneity in activities observed across schools.

Detecting and Preventing Dropout: The second set of activities builds heavily on the early warning system developed in Peñalolén. *Aquí Presente* uses student attendance as a proxy for dropout risk. While the measure is not complex, as it only uses one variable, it has several advantages. New data is received every day, making it more responsive than other student background characteristics. Low attendance has been shown to correlate with risk of dropout (Marshall & Correa, 2001). This correlation makes it a strong approximate measure for dropout risk. It is a data point that is already being collected by schools, so it does not require additional work to collect.

Aquí Presente collects the attendance data gathered by each school on a monthly basis. When students miss more than 15 percent of school days in a given month, a warning system is activated based on the number of days missed. When students miss between 15 and 25 percent of school days the school contacts the student or parent to understand why the student missed class and to underscore the importance of school attendance. The *Aquí Presente duplas* are responsible for following up with students who miss more than 25 percent of school days and developing an action plan to help increase attendance. Follow-ups may include activities such as home visits, interviews with parents, workshops with parents or students, or referring students to other organizations or networks in the community that may be better suited to address particular student needs.

Strengthening Local Networks: After conducting the initial school diagnostic activity, the *Aquí Presente dupla* also develops a mapping of actors internal and external to the school to lay the foundation for future collaboration. These actor mappings include programs or initiatives implemented within the school and associated professionals, public services operating in the community, non-governmental organizations and community organizations. *Duplas* use this to facilitate the coordination of *Aquí Presente*'s activities, share relevant information, optimize resource use and avoid overlap. In many cases, strong networks of actors already exist, and *duplas* use the networks to coordinate assistance for students in need. When networks are weak or when *duplas* see a gap where a useful network could be created, they work to strengthen existing or create new networks of actors.

Networks were frequently used or created to address the needs of students with severe or complex needs. In one instance, a *dupla* created a working group with a school and a hospital to help address the needs of several students with kidney disorders. In other cases, *duplas* acted as the link between the schools, young mothers, their children and hospitals to ensure that the young mothers could remain in school, and that the health needs of their children could be met.

Typically, actors in municipal schools are hired by and accountable to the municipality; there are no regular MINEDUC employees in municipal schools. The *Aquí Presente* administrative model operated contrary to this pattern. The *duplas* from *Aquí Presente* were directly hired by the MINEDUC and were overseen by seven regional coordinators, who reported to the SEREMI of Education of Santiago. *Aquí Presente* regional coordinators were also responsible for providing technical assistance to the *duplas* and communicating with school or municipal authorities in instances of conflict.

Funding

The Santiago SEREMI of Education implemented the regional pilot of the *Aquí Presente* program as a partnership between the Regional Government of Santiago and the MINEDUC. MINEDUC's traditional education financing model involves providing funding directly to schools that have a large amount of discretion regarding use of funds. An alternative funding source was necessary in order to fund the SEREMI's hiring of additional human resources (i.e. *duplas*) for direct placement in schools, which is not provided for in a SEREMI's normal budget. The *Consejo Regional Metropolitano* [Metropolitan Regional Council of Santiago] (CORE) provided funding for the *Aquí Presente* pilot to the Santiago SEREMI of Education. CORE is principally responsible for funding projects related to infrastructure but made the largely unprecedented move of investing in human resources through *Aquí Presente*.

The financing from CORE was provided through grants on a year-by-year basis. Funding was initially secured for a pilot period covering only the 2015 school year. Funding for a second year was received on the condition that *Aquí Presente* would be folded into MINEDUC at the conclusion of 2016. Beyond human resource costs, the expenses of *Aquí Presente* were minimal – desks, cell phones, and IT fees. However, the costs of the program's human resources were significant. During the pilot period, the program employed 118 personnel who were paid competitive wages. Of the 118 personnel, 104 were professionals placed in schools.

Gender Focus

Gender sensitivity is not built into *Aquí Presente* from the central program level. However, *duplas* sometimes identified gender-specific needs through their diagnostic activity, and introduced gender-transformative programming to address the identified needs. The diagnostic exercise used by the *duplas* identifies school and student needs along the focus areas of the National Policy of School Wellbeing, one of which is gender (MINEDUC, 2015b).[63] For example, one *dupla* observed that girls did not participate in sporting activities. Consequently, the *dupla* formed a girls' soccer league together with other schools, and boys were encouraged to cheer for the school's team and take on supporting roles. Another *dupla* noted greater difficulty in building ties with male students than female students. The *dupla* specifically planned more physical activities with male students to better help them engage and communicate.

Evaluation of Results

A 2015 evaluation of *Aquí Presente* found that 64 percent of students with less than 75 percent attendance improved their attendance over the 2015 school year. Targeted students increased their attendance by an average of 10 percent (MINEDUC, 2016a). However, without a valid comparison group, it is impossible to identify how much of this change came as a result of *Aquí Presente*. The same evaluation also found that *duplas* were effectively using the diagnostic exercise to identify problems faced by schools and develop strategies to confront those problems (MINEDUC, 2016a).[64]

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63. Other focus areas under the policy include student rights, holistic territorial development, participation, inclusion and institutional management (MINEDUC, 2015b).

64. *Aquí Presente* has been the subject of two external evaluations by the *Universidad de Chile* in 2015 and *GFK Adimark* in 2016. Neither of these studies is available to the public. Their results are therefore only included to the degree that they are cited in other reports.

Duplas interviewed as a part of this study expressed having developed a connection with and a commitment to the schools and the students they worked with. One *Aquí Presente* professional expressed that teacher classroom practices improved as a result of *Aquí Presente* activities, resulting from a greater focus on the needs and rights of children. Another *dupla* noted that prior to *Aquí Presente*, teachers knew which students did not attend class, but they did not know why. *Aquí Presente* introduced follow-up in cases of absences, which tells teachers why students miss class and allows for appropriate intervention on their behalf.

Transition to Aulas de Bien Estar (2017)

The Region of Santiago's funding for *Aquí Presente*'s pilot ended in 2016. In order to continue the program, the Santiago SEREMI of Education folded *Aquí Presente* into the *Aulas de Bien Estar* (ABE) initiative within the region.

ABE is a model for intersectoral management and decision-making. The model is designed to help municipalities and schools identify their most pressing needs; identify which programs should be implemented within each school; and coordinate program implementation at the school, municipal and regional levels; and it takes into account ongoing activities and existing goals and plans. The management model is designed to help reduce some of the challenges posed by over-intervention and insufficient coordination. It also serves to help schools choose and implement the programs that they need, coordinate interventions between sectors and conserve resources by ensuring that programs are not implemented unnecessarily. ABE is not directly coupled with additional financial resources. ABE forms part of MINEDUC's National Policy of School Wellbeing, but was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, JUNAEB and the *Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del consumo de Drogas y Alcohol* [National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Consumption] (SENDA). The model was initially piloted in 200 schools in 2015. Since then, it has expanded to roughly 1,000 schools throughout the country. The model is intended to eventually operate in all municipal schools.

Schools implement ABE under existing planning and goal-setting structures[65] rather than introducing additional processes with unique timelines schools would have to learn. ABE is led at the school level by the school's *encargado/a de convivencia* [head of school wellbeing] who is supported by school counselors, the school's health director, psychologists, social workers and other relevant local actors. This team implements ABE in one-year cycles, each consisting of four steps:

1. An initial diagnostic is conducted to identify and prioritize student and school needs, divided into five categories: health, family and socioeconomic need, learning, gender and sexuality, and intersectoral coordination. The diagnostic also identifies intersectoral activities already occurring at the school, gaps in program provision, and programs or entities in the community that could help fill those gaps. Perspectives of students, teachers and psychosocial support staff are included in the diagnostic.

2. Plans are then developed to address the identified needs. The plans take into account existing school resources and ongoing intersectoral activities. Crucially, diagnostics and plans are conducted and developed with school-level representatives of the Ministry of Health, SENDA, JUNAEB and other entities implementing activities in the school. This avoids a situation where each sector conducts its own diagnostic and develops independent plans, which may lead to a lack of coordination, over-intervention and an inefficient use of resources.

3. These plans are implemented over the school year, under the direction of the head of school wellbeing.

4. Finally, implementation is monitored and evaluated throughout the implementation process, and adjustments are made when it is deemed necessary.

School-level diagnostics and plans are given to the municipal administration of ABE, which is led by the municipal coordinator of school wellbeing, who coordinates activities with the municipal leaders of MINSAL, SENDA, JUNAEB and other relevant

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65. ABE is integrated into the *Proyecto Educativo Institucional* [Institutional Educational Project], which is a planning instrument used by schools to document needs and develop detailed goals and plans for improvement for the establishment, to which all actors in the educational community can commit.

institutions or municipal leaders. If programs or professionals are available at this level to address unmet needs, the municipality coordinates intervention with the school. If not, the regional level assumes responsibility, where ABE's regional working groups likewise coordinate the activities of ABE's component organizations. ABE at the regional level will identify activities or professionals from the suite of available programs under the auspices of MINEDUC, JUNAEB, SENDA and the Ministry of Health to implement in schools. ABE offers programs to support mental health, dental hygiene, reproductive health, recreation, drug resistance and life skills.

Regions can include any other government, private sector or NGO actors or institutions into the implementation of ABE. The Region of Santiago incorporated *Aquí Presente* to ABE under this type of supervision. This transition did not involve an alteration of *Aquí Presente's* methodology. Instead, it fundamentally altered its administrative and financial model. *Aquí Presente* was integrated into ABE as a modality that schools can choose to implement if they feel that it would help meet school needs. As a result, *Aquí Presente* becomes one intervention among many that schools can select. Other strategies included in ABE focus on quality of instruction, student health and drug abuse. While its integration into ABE gives a much larger number of schools the option of implementing *Aquí Presente*, the program no longer comes with funding. Whereas *Aquí Presente* in its pilot phase directly hired and placed professionals at no additional cost to schools, schools under ABE face a trade-off if they choose to implement the *Aquí Presente* methodology. Schools or municipalities must either hire professionals to act as the program's *dupla* using SEP funds or must assign the *dupla's* tasks to staff already working at a school. In environments where resources are scarce and staff are overburdened, schools or municipalities may be less likely to implement *Aquí Presente*, or less likely to implement it faithfully. One example of a municipality that has opted into *Aquí Presente* under ABE is La Pintana, which elected to implement *Aquí Presente* in its 13 schools. La Pintana's experience with adapting and implementing the program is detailed in Box 12. As of 2017, *Aquí Presente* was only incorporated into ABE in the Region of Santiago. However, other SEREMIs were in talks with the Education SEREMI of Santiago to investigate the potential for incorporating *Aquí Presente* into their regions.

BOX 12— *Aquí Presente* in La Pintana

Schools under ABE have the freedom to choose whether and how to implement *Aquí Presente*. The municipality La Pintana has chosen to implement the *Aquí Presente* methodology similarly to how it was used in the 2015-2016 period.

In La Pintana, 82 percent of students are identified as having some kind of vulnerability, making it one of the most at-risk communities in the Santiago region. Under the 2014 National Policy of School Wellbeing, all schools were required to have a head of school wellbeing, who develops school-level policies regarding student support mechanisms, student wellbeing, discipline, counseling and developing the establishment's school handbook, among other activities (MINEDUC, 2015). This individual could be hired for the purpose of executing these activities, or an existing staff member could be assigned to the coordinator position and take on the required tasks. A municipal coordinator of school wellbeing was also introduced to more intentionally develop positive school environments across the municipality. This coordinator evaluated the needs of the community, in part using the ABE diagnostic, and determined that dropout and school environment were the highest-priority needs for the municipality's 13 schools. The municipality then requested that schools hire psychosocial *duplas*, composed of a psychologist and a social worker, to support student wellbeing in each school.

After becoming aware of the *Aquí Presente* program, the municipal coordinator of school wellbeing decided to use the *Aquí Presente* methodology as a common framework for guiding and coordinating the work of psychosocial *duplas* that were already in place in schools. La Pintana is currently in the process of instructing the Heads of School Wellbeing and psychosocial *duplas* on the *Aquí Presente* methodology, and aims to have the program fully integrated by 2018. In some schools, the psychosocial *dupla* was already conducting most of the activities called for by *Aquí Presente*, such as follow-up with truant students, diagnosis of school needs, and support of networks, prior to the program's introduction. In these schools, *Aquí Presente* will likely have a minimal effect on school activities. However, *duplas* in some schools had not yet developed activities such as attendance monitoring, household visits, or workshops for teachers, students, and parents. It is hoped that systematizing the *Aquí Presente* methodology will help standardize dropout-prevention activities.

Findings

The following section presents six findings that have emerged from an analysis of Chile's experience with dropout reduction, which was conducted through a review of program documents, interviews and focus group discussions with national, regional and school-level stakeholders.

1. **Dropout is increasingly seen as a symptom of broader systemic challenges, and interventions focus on improving the school environment as a means of reducing dropout.**

In the early 2000s, the major policy thrust of the MINEDUC was expanding equity in education and reducing dropout among low-income groups, primarily through targeted support to schools with the highest levels of vulnerability. These policies contributed to a rapid increase in the secondary completion rate for low-income students. Following the rise in completion rates, dropout is no longer seen as the main priority for programs. Rather, the dropout that continues to exist is seen as a symptom of deeper structural problems in the education system, which requires holistic solutions. Consequently, dropout reduction is often one of many desired program outcomes.

This transition in approach has resulted in a greater prevalence of interventions that seek to improve school environments and that target multiple dropout factors simultaneously. In consultations, *Aquí Presente* was frequently described as promoting systemic change, rather than seeking to assist students one by one. While the program developed individual plans for students with low attendance, a greater emphasis was placed on changing the school environment by conducting focused or school-wide activities or conducting workshops for teachers, students and parents. *Aquí Presente duplas* generally engaged with internal or external networks to address the needs of specific students. Similar programs, like PARE, are also concerned with improving the school environment, in addition to one-on-one activities.

2. **Central program staff recognize the importance of gender, but it does not figure into program design or implementation.**

Program leadership in both JUNAEB and *Aquí Presente* expressed the importance of gender sensitivity in dropout reduction and recognized that young men and women leave school early for different reasons. Several individuals, at central and school levels, also mentioned the importance of considering the needs of LGBTQ youth. These responses demonstrated a consciousness toward the importance of gender sensitivity. However, when *Aquí Presente* and JUNAEB program leadership were asked about gender and dropout, they frequently spoke of pregnancy, parenthood and reproductive health, generally as it relates to young women. The topics discussed demonstrated a lack of an intentional gender perspective. It was less common to talk about motivation, educational trajectories and specific challenges faced by young men and women. While some actors noted that young men were more likely to drop out of school than young women, central staff did not mention activities directed at keeping young men in school. Furthermore, a gender focus was not incorporated into program design, implementation or evaluation. This seems to be representative of attitudes toward gender throughout the education system. The theme of gender is more discursive than practical. MINEDUC has produced many policies and documents related to gender, but gender is infrequently mainstreamed into program implementation.

3. *Aquí Presente* **and JUNAEB use distinct strategies for identifying students who are at risk for dropout. Differences in collecting and monitoring data have a direct impact on the nature and timeliness of the system's response.**

Aquí Presente uses one variable – attendance – as an approximate measure of a student's risk for dropping out of school in the short and medium term. Students with low attendance are included in the program, and their parents or caretakers are contacted to diagnose dropout risk and need for intervention. The program is thus able to quickly respond to student needs. More than just identifying when a student is at risk, it is able to understand why and develop a personalized response. However, because the system only uses one variable, it is not able to identify or assist at-risk students before they start to miss school, beyond interventions targeted at the student body.

The JUNAEB targeting system uses a suite of primary and secondary variables, covering social, economic, household and educational factors in order to identify medium- and long-term risk of dropout. The data system can identify students at risk of dropout years in advance and can assign interventions to mitigate their risk of dropout in the future. Because JUNAEB's data is collected only periodically – annually in many cases – it is unable to quickly respond to changing student circumstances. Furthermore, it cannot

personalize interventions to the needs of schools or students, indicate short-term factors that could lead to dropout or identify school-wide or environmental trends leading to dropout.

JUNAEB's data management system has much lower per-school costs because its only costs are central staffing and IT infrastructure. It maintains its low costs by relying on secondary data provided by other departments and ministries, and primary data gathered by teachers. *Aquí Presente* also relies on attendance data collected by teachers, but follow-up to clarify reasons for repeated absence is conducted by the *duplas*. Whereas JUNAEB's targeting system can cover the entire country without increasing costs to scale, every additional school using *Aquí Presente* must fund a *dupla* to execute the program. Because of this, *Aquí Presente*'s costs increase rapidly with scale. Furthermore, the program's scope will inevitably be limited by the fact that municipalities must opt into the program. It will likely only be implemented where dropout is a priority concern and municipalities invest financial resources for the *duplas*. Table 8 summarizes some of the main differences between the JUNAEB targeting system and *Aquí Presente*.

TABLE 8— Comparison of early warning system models

	JUNAEB	**AQUÍ PRESENTE**
Variables	Attendance, grades, age for grade, socioeconomic status, mother's education	Attendance
Primary data sources	Survey distributed by school staff	Interaction with students; diagnostic of school needs
Secondary data sources	Socioeconomic indicators, program participation, school performance and attendance data from other departments and ministries	Attendance data collected by schools
Cost	Minimal; relies on teachers for data collection	Requires specialists in each school
Response	BARE and PARE	Outreach to student and parents; development of improvement plan for each student; school-wide activities to address environmental factors

It is important to note that the data and indicators used by the early warning system are independent from its response. While JUNAEB itself can only respond with BARE and PARE to students identified as in risk, the data could also be used to focus other interventions. Relatedly, a system's ability to prevent dropout is only as good as the response activated by the early warning system. Identifying students in need does not reduce dropout per se if effective interventions are not activated.

4. The outsider status and MINEDUC affiliation of *Aquí Presente duplas* earned them initial distrust, but their outside perspective and autonomy from school management allowed them to cause disruptive change.

The decentralized nature of school management in Chile means that municipalities operate their schools independently from MINEDUC, within the confines of regulations. There are no MINEDUC representatives or employees regularly stationed in municipal schools. The 2015 to 2016 *Aquí Presente* model went against this structure by placing a MINEDUC employed *dupla* in each participating school. In many schools, there was an initial distrust of the *duplas* by teachers and staff. They feared that the *duplas* would serve to supervise the school on behalf of MINEDUC, monitor school performance or file complaints against the school. This misconception took time to correct but was overcome as school actors observed that the *duplas* represented a valuable resource to the school, and that they worked in collaboration, rather than in opposition, to school activities. Placing *duplas* within schools full-time, rather than having them visit for a few hours per week, facilitated their integration into school life, which built trust and understanding.

The outside status of *Aquí Presente duplas* as MINEDUC employees rather than school employees better enabled them to see inappropriate practices and cultures that had become normalized within the school. Because they were independent from school and municipal authority, they were in a position to challenge these activities and norms. In one case, a *dupla* helped remove a physical education teacher who excluded young women from activities. In other cases, *duplas* helped instill the idea that schools should have warm and welcoming environments. In schools with tensions between teachers and students, *duplas* helped sensitize teachers to the challenges frequently faced by students in order to replace criticism and discipline with sympathy and understanding.

Because they were a demonstrably useful resource, *duplas* were not rejected by the schools and could instead work in parallel. The attempts by *duplas* to change school practices sometimes created tension with teachers or with management teams, but *Aquí Presente duplas* were backed up by the regional MINEDUC secretariat in instances of conflict. Being independent from the school and municipality gave *Aquí Presente duplas* more latitude to speak and act freely than other school actors.

5. **Effective dropout reduction requires the dedicated attention of qualified, specialized professionals within schools. School staff is already overburdened and have little capacity to shoulder this task.**

The effectiveness of *Aquí Presente* between 2015 and 2016 was largely attributable to the introduction of *duplas*, which is a team of two qualified professionals dedicated to the task of reducing dropout and improving school conditions. The introduction of additional human resources directly expanded the capacity of the school to carry out activities such as following up with parents of students who repeatedly miss school. In the absence of the additional professionals, schools would only be able to carry out these activities by assigning them to a teacher or other staff member, who was likely already overburdened. A program that only provides materials or methodologies relies on the commitment and extra capacity of existing staff for effective implementation. However, *Aquí Presente* ensured that its dropout-reduction activities were conducted faithfully by introducing *duplas* whose sole tasks were to execute *Aquí Presente* programming. Importantly, *Aquí Presente*'s effectiveness can also be partially attributed to the *duplas*' qualifications and selection criteria. One of the municipalities that had a school participate in the pilot program attempted to replicate *Aquí Presente* in the municipality's other schools. However, this municipality hired *duplas* with a different professional profile at a lower level of pay, which one director saw as a reason for diminished program effectiveness.

At the conclusion of *Aquí Presente's* pilot, *duplas* were removed from most schools. While some activities introduced by *duplas* were made permanent following the *duplas*' removal, other activities were discontinued – indicating that activities were not self-sustaining without the necessary human capital. One of the few program components that was more likely than others to survive past the conclusion of the pilot was the use of support networks. For example, the *Mesa de Trabajo Intersectorial de Casos de Alto Desafío* [Intersectoral Working Group for Complex Cases], which helps handle the cases of students who are at high risk for dropout or whose needs are not being met by their schools or other current interventions, has been made permanent. Development of personalized improvement plans for frequently absent students was less likely to continue.

With the 2017 transition of *Aquí Presente* to ABE, the responsibility for hiring individuals to implement the *Aquí Presente* methodology also transferred from the MINEDUC to municipalities. Under this arrangement, either existing staff must implement the *Aquí Presente* methodology or additional staff must be hired using funds that trade off with other school-level expenses. Because of this, implementing staff may have their attention divided between *Aquí Presente* activities and other responsibilities levied by the school or municipality. The 2017 model gains political viability by not requiring additional investment from MINEDUC, but consequently does not directly provide schools with additional human capital to execute dropout-reduction activities.

6. **Insufficient coordination between government actors and a proliferation of programs have led to over-intervention in schools. Recent policy innovations have demonstrated that proactive coordination at the school level can prevent duplication of efforts and improve intervention quality.**

Many departments within MINEDUC and other government ministries conduct activities in schools or directed at vulnerable students, which directly or indirectly seek to keep these students in school. These activities, many of which come with individual diagnostics, include interventions such as school feeding, dental hygiene, sporting activities, support to youth who are pregnant or parents, and programs countering teen drug abuse. While each of these activities is individually important to ensuring students successfully complete secondary education, an effective response to dropout must encompass a multisectoral strategy that coordinates across interventions and holistically meets student needs, which is currently being attempted through ABE.

At a national level, there is insufficient communication between various MINEDUC departments, and between MINEDUC and other ministries. For example, while PARE and *Aquí Presente* similarly use psychologists and social workers to evaluate school and student needs and perform customized interventions to reduce dropout, there is a lack of awareness of *Aquí Presente* by JUNAEB central staff and vice versa. While the two programs do not operate in the same municipalities, greater awareness and communication could result in collaboration and sharing valuable lessons. Similarly, JUNAEB struggles to access student-level data from entities such as the *Ministerio de Desarrollo Social* [Ministry of Social Development] (MIDES), which has consolidated a database of all social assistance received by each student, but this database is not shared with JUNAEB. Instead, data on program participation

is shared on a piecemeal basis, meaning that JUNAEB must often duplicate efforts in developing each student's assistance profile. Finally, greater coordination with the *Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género* [Ministry of Women and Gender Equity] could help dropout-reduction programs to begin to incorporate gender-transformative approaches and attitudes.

At the level of schools and municipalities, a multitude of possible interventions are available for adoption, but school administrators do not have the human or financial resources to implement all of them. Furthermore, it is difficult for school administrators to navigate the universe of interventions and make decisions on which programs to implement based on imperfect information. School administrators may engage with a large number of programs and partners, which can stretch schools beyond capacity and imposes an administrative burden of coordinating among programs.

Several policy innovations that have emerged in recent years – ABE, PARE and *Aquí Presente* – incorporate local diagnostic and coordination activities in order to overcome the challenges outlined above. *Aquí Presente* and ABE employ diagnostic activities to reveal the challenges faced by schools and the resources they have at their disposal. ABE uses the diagnostic to help align needs with existing interventions. *Aquí Presente* works with or establishes roundtables and working groups. These forums allow *duplas* to coordinate responses to specific students' needs with other programs or organizations. Similarly, PARE brings in specialists from other organizations or ministries to intervene in order to improve the quality of the response and not duplicate efforts. The objective of ABE is to improve schools' navigation of the universe of available interventions by improving and systematizing school management and decision-making. Given the newness of the program, it is still unclear as to what degree ABE will improve the coordination of interventions at the school level.

06
Discussion & recommendations

Drawing on both literature and consultations with experts in the region, our in-depth review of policy and program experiences in Mexico and Chile indicates that dropout is a systemic issue and closely linked to other challenges facing the education system. Through reflection of common successes and challenges in each country, we offer nine recommendations for decision-makers in the region to consider when designing, implementing, evaluating, financing or otherwise supporting an initiative either to improve retention in secondary schools or to broadly transform secondary education.

The recommendations that emerge from the study's analysis can be placed into five categories. These are areas that warrant particular attention and should be carefully considered during the design and implementation of a strategy or program that seeks to directly or indirectly influence dropout:

→ Quality of learning environments
→ Inclusive and participatory approaches
→ Data and targeting
→ Coordination
→ Investment in school capacity

Our study also highlights several important themes relevant across multiple recommendations. First, we have observed a significant deficit in the attention that dropout-reduction programs pay to gender. Therefore, we present strategies for taking a gender-sensitive or gender-transformative approach in reducing dropout. Second, we note tension between the roles of central government and the autonomy of local school leaders. While we suggest ways to strengthen both, the relevance of and ability to apply these recommendations will depend on a country's education governance structures and the balance of power between central and local authorities. Finally, case studies from Mexico and Chile also highlight different approaches to scaling. While the case studies did not crystalize around a cohesive, recommendable path toward scale, they did demonstrate the importance of a set of enabling factors:

→ High-level partnerships to align and coordinate initiatives
→ Systems for collecting student and program data and triggering an appropriate response

→ Sufficient financing and resources to support implementation at the school level
→ School and classroom practices that support the integration of new program activities

Additional lessons and principles that may facilitate successfully bringing interventions to scale are also integrated into the discussion below.

Quality of Learning Environments

1. Improve the school environment to promote a sense of belonging.

The evolution of education initiatives in Mexico and Chile over the last 10 to 15 years demonstrates the importance of seeing schools and classrooms as the center of both the dropout problem and its solution.

School staff who are inadequately prepared to support students facing economic, social or behavioral challenges can unintentionally create an environment that discourages students from continuing with their education (Bassi et al., 2012). Dropout-reduction efforts should, like *Aquí Presente*, focus on making schools more inclusive of and responsive to students' diverse needs, which requires built-in identification of these needs and flexibility in how to respond. Several potential strategies for improving the school environment are presented below:

→ *Assign the responsibilities for monitoring the school environment to an actor at the school level:* As in Chile, one school-level actor – teacher, counselor or other staff member – should have explicit responsibility for monitoring the health of the school environment with the backing of a support team and should be empowered to initiate activities to address grievances and promote inclusiveness.

→ *Develop school improvement plans:* Schools should develop school improvement plans, based on a diagnostic of school needs that incorporates perspectives of students, parents, teachers and other relevant stakeholders (Recommendation 8). Ministries of education should provide technical and material support in the development of these plans and should hold schools accountable for their execution.

→ *Provide sensitization training to teachers, including gender sensitization:* Teachers should receive sensitization training from actors such as school psychologists or social workers regarding the challenges that students face in and out of school and some of the underlying factors behind poor academic performance. This could help teachers and staff to recognize and respond to bullying, gender-based violence, and other forms of physical and emotional abuse. This includes behavior in school or at home that lead students to drop out when they do not feel safe or do not have adequate support. Sensitization training for teachers, staff and program personnel specifically focused on gender can also help these individuals understand their own implicit biases and how they may unconsciously perpetuate gender stereotypes that can contribute to dropout (Kwauk, Braga, & Kim, 2017). Intentionally incorporating gender equality into program materials and curricula can reinforce these trainings.

→ *Ensure at-risk students receive individualized attention*: Once students are identified as having a high risk of dropping out, they should be assigned a staff member who can pay them individualized attention and develop a personalized support plan (Rumberger et al., 2017). At-risk students, especially those with limited family support, are encouraged when they know that someone cares whether they continue in school or not. The importance of having personnel with dedicated time for these types of activities is explored more in Recommendation 9.

→ *Group together students facing similar challenges and provide targeted support:* In cases where large numbers of students are at risk of dropping out, personalized groups of students facing similar challenges can be formed to create a sense of identity and camaraderie, while facilitating and lowering the costs of joint intervention and monitoring (Rumberger et al., 2017). These smaller groups of students could be accompanied by a small team of dedicated teachers who progress with students from grade to grade in order to foster continuity and personal, long-term relationships. These teachers could provide personalized mentorship specific to the challenges faced by students.

2. **Improve the relevance of curricula and quality of pedagogy to increase the attractiveness of education over labor market entry and equip students with the necessary skills to continue studying.**

Beyond making improvements to the school environment, the quality and relevance of education must be addressed to reduce dropout. In the long-term, this means thinking critically about ways that curricula and pedagogy can be strengthened and made more meaningful and relevant to youth (e.g., by considering student interests and labor market needs) and supporting teachers to see that addressing dropout and improving learning go hand in hand and are both central to their job.

One way in which education systems are beginning to improve education relevance and quality is by incorporating socioemotional learning into some aspect of secondary education. In the case of *Construye T* in Mexico, socioemotional learning is explicitly incorporated into teacher training and curricula across primary and secondary levels. This shift is important for addressing a worrisome mismatch between what students learn in school and what soft skills and competencies are sought by employers in the region (Florez & Jayaram, 2016) and equipping youth with the skills to overcome challenges inside and outside of school. Updating teacher pedagogy could also strengthen the effects of these curriculum adjustments. Education systems should be careful to also consider the differing learning styles and socioemotional strengths and weaknesses of young men, young women and LGBTQ youth in order to tailor programming to these differences. For example, *Aquí Presente duplas* tailored interventions to the interests and learning styles of young men by incorporating physical activity into programming, which led to greater engagement. Additional strategies for improving education relevance and quality include the following:

→ *Provide remedial education or tutoring:* In the short-term, these opportunities should be provided for students who arrive to secondary school without foundational skills in place to succeed at this level. Supplemental instruction may be easier to incorporate in systems that have extended the school day and made room for additional classes or school activities.

→ *Tie curricula more closely to career or to post-secondary education options:* This may include adjusting learning materials to focus on locally relevant industries, collaborating with industry leaders to ensure curricula promotes workforce readiness and helping students develop graduation plans relating to post-graduation goals (Rumberger et al., 2017). For example, different cities in Colombia have invested in innovative programs where students learn technical skills relevant for local industries, such as tourism or petrochemicals, and gain practical experience with local companies (Florez & Jayaram, 2016). Curricula-related reforms should also consider different needs for male versus female students. For example, while young women are more likely to complete secondary education than their male peers, they are less likely to enter the labor market (ILO, 2016). Education systems might respond by providing female students with greater support to plan for this school-to-work transition.

→ *Allow teachers more flexibility to adapt instruction:* Teachers should be given sufficient flexibility to adapt the curricula and classroom activities to the perceived needs and interests of students. While more prescriptive curricula may give greater structure to less-experienced teachers, they allow less latitude for the incorporation of relevant local themes and needs (UNESCO, 2016).

→ *Integrate innovative pedagogical methods:* Methods such as learner-centered teaching and experiential learning can improve both cognitive and socioemotional skills simultaneously and increase student engagement. Supplemental school programming such as after-school activities and student government can also be intentionally designed to promote the development of socioemotional and technical skills (Florez & Jayaram, 2016).

More research on the effects of altering pedagogy or curriculum with the goal of improving relevance is needed, however, since few rigorous evaluations of interventions incorporating market-relevant aptitudes have been conducted in developing-country contexts (Null et al., 2017).

Inclusive and Participatory Approaches

3. Incorporate a gender perspective into the design of dropout reduction initiatives to respond to the distinct needs of young men and women.

Rates of school completion differ significantly between young men and women in Mexico, Chile and elsewhere in LAC. Dropout-reduction strategies must be sensitive to unique factors that affect young men and women differentially. Frequently, programs and policymakers incorporate gender only through data disaggregation and attention to pregnancy and parenting. These approaches do not sufficiently address the unique needs of young men and women or permit responses to underlying causes of dropout (Kwauk et al., 2017).

In both Mexico and Chile, there was broad agreement about the importance of gender equity in education. However, government actors, program teams and school staff consistently struggled to identify ways that a gender lens could be incorporated into strategies to reduce dropout. Similarly, respondents often were not aware of or did not have access to good data on *why* young men versus women drop out. While taking a gender-sensitive approach may seem like a complex or abstract idea, beginning with a gender impact assessment to build local evidence on why young men, women and youth in the LGBTQ community drop out may help schools to identify more concrete ways to respond to the different needs of these groups.

Numerous frameworks exist to help incorporate a gender lens into program design, monitoring and evaluation, though often in sectors outside education (Brisolara, 2014; Barker and Aguayo, 2012; YouthPower Learning, 2016). Decision-makers should consider adapting a gender-sensitive evaluation framework for education programs that aim to reduce dropout. A gender-sensitive approach must start early (e.g., be incorporated into school diagnostics, see Recommendation 8) and consider where and how gender can influence program effects. Consciously attempting to achieve gender parity in program implementers, as *Aquí Presente* did with its *duplas* in schools, is an important consideration when promoting the full participation and engagement of all students. Explicit indicators of gender equality should also be gathered throughout the data collection process (Brisolara, 2014).

4. Enhance parent and family engagement in ways that are appropriate for youth at the secondary level.

Effectively engaging parents, families and other influential adults in students' learning in secondary education is critical to helping students successfully gain academic and soft skills, traverse challenges that come with adolescence and gain self-sufficiency. However, ensuring parental engagement faces additional difficulty at this level of schooling. Qualitative data from interviews suggests that students facing the greatest risk of dropping out often have little parental engagement or spend large amounts of time alone. It is far less common in LAC for parents to have completed secondary education, which can affect their attitudes and values toward the benefits of school at this age. Household structure may also affect engagement strategies. Many students live in single-parent homes or are looked after by grandparents, older siblings or other adults, which require differentiation in communication, outreach and the level and nature of engagement that can be expected. Families may also have different expectations for young men versus young women. For example, interviews for this study and other data from the region indicate that young men may be encouraged to work and contribute to household income, while young women may be expected to take care of the household or start a family.[66]

Programs to reduce dropout could consider different approaches for engaging parents and families:

→ *Preventive and responsive:* Parents and families can and should be engaged before a student misses class or fails a grade, for example by sharing information regarding the returns to secondary education.[67] Once students show risks of dropping out, families can be engaged via phone calls, text messages or home visits. These interventions should be deployed especially in the first year of secondary school,[68] when students are especially susceptible to dropping out, and more intensive activities may be needed.

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66. For example, a large, multinational survey found that among adult men ages 18 to 59, more than half (54 percent in Chile, 56 percent in Mexico) felt the most important role for women was to take care of the home and cook for her family (Barker & Aguayo, 2012).

67. While informational campaigns have shown promise in some settings such as the Dominican Republic (Adelman & Székely, 2016; Almeida et al., 2015), an informational campaign for Mexican students in 10th grade indicated a positive effect on learning outcomes, but no effect on on-time school completion (Avitabile & de Hoyos, 2015).

68. Whether or not this is the first year of lower or upper secondary will necessarily vary by school system, depending on when students make the most significant transition between education cycles.

→ *Universal and targeted:* Some activities carried out by schools may be aimed at all families, such as sharing information on student performance or annual meetings between teachers and parents. These should be complemented by more targeted interaction with families with low levels of engagement or of students who are more vulnerable to dropping out (e.g. due to income level, grade averages).

→ *School-, home- and community-based:* Engaging parents and families can take place at school (e.g. in the form of workshops with parents or meetings between parents and teachers), at home (e.g. home visits to determine why a student is missing class) or in the broader community. As with *Aquí Presente*, school actors may coordinate with other initiatives or networks of actors that work with families, particularly in complex or severe cases that go beyond what can be addressed by a school.

Assessing which approach or combination of approaches is appropriate for local needs can be identified as part of a school-wide diagnostic (Recommendation 8). It is important to see parent and family engagement as an ongoing effort because changing attitudes and expectations takes time. Change requires dedicated human resources, particularly for some of the more intensive approaches described above, and may go beyond what teachers can consistently provide (Recommendation 9).

Data and Targeting

5. National and local early warning systems should form a foundation for dropout response to identify risks and target interventions.

Early warning systems serve to identify students who have an elevated likelihood of dropping out, and to assign interventions and additional monitoring to these students to help complete school. Accordingly, every such system should include identification and response components, segregated by sex and analyzed with regard to gender. Both elements are vital to ensuring that the right students get the necessary help to stay in school, and are foundational for any country's response to dropout.

The identification component of the EWS should use already available secondary data such as attendance, behavior and course-based data (ABCs) (Frazelle & Nagel, 2015). These indicators are correlated with dropout, collected regularly and reflect changes in student home life, wellbeing or commitment to schooling. Identification of students using data that is less frequently collected or that does not vary significantly over time will result in a system that is not immediately responsive to changes in student needs. Risk-identifying EWS use variables such as poverty, mothers' level of education, or attendance and achievement data collected on an annual basis. Like the case of JUNAEB's targeting system, these variables can effectively identify long-term risk, but are unable to respond appropriately when new challenges arise. Ideally, EWS will incorporate student background characteristics to identify and respond to long-term risk and ABCs to identify and respond to medium- and short-term risk.

Without an effective response component, the accurate identification of at-risk students serves little purpose. EWS should activate a response that includes outreach to the student and their parents to identify student risk factors. This is required to ascertain why the student is at risk of dropping out and what sort of changes or interventions would help the student reach graduation. For example, through discussion with students and their parents, *Aquí Presente* developed a personalized plan to help each student identified as at-risk, to increase attendance and lower dropout risk. Diagnostic activities also permitted the identification of and response to unique factors within each school that contribute to dropout. Identification of generalized risk through national systems such as that used by JUNAEB may be sufficient for the allocation of scholarships, such as BARE in Chile, and other uniform interventions to reduce dropout, but may not address underlying risk factors. School-level actors should develop personalized responses to at-risk students and should continue follow-up even after attendance or grades have returned to normal levels.

EWS should operate at both national and local levels. At national levels, they serve to guide programming and resources to highest-risk regions and schools and promote the efficient use of resources by ensuring that programs only go where they are most needed. Within schools, they are necessary to direct an individualized response to at-risk students and can similarly direct program engagement and resource use locally. It may be challenging for national EWS to incorporate gender beyond disaggregating data and monitoring pregnancy and parenthood. School-level actors may be better able to detect gender-specific needs or risk factors.

6. Strengthen data on implementation, effects and costs in order to identify and spread best practices and improve implementation with scale.

Dropout-reduction programs need rigorous, timely and reliable sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis on how activities are implemented, their effects and what they cost. Such information is vital to improve their models and ultimately scale. Appropriate monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies should thus be integrated into program models from the design phase:

→ **Design programs using an evidence-based theory of change:** Program design should be based on rigorous quantitative and qualitative evidence and demonstrate the methodological soundness of the intervention's content and processes.

→ **Collect and assess process data:** Programs should document which activities take place in schools and how they are implemented to understand why an approach does or does not reduce dropout. This qualitative data allows actors at all levels of the program to learn from implementation and make adjustments to improve effectiveness over time and with scale as well as to document and quantify unexpected positive and negative consequences. Documentation also helps to capture lessons that future initiatives can build on. For example, the limited nature of documentation and data on the implementation of the *Aquí Presente* pilot presents a challenge for municipalities that choose to implement the model moving forward. However, programs should weigh the utility of this data against the burden its collection can place on local actors, especially if the data may not be immediately useful to them.

→ **Identify and track appropriate indicators to measure impact over the short- and long-term**: At the outset of interventions, appropriate indicators for measuring impact should be identified and collected. Baseline data must be collected and analyzed in order to quantify program impact, including differences in impact by gender. Interventions should also collect longitudinal data. To lower costs, formal evaluations often only study the short- and medium-term effects of programs, frequently limited to one or two years (Adelman & Szekely, 2016). Because dropout results from the long-term accumulation of risk factors, short-term evaluations may miss the long-term effects of programs, as well as the long-term effects of dropout on education, labor and social outcomes. This extended perspective can also help determine which strategies are most cost-effective.

→ **Collect cost and cost-effectiveness data**: There is limited knowledge and evidence on the cost and cost-effectiveness of approaches to reducing dropout (Adelman & Szekely, 2016). This finding was reinforced though interviews and document review. Without this type of data, it will be challenging for policymakers to evaluate the most efficient options for reducing dropout in a resource-scarce environment or to estimate how much can be done with limited resources. Reliable costing data is also a key input into determining whether to scale a program.

→ **Share data among programs and government agencies**: Rigorous and continuous data collection is often resource-intensive. However, many education and social indicators are already collected through the regular activities of various government ministries. Initiatives should look to avoid duplication of effort and find efficiencies in this process by sharing data with other programs, departments and government ministries. However, data sharing on this level is largely dependent on strong existing IT infrastructure and an identification system for citizens that is common across ministries.

Coordination

7. Strengthen coordination between different, yet complementary initiatives at national and regional levels.

Dropout is affected by diverse issues,[69] which interact with each other and require addressing multiple targets simultaneously. The complexity of the challenge of reducing dropout requires a corresponding multidimensional, coordinated response that sees the school community as a system. Strategies that work in isolation to reduce dropout may therefore see limited impact. There is a need to improve formal communication and coordination among initiatives that directly and indirectly work to reduce dropout rates.

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69. These may include: economic constraints, academic challenges and pregnancy.

At the national level, ministries of education are often the government body responsible for improving retention at the secondary level.[70] However, within those ministries, various departments and teams independently carry out their own activities to reduce dropout or support at-risk students with little coordination. For example, each of the four initiatives studied in this report sits within a national ministry of education, but there is limited formal communication between teams leading individual programs or strategies. Also, an entirely separate unit, department or even ministry often addresses gender, such as the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres* [National Institute for Women] (INMUJERES) in Mexico and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity in Chile. There is a need to recognize the shared objectives of what may be considered distinct initiatives or teams, find ways to complement and amplify one another through formal coordination mechanisms and identifying linkages between different strategic plans. While these may appear to be different efforts at the level of program design, in practice they often target the same individuals, provide related support and require similar levels of reporting or data collection. While concerted coordination may require additional communication and effort on the part of national and regional-level actors, the current lack of streamlined coordination often leads to confusion, inconsistent local implementation and additional burden placed on school actors.

Aligning national actors and initiatives can help to create a more unified policy narrative, to reliably provide consistent tools to local stakeholders and to provide the training necessary to effectively put them in practice. A unified and coordinated national approach can thereby lower the administrative burden of local actors and augment local autonomy. *Aulas de Bien Estar* in Chile demonstrates one way this might be done, by bringing together different ministries and agencies at the national level and jointly offering a package of different yet complementary interventions to schools.

Beyond formal coordination mechanisms, actors should be aligned horizontally as well as vertically around similar theories of change, objectives, and metrics. This alignment could improve each actor's understanding of roles and relationships with other actors, leading to a more coherent division of labor. This sort of alignment and lessons-sharing should also be promoted between upper secondary schools and accelerated or adult education, as many students leave upper secondary for alternative modalities they perceive as being faster, more relevant, or more conducive to concurrent employment.

Once aligned at the national level, initiatives should work closely with and support state or regional education officials to facilitate local implementation. Officials at this level are an important midpoint between national and school actors and can improve coordination among various strategies, with the right leadership. A state-level champion consisting of an individual or small group of people can help to drive programs forward, generate buy-in across different departments or institutions and provide more contextually-relevant support to schools. Especially in a decentralized system where provision varies dramatically between states, a strong champion can help to consolidate communication from the national level and monitor implementation more closely than is often possible at the national level. In Estado de México, for example, state education officials collaborate closely and formed a joint committee to oversee both *Yo No Abandono* and *Construye T*. This structure demonstrates a clear local commitment to both initiatives, streamlines communication with school (or subsystem) representatives, and creates a space to discuss complementarities between the initiatives.

Investment in School Capacity

8. Provide appropriate resources and guidance to support decision-making and reduce over-intervention at the school level.

Within crowded education landscapes, schools are commonly the target of dozens of national, local, public and private strategies and programs seeking to effect change. In Mexico and Chile, it is common for individual interventions to conduct school-wide diagnostics, train school directors and teachers, provide written materials (e.g. manuals, classroom tools), add new tasks to the staff and faculty's regular responsibilities and require some level of data collection. When these interventions are aggregated, this can lead to "over-intervention",[71] where the onus falls on already-overburdened school actors to act as the coordinator between the

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70. In some cases, other federal agencies – such as ministries of social development – are also involved when programs target poor or vulnerable groups. The need to strengthen coordination and communication across national actors only becomes more important in these situations.

71. Multiple actors in Mexico referred to this issue and respondents in Chile specifically used this term *sobre-intervención* [over-intervention].

school and a multitude of interventions. Furthermore, an excess of uncoordinated interventions can lead to duplication of effort and an inefficient use of resources, as programs may be implemented where they are not needed or where similar strategies are implemented by different initiatives.

While better coordination among these initiatives at national and regional levels can help (Recommendation 7), these challenges can also be alleviated by ensuring schools understand both their needs and potential solutions, have autonomy to decide how best to respond, and receive ongoing resources and support to execute selected interventions effectively. This may involve:

→ *Establishing a single school-wide diagnostic tool* that assesses all dimensions relevant to school and individual student interventions[72] with a gender perspective. This tool can include a core set of questions or components, with the flexibility for schools to add additional topics. For diagnosing causes of dropout, questions should aim to identify not only how many students drop out but who these students tend to be and why they leave school. This can also help to build more nuanced, local evidence around why youth leave the school system and how the experiences of young men and women differ in different contexts.

→ *Building coordination into new interventions.* A key component of the initial *Aquí Presente* diagnostic involved identifying what programs, interventions, and organizations were already active in the school community. This activity prevented duplication of effort and promoted awareness of potential areas for collaboration.

→ *Offering a menu of options of different strategies and tools* that schools can implement or employ based on the needs identified through the diagnostic exercise, rather than having interventions imposed upon schools or leaving school directors to explore the universe of available interventions on their own. For example, *Aulas de Bien Estar* in Chile aims to align school needs with appropriate programming by helping school directors select from a set of available interventions based on an initial diagnostic of school needs.

→ *Foster knowledge sharing between schools* to raise the profile of dropout-reduction and facilitate learning between schools of effective and innovative practices. *Aquí Presente* incorporated regular meetings between *duplas* stationed in different schools to share successes and discuss challenges with peers. This helped promote the bottom-up dissemination of promising innovations.

→ *Providing ongoing support as schools carry out selected activities* to train school actors on program approaches, ensure consistent use of program materials and implementation, and monitor and adjust activities to improve their effectiveness.

9. **Invest in dedicated personnel at the school level to relieve burden on staff and achieve substantial, long-term reductions in dropout.**

School actors have the greatest proximity to students and can identify, support, and monitor those at risk of dropping out in ways that are contextually relevant. However, dropout-reduction activities, such as following up with students who miss class, communicating with parents and liaising among school and community actors, require substantial time and effort. School staff, especially teachers, may not prioritize or feel responsible for these activities if they are already overburdened with academic tasks. Dropout programs often stop short of investing in these professionals, and conduct instead one-off trainings and design tools and guides for staff to use to the best of their ability. This may not be enough to achieve substantial, long-term impact, however, and additional investment in existing or new human capital is needed to effectively leverage training, tools and other program inputs.

For strategies requiring significant amounts of staff time, program-specific personnel with adequate training and qualification, including gender sensitization, may be needed to ensure activities are carried out with the intended frequency and intensity and that they are aligned with other programs in the school and broader community. For strategies that can be more easily integrated into daily school and classroom activities and where teaching staff will play an important role, initiatives could offer financial or professional development incentives to motivate teachers and foster a sense of accountability for implementation and results. Especially when

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72. These dimensions may include dropout, parent engagement, satisfaction with the school environment and bullying.

these activities add to existing responsibilities or require a change in teachers' attitudes or practices[73], these incentives can be important investments. These incentives, along with close monitoring of program activities (Recommendation 5), may contribute to greater consistency and fidelity in program implementation.

School-level champions should also be cultivated early on to generate buy-in among different local stakeholders. Often, as in Mexico, initiatives target school directors as the *de facto* champions due to their natural leadership role; however, the level of commitment and availability of school directors can vary dramatically and influence how well an initiative is adopted or implemented. Initiatives could provide schools with criteria to select the individual who best fits the profile to champion the initiative. Often this means finding someone who is motivated, has time and capacity to dedicate to new activities and is well positioned to work with different stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, or parents). Depending on the education system, school size and other contextual factors, this figure may vary (e.g. the assistant director, guidance counselor, or head teacher).

Initiatives should be careful to select both men and women as school actors to champion and implement activities because these individuals may also serve as role models or mentors for students. *Aquí Presente*, for example, tried to create a gender balance when placing program staff in schools. Where this was achieved, staff could more easily build trusting relationships with both male and female students.

Conclusion

Secondary dropout is a challenge with serious implications for youth, their families and societies across Latin America. It will require complex and coordinated solutions at scale as greater numbers of students gain access to and progress through lower secondary education. While there are many principles that will hold true for every country attempting to reduce dropout rates, the specific dropout reduction strategies that should be employed will also depend heavily on the context of dropout, the reach of secondary education and the country's socioeconomic trajectory.

The two countries studied in greater depth in this study face distinct challenges in reducing dropout. Over the last 20 years, Chile has successfully extended secondary education to the vast majority of youth. Consequently, dropout reduction programs are very targeted, and are specifically directed at those with low income and other particular risk factors. Conversely, secondary completion rates in Mexico are much lower, necessitating broader, systemic responses. These distinct national contexts provide rich evidence that is applicable for countries at different points in their developmental trajectories, with different levels of decentralization and governance models. The specific challenges each country faces influence which dropout reduction strategies are appropriate and necessary.

We hope that these recommendations are useful for decision-makers in designing and implementing strategies that contribute to the achievement of universal secondary education throughout the region. Responding to the region's high rates of early school exit will be necessary to meet the needs of youth, society and the economy in the coming decade.

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73. For example, changing curricula or pedagogy.

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08
Annexes

ANNEX 1— In-country stakeholder types that participated in interviews and focus groups for this study

LEVEL	AFFILIATION	INITIATIVE
MEXICO		
National	Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education (SEMS)	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	*Construye T*
	World Bank	*Construye T*
	Universidad Iberoamericana	*Construye T*
	Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE)	–
Regional	Representative of SEMS in Estado de México	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	Undersecretary of Upper Secondary and Higher Education (Estado de México)	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	Representative of SEMS in Jalisco	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	Coordination of Upper Secondary, Higher, and Technology Education (Jalisco)	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	Colectivo Ollin (Jalisco)	*Construye T*
Local	10 federal and state subsystems in Estado de México	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	1 upper secondary school in Estado de México (school leadership team)	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
	2 upper secondary schools in Jalisco (school directors, guidance counselor, teachers)	*Construye T, Yo No Abandono*
CHILE		
National	Ministry of Education, Departments of Transversality and Secondary Education	*Aquí Presente*
	Representatives of JUNAEB Departments of School Health, Planning	*JUNAEB*
	Universidad de Chile – Department of Pedagogical Studies	–
Regional	Regional Education Secretariat (Santiago)	*Aquí Presente*
	Aquí Presente regional coordinator	*Aquí Presente*
	Municipal Coordinator of School Wellbeing	*Aquí Presente*
Local	2 lower secondary schools in Santiago (School Wellbeing team)	*Aquí Presente*
	1 upper secondary school in Santiago (school director)	*Aquí Presente*
	Aquí Presente duplas from upper secondary schools	*Aquí Presente*

ANNEX 2— Mapeo de iniciativas para promover la permanencia escolar en América Latina y el Caribe

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
Argentina	Centros de Actividades Juveniles (CAJ)	Extracurricular activities	2001-present	A national program to improve vulnerable students' access to, retention in and completion of secondary schooling through their participation in organized, extracurricular activities (e.g., workshops, debates, events, field trips). Participating schools organize activities on the environment, art, communication and new technologies, science, and sports to expand and diversify educational experiences beyond the traditional classroom. Schools with CAJ aim to create more student-centered, inclusive educational environments that strengthen the connections between students and their peers and teachers, as well as between the school and community.
Argentina	Aprender Enseñando Program	Tutoring	2005-present	A tutoring program that places student teachers in classrooms to assist teachers primarily in mathematics and language. They provide additional support to small groups of vulnerable and at-risk secondary students with the goal of reducing grade repetition and school dropout. In addition to improving academic performance, the program seeks to strengthen the self-esteem of those students receiving the tutoring and provide practical teacher training experiences to tutors.
Argentina, Uruguay	Futuros Egresados	Scholarships Mentoring	1998-present	The Futuros Egresados program has two primary components, namely mentorship provided regularly to participating high school students, and a scholarship or cash transfer given to the families of selected students. Cimientos partners with high schools to identify low-income students who are dedicated to their education. Selected students meet with their mentors at school to develop soft skills such as critical thinking, time management and self esteem.
Argentina (Buenos Aires metropolitan area)	Grupos Juveniles/ Programa Grupos Comunitarios de Estudio (GCE)	Extracurricular activities (e.g., community service) Tutoring	1999-present	Equipo de Trabajo e Investigación Social (ETIS), an NGO based in Buenos Aires, developed the program as a community-based intervention to reduce dropouts in the formal education system. ETIS identified key local causes of dropouts and established an intervention that coordinates among schools and community organizations to establish adult-coordinator supported student groups to conduct community service projects and receive academic support. The program also works to promote a positive image of schools via campaigns and parent engagement, and provide materials and supplies. The program, in part, inspired the Aprender Enseñando [Learn through Teaching] program and won the IDB-Juventud award.
Argentina (Buenos Aires Province)	Programa de Patios Abiertos en las Escuelas	Extracurricular activities	2004-present	The program seeks to improve the inclusivity and retention of the education system by targeting at-risk youth both in and outside of the formal system. Schools that are part of the program develop public spaces for children and adolescents to use on weekends as well as accompanying recreational and art workshops and activities. Program aims to improve school retention and reinsertion by strengthening both youth's and communities' connection to the school. Schools, community organizations (e.g. sports clubs, libraries) and local and provincial governments partner to deliver the program.
Argentina (City of Buenos Aires)	Campaña Deserción Cero	Information campaign Extracurricular activities	2004-present	The Deserción Cero campaign was established following the expansion of compulsory education to include secondary school, alongside other policies and programs created to make the education system more inclusive. The campaign involves four components: a mass communications campaign via television ads, billboards, and print media; establishing education referral services in local administrative offices where a variety of social services are provided; free extracurricular activities in culture, recreation and sports via youth clubs; and expansion of secondary education services, which includes both traditional secondary schools and opportunities to re-enroll adolescents and adults who had dropped out.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
National and provincial ministries of education.	N/A	In 2014: 808 locations, 50,000 students in all provinces nationwide.	Secondary schools are selected based on their student populations with unmet basic needs and receiving CCTs as well as the school's socioeconomic vulnerability. Within participating schools, enrolled students, students from neighboring education institutions and youth outside of the formal education system may all take part in CAJ activities.	Argentina Ministerio de Educación (2011) Auditoría General de la Nación (2014) UNICEF Argentina & Fundación SES (2006)
Ministry of Education	N/A	N/A	Socially, economically and educationally vulnerable 12 to 17 year old adolescents. In addition to those who are at-risk of dropping out, the program may also target those who are outside of the formal education system.	Krichesky (2009) Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (2011) Rodriguez-Carracedo (2016)
Partnership between the NGO Cimientos and public schools.	A rigorous randomized controlled trial of 408 students was conducted from 2014 to 2016 in 10 schools in Buenos Aires. In the two year time period, The trial was able to reduce absenteeism and grade failure but did not have a statistically significant impact on dropout. It improved school performance and school navigation skills but did not appear to affect socio-emotional or academic skills. The greatest gains were seen in the most vulnerable students - those with the highest likelihood of dropping out and those who are poorest.	Roughly 10,000 students served.	Students are interviewed and enrolled based on financial need and commitment, and are identified via a partnership with schools.	Fundación Cimientos (2013) Ganimian et al. (2016)
Equipo de Trabajo e Investigación Social	N/A	N/A	ETIS collaborates with community organizations, selects meeting spaces and distributes a call for participants via these organizations and local schools.	Estigarribia (2015) Erglis & Estigarribia (2007) http://etis.org.ar
Ministry of Education of the Province of Buenos Aires	N/A	In 2004, 50 schools and 1,500 children. In 2015, 384 schools and 20,000 children.	Schools that cater to 5 to 21 year olds in vulnerable situations, both those at-risk of dropping out of school as well as those outside of the formal schooling system. Schools are targeted based on: number of students with unmet basic needs, geographic location (e.g. slum), prevalence of violence and existence of previous free recreational opportunities.	UNDP (2009) Dirección General de Cultura y Educación (2010) UNESCO (2015)
Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires	N/A	N/A	N/A	Acosta (2011)

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Uruguay	Policies to extend the school day	Full-time or extended schooling	At different points over the last few decades	Education systems in a number of LAC countries moved to extend the school day through policies that range from adding a few hours over some school days each week to moving from double-shift to full-time school days. These policies often seek to improve student learning and other educational outcomes. They may also look to this as an option for impacting social outcomes, such as improving female labor participation, and reducing teen pregnancy and crime rates. These policies may also vary in how they choose to use this extra time in school (e.g., for extracurricular activities or for more instructional time).
Brazil	Programa Mais Educação (PME)	Other (e.g., financial assistance to schools)	2008-present	PME is a national-level program that is operated at the state level and takes place in the 10 states with the lowest socioeconomic indicators. Each participating school is directly provided with the funds to carry out the activities that they see as most beneficial within a selection of macrocampos [macro-areas] or fields of interventions. These include pedagogical accompaniment, school environment, rights in education, culture and art, health promotion and economic education.
Brazil	O Programa de Expansão, Melhoria e Inovação no Ensino Médio	School-based management Teacher training and incentives	2001-present	PROEM's interventions fall into three categories: improvement of the quality of secondary education, strengthening the management of the educational system and modernizing the teaching profession. To these ends, PROEM includes the following: increased investment in teacher training and optimizing the physical and human resources of the state; the transformation of 11 secondary schools into Technical Professional Education Centers, which served to increase the number of students receiving technical education and promote a closer working relationship between the private sector and schools; and changes to the management of the education system, including a revision of curriculum, a diagnostic of the education system, and a decentralization of many education decisions.
Brazil	Programa de Combate ao Abandono Escolar de Paraná	Early warning system	2013-present	This program is an early warning system that tracks school absences. Once a student has been absent from school five times, the system notifies the Child and Adolescent Social Protection Network, so that they can take action to prevent school absence from leading to dropout. The network is composed of schools, social assistance centers, community councils and other actors.
Brazil	Novo Ensino Médio	College and career readiness	2017	Novo Ensino Medio is a national education reform that was passed in 2017. The reform's main purpose is to make secondary school curriculum more flexible, such that every student takes certain core classes known as Base Nacional Comum Curricular, but can then follow an educational path that prepares them for their post-secondary plans, whether that be to enter the workforce directly or to continue on to tertiary education. This serves to increase the relevance of education to the student's plans.
Brazil	Ficha de Comunicação do Aluno Infrequente (FICAI)	Early warning system	1997-present	When a student either frequently misses or drops out of school, the school council contacts their parents in order to bring the student back. The school and other partnering institutions meet with parents and students, and conduct other activities to ensure parents fulfill the responsibility to keep their child in school.
Brazil	Caminho da Escola	Transportation support	2007-present	Rural schools are provided with a special credit line by the National Bank of Economic and Social Development for the purchase of buses, vans, bikes and boats to help students to reach school. This program supports schools from primary to upper secondary levels. Several assessments have observed a decrease in the proportion of rural students who do not attend school because of the inability to access it.
Brazil	Programa Aprendiz na Escola	TVET track College and career readiness	2014-present	This program is a state-level initiative that seeks to comply and work in cooperation with the national Lei da Aprendizagem [Apprenticeship Law], which stipulates that all medium and large employers in Brazil must offer apprenticeships that are equivalent to 5 to 15 percent of their total number of employees. To be eligible for apprenticeships, youth must be concurrently enrolled in education and training. Through the Aprendiz na Escola [Learning in School] program, local employers offer work contracts to students in the third year of high school who must stay in school in order to take advantage of the apprenticeship.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
Education systems	A review of quasi-experimental studies found that extended school day policies have had mixed results on learning outcomes in mathematics and language within the region. Related to schooling outcomes, studies of these policies found a reduction in high school dropouts in Chile, increased probability of completing secondary school in Argentina and a positive impact on grade promotion in Brazil. Some studies also found reductions in teen pregnancy and parenting, and crime rates.	System-wide policies	Public school students in the identified countries.	Berthelon & Kruger (2011) Alfaro, Evans, & Holland (2015)
Ministry of Education	A quasi-experimental study using a regression discontinuity method found no evidence of a reduction in the dropout rate.	60,000 schools throughout Brazil in 2014	To participate, at least 50 percent of the school body must be recipients of the state social assistance program Programa Bolsa Família. Additionally, the program only operates in the 10 states with the lowest socioeconomic indicators.	Batista de Oliveira & Terra (2015)
Government of Paraná State and the IDB	N/A	All public secondary schools in Paraná	Many programmatic elements are state-wide and not targeted (e.g., teacher professional development and improving school management).	Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (2011)
Education Secretariat of Paraná	N/A	Information network in Paraná state, available to all secondary school teachers and community actors.	N/A	Valgas (2003)
Ministry of Education	N/A	Curriculum will be introduced nation-wide	Nationwide	Ministério da Educacão (2017)
State-level cooperation between state and municipal secretariats of education, tutoring councils and the Offices of Justice for the Childhood and Youth.	N/A	The form is utilized by at least 8 states in Brazil.	Monitors the attendance of all students, and is activated when a student drops out or is frequently absent.	UNICEF (2012) Falcão & Pauly (2014)
National Bank of Economic and Social Development; State- and municipal-level ministries of education.	N/A	The program is active in 4,725 municipalities throughout Brazil, and has financed nearly 26,000 buses.	Bikes are provided to students who live between 3 and 15 kilometers from their schools. Wheelchair-accessible buses are placed in areas with students with disabilities.	UNICEF (2012) Carvalho et al. (2015) Barsanuf Campus et al. (2016)
Secretary of Education of the state of Ceará, Ministry of Work and Employment, local employers	N/A	Through 2016, the program had trained 2,000 students in 9 municipalities		ILO (2016)

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
Chile	Beca de Apoyo a la Retención Escolar (BARE)	Scholarship	2002-present	A scholarship program that targets youth at risk of dropping out of secondary school. Students are pre-selected for the scholarship from schools that have the highest average dropout risk. Based on socioeconomic, demographic, and educational indicators, students with the highest risk of dropping out in these schools are awarded the scholarship. To renew scholarships each year, students must: a) study all four years in a school recognized by the Ministry of Education, b) have an attendance rate of 85 percent or higher from the previous year, c) have a household income in the bottom 60 percent, and d) not receive other JUNAEB scholarships that are incompatible with BARE.
Chile	JUNAEB Targeting System	Early warning system	2001-present	A national early warning system used to assign interventions to help ensure school completion. It maintains a database, drawn from an array of primary and secondary data, of all students and identifies dropout risk based on factors such as income, attendance, school performance, and pregnancy. It then assigns interventions, including a scholarship program and a psychosocial support program, to students identified as at risk for dropout.
Chile	Subvención Pro Retención (SPR)	Other (e.g., financial assistance to schools)	2003-present	Schools who have successfully retained poor students can apply for an annual grant, approximately equal to one year's subsidy or tuition per student. Those who stay in school but repeat a grade are also included. The grant is intended to encourage schools to employ strategies that keep these students in school by covering the costs associated with these actions. Strategies include additional academic support, psychological services and other forms of assistance.
Chile and in dozens of countries worldwide	TeenSTAR Program	Sexual health education	1996-present	TeenSTAR is a program to teach youth about responsible sexual behavior. The curriculum teaches sex education. It often emphasizes abstinence and "enhances teens' self-understanding and self-esteem." The program is implemented in various countries all over the world.
Chile (Santiago metropolitan area)	Aquí Presente	Early warning system	2015-present	The program places a pair of professionals in each participating school. The professionals assess school needs and factors leading to dropout, and develop activities to address these factors. The professionals also operate a dropout early warning system, in which they track student attendance, follow up with students who miss school, and engage school and community actors, including caregivers, in reducing dropout risk of specific students.
Colombia	Sistema de Información para el Monitoreo, la Prevención y el Análisis de la Deserción Escolar (SIMPADE)	Early warning system	2012-present	Early learning software system where school leaders, local governments, and the Ministry of Education can access detailed, real-time data on individual students then design and implement strategies to prevent dropout. The system generates an index of dropout risk that categorizes low-, medium- and high-risk students. The system then monitors the actions that are taken in response by education actors. The model incorporates detailed information on individuals, families, schools, and regions and communities pulled from multiple sources, which include individual school and education system data.
Colombia	Ni Uno Menos	Information campaign	2005-present	Inspired by a Chinese film of the same name, this mass communications campaign is targeted at children, parents, school actors and broader society to improve access to and retention in school through the end of secondary education. Components of the campaign include television commercials, radio ads, press releases, and video clips for a national audience, and targeted workshops, theater productions, and radio soap operas in municipalities with high dropout rates.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas (JUNAEB), under the Ministry of Education	Due to the program's selection of only those students within certain schools, an evaluation was able to do a non-randomized comparison between students of similar vulnerability in priority and non-priority schools. The study also used regression discontinuity. These comparisons revealed no measurable effect of the scholarship on beneficiaries in terms of retention, advancement, or dropouts.	By law, the program is limited to administering 19,110 scholarships per year. Nationally, about 30,000 secondary students drop out of school each year.	Within priority secondary schools, which consist of those with the highest dropout and failure rates, the program uses a model of six indicators to target socially and educationally vulnerable youth: 1. attendance rates, 2. over-age enrollment, 3. socioeconomic condition (part of the Chile Solidario program) 4. pregnancy 5. parenthood, and 6. mother's education.	Espínola, Hoffmann, & Claro Stuardo (2010) Salas, Ormazabal, & Crespo (2015) Acosta (2011)
Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas (JUNAEB), under the Ministry of Education	N/A	All students in municipal and subsidized private schools.	The system assigns students into three levels of vulnerability. First priority includes students in extreme poverty and beneficiaries of social assistance programs such as Chile Solidario. Second priority includes students in the most socioeconomically vulnerable 20 percent of households and with low attendance and academic achievement or in schools identified as vulnerable. Third priority includes students in those 20 percent of households but who do not meet other risk factors outlined in the first two priorities.	
Ministry of Education	A 2011 impact evaluation compared retention rates among low-income students in schools that received a grant with similar students in schools that did not participate in the program, and found limited evidence that SPR affected retention rates. Overall, the evaluation did not recommend the continuation of SPR and was critical of the program model, which provided little more than financial resources to schools without providing guidance to schools or tracking activities implemented to reduce dropouts.	169,2000 students (2010)	Schools with students enrolled in grade 7 of primary through grade 4 of secondary who are registered in the Chile Solidario social protection program.	Espínola Hoffmann & Claro Stuardo (2010) Chile Ministerio de Educación (2003) Chile Ministerio de Educación (2016b) Salas, Valenzuela, & Vergara, 2011)
TeenSTAR trains monitors to deliver the sessions.	The TeenSTAR program has been experimentally evaluated, including in Chile, and shown substantial positive results in sexual behavior and reducing pregnancy rates among female adolescents.	N/A	N/A	Portales et al. (2008) Cabezón et al. (2005)
Ministry of Education, Santiago	N/A	52 schools and 23,000 beneficiary students.	The system identifies students based on attendance rates.	Chile Ministerio de Educación (2016b) CORE (2016) http://aquipresente. mineduc.cl/ (n.d.)
Ministry of Education and Corporación Colombia Digital	N/A	SIMPADE compiles information on all students nationally.	N/A	MinEducación (2012) Colombia Digital (n.d.)
Ministry of Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	"Lanzan estrategia educativa 'Ni uno menos' en el Magdalena" (2009) MinEducación (n.d.)

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
Colombia (Bogotá)	Programa A-probar	Tutoring	2012-present	Program in Bogotá where students at risk of failing receive extra, individual pedagogical support from teachers after school and on weekends. The objective is to reduce grade repetition and, ultimately, dropouts.
Colombia (Bogotá)	Movilidad Escolar	Transportation support	2014-present	Transportation program to improve pre-primary, primary, and secondary student attendance and retention, particularly in parts of Bogotá where school capacity is limited. Movilidad Escolar offers three different transportation options: school buses, public transportation subsidy and a bike-to-school program.
Colombia (Medellin)	Programa de Jornada Escolar Complementaria	Extracurricular activities	2012-present	Program offering extracurricular activities for public school students in six areas: culture, science and technology, sports and recreation, environment, civic education and multilingualism. The program aims to help students enjoy their free time while learning and being productive.
Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua	Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial (SAT)	Flexible and accelerated learning	1974-present	Alternative, flexible education program that blends theory and practice for secondary school students in rural areas that suffer from limited access to or irrelevant secondary education. The SAT curriculum is delivered by local, trained tutors and centers around agricultural practices, community and economic development, and entrepreneurship. In Colombia and Honduras, SAT is a formal, accredited program.
Costa Rica	Colegios de Alta Oportunidad (CAO)	School-based management	2008-present	CAO is implemented by a public-private partnership and it responds to the exclusion of students from the formal education system. CAO is a network of 11 public schools working collectively with students, teachers and administration to develop annual plans of action that transform school management and culture to better motivate students and offer them a quality education. The CAO process includes five main phases: designing plans of action, training teams of students and teachers, executing the plan, evaluating progress, and sharing results and improvement plans with the Ministry of Public Education. The network aims to reduce repetition and dropout rates, improve academic performance, improve access and equity of education services, and support the transition to higher education and the workforce.
Costa Rica	Proyecto de Apoyo a la Educación Secundaria para la Reducción del Abandono Escolar (ProEDUCA)	School-based management	2011-present	ProEDUCA works to strengthen community and school capacity to prevent secondary school dropouts and reintegrate those who have already dropped out of the formal system. The intervention specifically focuses on making education management more participatory, making classes more interesting and dynamic and improving student connectedness to schools. Example activities include a training program for teachers to learn how to teach instrumental music, and training for youth to become student leaders. ProEDUCA operates via school networks, bringing together government actors and school teachers, directors, and other school actors.
Costa Rica	Reforma Integral de las Normas de Promoción y Repitencia dentro del Sistema Educativo Costarriquense	Other (e.g., more flexible grade repetition and promotion policy)	2009-present	In 2009, the Ministry of Public Education changed its policy regarding grade repetition and promotion for secondary school students. Under the new policy, students need only repeat the specific courses they failed, rather than the entire year. The new policy also changed how final grades were calculated and, while good behavior is still a requisite for advancing to the next level, it is no longer factored into a student's academic grade.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
Bogotá Secretary of Education	N/A	13,023 students, 107 schools (2014)	N/A	"Tasa de deserción escolar en Bogotá" (2015) "En Bogotá, últimos días de refuerzo escolar" (2013) "Estudiantes de Bogotá reciben clases extra" (2015) "Más de 12 mil estudiantes de colegios públicos" (2015)
Bogotá Secretary of Education	N/A	N/A	Pre-primary through 11th grade students in rural areas of Bogotá, or in urban areas with limited school capacity, or students with special needs. Each transportation option uses criteria for determining beneficiaries.	SED (2014) http://www.educacionbogota.edu.co/es/temas-estrategicos/movilidad-escolar
Medellín Secretary of Education	N/A	74,000 students (2014)	N/A	Meister (2014) INDER (n.d.)
Fabretto Children's Foundation (Nicaragua), Ministry of Education and FUNDAEC (Colombia), Ministry of Education and Asociación Bayán (Honduras)	A quasi-experimental study in Honduras found that test scores were 45 percent better among SAT-participating students than in neighboring rural schools. Another study found that dropout rates among students in the SAT program were lower than those in other alternative education programs.	300,000 students across the region since the beginning of the program.	High-school age students in rural communities	Kwauk & Perlman Robinson (2016) McEwan et al. (2015)
Fundación Acción Joven (FAJ), Ministry of Public Education (MEP), Fundación Miguel Yamuni, Asociación Horizonte Positivo	N/A	20,000 students; 1,500 teachers and administrators	N/A	Fundación Acción Joven (n.d.)
Ministry of Public Education	An impact evaluation is currently underway.	80 secondary schools; 55,000 students; 4,500 school officials	N/A	Ministerio de Educación Pública (2013) www.proeduca.go.cr
Ministry of Public Education	N/A	All public secondary schools	All public school students in grades seven through nine (ciclo [cycle] III)	Rodriguez & Picado Campo (2012) Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (2011) Ministerio de Educación Pública (2011)

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
Costa Rica	Yo Me Apunto	Infrastructure improvements Teacher training and incentives Information campaigns Extracurricular activities	2015-present	Political strategy to improve student retention, reinsertion of dropouts and school achievement in coordination with other sectors, school actors, businesses, foundations, international organizations, and mass media. The strategy incorporates both universal activities (e.g., infrastructure improvements, continuous professional development for teachers, teacher appreciation and information campaigns) and more targeted activities in priority schools (e.g., CAO in partnership with Fundación Acción Jóven, extracurricular activities).
Dominican Republic	Programa de Escolarización Acelerada y de Nivelación	Flexible and accelerated learning Tutoring	2001-present	An accelerated learning program for students in public secondary schools who are above average age for their grade by two or more years. Students complete their secondary education in two years instead of four and, in addition to regular coursework, receive weekly tutoring from teachers and additional support from high-performing students.
Dominican Republic	Programa de Alimentación Escolar (PAE)	Other (e.g., school feeding)	2008-present	National school feeding program providing nutritious, locally-sourced meals to public school students in an effort to improve access, retention, and academic performance, and lower dropout rates. In addition to improving food security and education outcomes, the program encourages the participation of teachers, families, and the community, and supports small businesses.
Dominican Republic	Information intervention (RCT)	Information campaigns	2001	Intervention targeted a random selection of eighth grade male students, collected information on students' perceived returns to secondary education, then provided data about future earnings by education level. The goal of the intervention was to assess if better information would increase students' demand for secondary education and, as a result, increase years of schooling.
Ecuador	Programa de Alimentación Escolar	School feeding	1999-present	All public schools in Ecuador provide free breakfast and a snack to children in the basic cycle of education covering 1st to 10th grade. The program provides breakfast 200 days a year and covers 89 percent of enrolled children.
Ecuador	Departamento de Consejería Estudiantil (DECE)	Mentoring and counseling	2012-present	Student counseling departments in private and public schools that provide interdisciplinary social services to support students' holistic development to ensure education participation, retention and completion. DECEs carry out five main actions: promotion of healthy lifestyles and prevention of psychosocial problems, detection of risks, intervention, referral services and monitoring. Counselors from DECE also take part in helping students plan educational trajectories, professional education and technical education.
Ecuador	Nivelación Escolar	Flexible and accelerated learning	2015-present	Students who are between 9 and 19 years old, at least two years behind in their education and have at least reached 4th grade, can, depending on their educational level, complete 5th through 7th or 8th through 10th grade in one school year. The program is designed to accelerate the completion of educational cycles and diminish the feeling of exclusion among older students.
El Salvador	Edúcame	Flexible and accelerated learning	2005-present	National program that seeks to provide more flexible, alternative schooling options to help those at risk of dropping out and those who have already left the formal schooling system to complete their secondary education. Those at risk of dropping out include above average aged students. The program offers a variety of options such as accelerated learning, distance learning, and mixed virtual and in-person education services.
LAC	Operación Éxito (OE)	Online and virtual education	2005-present	Virtual platform offering complementary educational content to prevent dropouts by motivating students. In addition to this "virtual school", OE also offers school management modules online (e.g. for engaging with parents, to track student performance). Alongside these virtual components, OE hosts an annual international science and math competition.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
Ministry of Public Education & UNICEF	N/A	102,349 students in 165 secondary schools (including 9,000 students in institutions for adult education).	Priority schools are identified based on an index of unmet basic needs and number of students from households with low education levels.	Ugarte (2015) Ministerio de Educación Pública (n.d.)
Ministry of Education	N/A	5,343 students (2015)	Public school secondary students who are two or more years older than the age for their grade.	MINERD (2014) MINERD (2015)
Instituto Nacional de Bienestar Estudiantil (INABIE) under the Ministry of Education	N/A	Includes 1,710,620 students in pre-primary, basic education, and secondary schools from 2015 data.	PAE targets public, basic education institutions, which include the equivalent levels of lower secondary (ages 6 to 14).	INABIE (n.d.)
Jensen (2010) research team	Randomized controlled trial. A follow-up survey of participants found students in the treatment group to have higher expected returns for secondary education than those in the control group. Students in the treatment group also lowered their expected returns for primary education only in comparison to the control group. Students who received the intervention were more likely to enroll in secondary school and had an average of 0.20 years more of schooling over the following four years. While significant, these effects were very small. There was no statistically significant impact on secondary school completion. In addition, effects are largest for relatively wealthier students and not significant for students from the poorest households.	Includes 2,250 students.	Eighth grade boys in urban areas nationwide.	Jensen (2010)
Ministry of Education	N/A	In 2014, 2.2 million students were covered, in 18,000 primary and secondary schools.	The program is operational in all public schools throughout the country.	Sanchez (2015)
Ministry of Education	N/A	All schools with over 300 students have a DECE.	Counselors from DECE serve all students in their respective schools.	Ministerio de Educación de Ecuador (2016)
Ministry of Education	N/A	Roughly 10,000 students thus far.	Students who have started school late or have repeated grades at least twice.	Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2015)
Ministry of Education	N/A	Roughly 40,000 students per year between all program modalities.	Adolescents and adults from 15 to 35 years old, with a focus on the third cycle of basic education (grades 7-9) and secondary education (grades 10-12). Youth who are out of school or overage are targeted.	Joma (2016)
Operación Éxito	N/A	Over 50,000 teachers use the OE platform, which reaches over 1 million students.	Marketed to teachers.	Graduate XXI OE website

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
LAC	Fe y Alegría (FYA) model	Other (e.g., curricula and education delivery)	1955-present	FYA is a network of Jesuit schools that operates throughout Latin America and beyond, which serves roughly 1.4 million students through formal and informal education services. Roughly half of the students are enrolled in formal primary and secondary education. FYA specifically attempts to establish schools in areas that are poor, rural or underserved by the public education system. For example, FYA has a specific initiative to develop primary and secondary education in rural Peru. Their model is localized, which allows schools to respond to the needs and unique situations of each communities. These rural schools emphasize skills for work and frequently include bilingual multicultural education. FYA teachers have a unique curriculum that ideally promotes community development, and management practices promote integration and reduce corruption.
Mexico	Percepciones	Information campaign	2009-2012	Low-cost pilot intervention to provide students entering upper secondary school with information on the returns to secondary and tertiary education, sources of financial aid for tertiary school and data on life expectancy with the objective of improving graduation rates and learning outcomes.
Mexico	Programas Escuelas de Calidad (PEC)	School-based management	2001-present	A school-based management program that aims to strengthen local autonomy and school quality within the country's decentralized education context. PEC provides financial and technical assistance to public pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools over five years to carry out plans for school improvement, involving school leaders, staff and parent associations.
Mexico	Programa Construye T	Teacher training and incentives Socioemotional learning	2007-present	Construye T is an intervention to develop students' socioemotional skills so they can understand and regulate their emotions, make responsible decisions and overcome academic and personal challenges. This intervention trains teachers and school leadership and develops and provides support materials (e.g. guides, videos) and was incorporated into the new national curriculum in 2017.
Mexico	Movimiento contra el Abandono Escolar, "Yo No Abandono"	School-based management	2013-present	A national strategy to improve access, retention and completion of upper secondary school by transforming school environments. Under this strategy, all upper secondary school staff in the country received a toolkit of 12 manuals to support their work with teachers, students and families to reduce dropouts. To complement these manuals, school directors and some teachers attend annual training workshops. Some of the main actions recommended for schools to employ include daily tracking of at-risk students, promotion of healthy co-existence among students, tutoring, parent engagement and developing students' socioemotional skills.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
Fe y Alegría	N/A	Over 500,000 students in formal primary and secondary FYA schools throughout LAC.	Communities in poor and rural areas.	Osorio & Wodon (2014)
Secretary of Education	The intervention included an experimental evaluation component, randomly assigning schools to treatment or control groups. After three years, the intervention had no effect on completing upper secondary school, but did have large, significant effects on math scores on a national standardized test. These positive effects were larger for women and for those from higher income households.	54 public upper secondary schools with 26 receiving treatment.	Schools were randomly assigned to the treatment group.	Avitabile & de Hoyos (2015)
Undersecretary of Basic Education	Two evaluations found that participation of primary schools in the program for three years correlated with a small yet significant reduction in dropout rates. These studies found mixed results in relation to grade failure and repetition rates. These studies used regression, difference-in-difference and propensity score matching analyses meaning that the analyses were as rigorous as possible without being fully experimental.	51,227 schools (2014)	While all public schools are eligible to participate in PEC, the program specifically targets disadvantaged, urban schools. Prioritized schools include those with majority indigenous populations, low performance on standardized tests, with students with disabilities, with migrant student populations and with large numbers of Oportunidades (CCT) beneficiaries.	CONEVAL (2015) Skoufias & Shapiro (2006) Murnane, Willet, & Cardenas (2006)
Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education (SEMS) with UNDP	A quasi-experimental impact evaluation used results of the 2007 and 2009 national survey on exclusion, tolerance, and violence in upper secondary schools as baseline and endline data for Construye T, supplemented by school administrative data. In effect, baseline and endline data allowed us to study the program's first year of implementation. As federal subsystems joined the program first, the study compared federal schools (the "treatment" group) with state schools (the "control" group). Relative to state schools, the study found promising effects on student attendance and school violence, among other indicators. However the study also found some limited and unintended results such as decreased contraceptive use and small increases in failure and dropout rates. These mixed results should be considered with caution as the impact evaluation cited inconsistencies in school administrative data and concerns over whether it was possible to see intended attitude and behavior changes after just one year of implementing Construye T.	In 2014-2015: 2,500 schools serving more than 2 million students and 99,000 teachers	Upper secondary students in public schools nationwide.	INSP & PNUD (2013)
Undersecretary of Upper Secondary Education (SEMS)	In 2015, SEMS conducted a retrospective cohort study using data from a survey of directors, teachers and youth in 147 schools across 12 states. Ninety-three percent of directors reported having received the Yo No Abandono manuals. The study found a statistically significant, negative relationship between having manuals and dropout: students in schools with manuals were 38 percent less likely to have dropped out in the previous year than those in schools without manuals. Directors were also surveyed about which recommended actions they had implemented. In comparison to students in schools which implemented no recommended actions, students were 81 percent less likely to have dropped out in schools where directors reported carrying out a set of six recommended actions. Overall, the study's findings are promising, but should be considered with caution as the comparison group is very small and the data on implementation of certain activities primarily relied on self-reporting from directors.	All public upper secondary schools receive the toolkit.	All public upper secondary schools.	SEP & INSP (2015) SEP (2015) SEP (n.d.)

LOCATION	INITIATIVE	PRIMARY APPROACHES	YEARS IN OPERATION	DESCRIPTION
Nicaragua	Ayúdame a Llegar	Transportation support	2010-present	Various foundations, including La Fundación Telmex and Claro Nicaragua have donated 20,000 bicycles to the Ministry of Education (MINED) since the year 2000. MINED then distributes the bicycles to students and teachers in rural areas.
Peru	Niñas con Oportunidades	Information campaign Sexual health education Tutoring College and career readiness	2015-present	CARE Peru works with government, schools, parents and teachers to empower young female students in rural areas of Peru to complete their secondary education. The program involves 5 main strategies: 1. provide information on the benefits of secondary education; 2. sexual education to adolescent women to reduce teen pregnancy; 3. engage parents and local governments in issues around secondary education; 4. strengthen girls' math and language skills, as well as soft skills; 5. incorporate into existing curricula information about job training and support teachers to educate girls around leadership, entrepreneurship and other skills. The program aims to reach 100,000 girls by 2025.
Peru	Con secundaria completa ¡sí la haces!	Information campaign Extracurricular activities	2015-present	National campaign to inform youth about the benefits of completing a secondary education and encourage their participation in school. In addition to communications outreach (e.g., social media and local press), participating students select an important issue in their school (e.g. discrimination, violence) and together produce a video, cartoon, play, mural or radio interview that is displayed at a local community festival. In 2015, the campaign held festivals in the regions of Ucayali, Amazonas, Piura, Puno and Cusco.
Peru	Qali Warma	Other (e.g., school feeding)	2012-present	National school feeding program that seeks to improve students' attention in class, school attendance and retention. The program operates in public pre-primary and primary schools throughout the country and, since 2014, in secondary schools in indigenous communities in the Amazon.
Uruguay	Liceos con Tutorías	Tutoring and teacher training and incentives	2008-present	Liceos con Tutorías aims to reduce repetition and dropout rates in secondary schools with high failure rates. Within these schools, the program targets at-risk students. The program supports schools in four ways: 1. strengthening pedagogical teams via pedagogical coordinators and tutors; 2. strengthening of psychological and counseling services; 3. funds for food, supplies, transportation or uniforms; 4. and tutoring sessions for targeted students.
Uruguay	Compromiso Educativo	Scholarships Tutoring	2011-present	The program involves three main strategies: education commitments, scholarships and peer support and tutoring groups. Students in upper secondary school who are evaluated as being high-need can sign a commitment agreeing to a higher standard of educational performance and behavior in order to receive a roughly $400 scholarship in four installments contingent upon maintaining performance. Another subset of students who are not as economically vulnerable but who have low educational achievement can still sign the commitment in order to receive additional academic assistance. For academic credit, university students or student teachers facilitate weekly peer support and tutoring groups among participants.
Uruguay	Tránsito Educativo	Transition support	2011-present	Tránsito Educativo is designed to help at-risk students make a successful transition to secondary school by intervening at three critical moments: the second semester of grade 6 of primary school, during summer break and in the first semester of secondary school. Participation in this program is determined by identifying schools with the highest number of at-risk students and then selecting the 50 most at-risk students at each school. A transition team is developed at each school, including primary and secondary teachers, to work intensively with students through the last semester of primary to motivate them and their families to continue on to secondary education.

IMPLEMENTER	MEASURED EFFECTS	REACH	TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND TARGETING STRATEGY	SOURCE
Ministry of Education	N/A	Twenty-thousand rural students and teachers.	N/A	"Entrega de bicicletas en Nicaragua busca disminuir deserción escolar" (2013)
CARE Peru	N/A	Nineteen schools in the cities of Chincha, Ica and Huaytará, Apurímac where 4,916 youth are reached.	N/A	http://www.care.org. pe/proyectos/ninas/
Ministry of Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	"Minedu: este jueves se lanza campaña nacional 'Con secundaria complete ¡Sí la haces!" (2015) http://www.minedu. gob.pe/silahaces/
Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS)	An impact evaluation supported by the World Bank has been underway since 2014 and will determine program effects on learning conditions (e.g., attention, short-term memory), food intake (e.g., quality and quantity), and school participation (e.g., enrollment, attendance, and progression) of students at the primary level.	In 2017, 62,876 pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools and 3,627,723 students nationally.	N/A	http://www.qw.gob.pe/
Ministry of Education	N/A	PIU operates in over 100 secondary schools. Nineteen thousand students are targeted through the program.	Public secondary schools with the highest dropout and repetition rates	Camacho (2009) Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (2014) ANEP (2008) Aristimuño (2016)
Ministry of Education	A 2011-2012 combined process and impact evaluation using propensity score matching found large, statistically significant positive effects of participating in the program. Participating students had substantially higher pass rates and rates of continuing onto the next level of education than non-participants and lower rates of repetition due to school absences.	Seven thousand students received scholarships in 2014. In 2013, the program operated in 80 educational centers in 15 of Uruguay's departments.	The program targets students who are in positions of socioeconomic vulnerability, those who have loose ties to the school system or who are in danger of dropping out.	INEEd (2014) ANEP (2014b) ANEP & MIDES (2013)
Coordinated by the Consejo Directivo Central, and involves the Basic Education Council, the Secondary Education Council, the Ministry of Social Development.	A 2011-2012 combined process and longitudinal impact evaluation found that 94 of participating students successfully transitioned from primary to secondary school. The study involved following students throughout the duration of the program, including one month of daily monitoring. Control groups were constructed based on similar background characteristics, as well as varying participation in program phases. The qualitative component of the study noted that participating students showed increased enthusiasm to attend school and arrive to school on time and improved conduct and self control. They are able to adapt to the new setting, rules and expectations of secondary school.	The program is active in 25 "educational spaces" throughout the country, each of which is composed of at least five primary schools and two secondary schools. 7500 students participate in the program.	Schools that have the highest persistent dropout rates participate in the program. All students in these schools participate in some program elements, while only the 50 students with the highest risk participate in other program elements.	INEEd (2014) DINEM (2013)