



IMPACTS

The role of All in for Youth in
supporting students and families:
From 2016 to 2024



→ **Year 8**
Evaluation Report

Prepared by All in For Youth, The Community-University
Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and
Families and Concordia University of Edmonton

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All in for Youth and their partners acknowledge that AIFY schools are located within Treaty 6 territory and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. We respect the histories, ancestors, medicines, languages and teachings of this land that continue to nurture our spirits and positively impact our lives. It is in reciprocal relationships with Indigenous people that the work of AIFY is possible. We are able to work, live and play on Treaty 6 territories and Métis homelands because of the generosity of Indigenous nations.

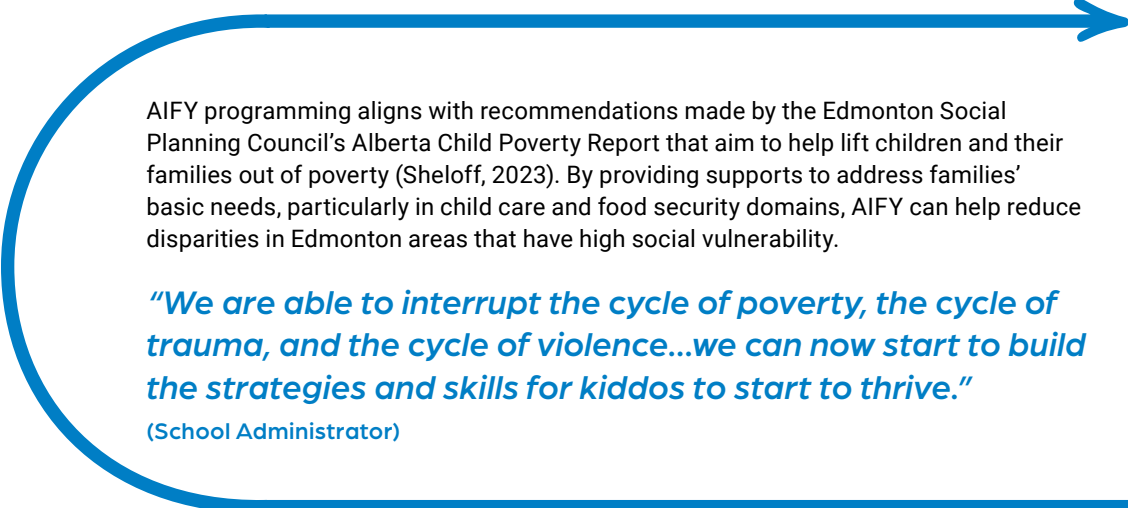


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is the AIFY Model?

In 2016, **All in for Youth (AIFY)** was formed as a collaborative partnership of local schools and community organizations to support vulnerable children in Edmonton. AIFY provides comprehensive school-based wraparound supports to children and their families to support their health and wellbeing, meet their critical needs, fulfill their potential in school, complete high school, and disrupt the cycle of poverty. Originally a five-year pilot program implemented in five schools, AIFY is now in its eighth year and has evolved to include eight schools, providing supports and services to thousands of students and families.

As one of the few models of school-based wraparound support in western Canada, AIFY is grounded in an evidence-based approach that offers several unique advantages by tailoring services to the individual needs of children and families, helping them reach their full potential. (Burns & Goldman, 1999; Hill, 2020; Maier et al., 2017).



AIFY programming aligns with recommendations made by the Edmonton Social Planning Council's Alberta Child Poverty Report that aim to help lift children and their families out of poverty (Sheloff, 2023). By providing supports to address families' basic needs, particularly in child care and food security domains, AIFY can help reduce disparities in Edmonton areas that have high social vulnerability.

"We are able to interrupt the cycle of poverty, the cycle of trauma, and the cycle of violence...we can now start to build the strategies and skills for kiddos to start to thrive."

(School Administrator)

AIFY Supports and Services

NUTRITION SUPPORT



Snacks and meals with nutritious foods to provide students with fuel for the school day.

MENTORING



Students have the opportunity to connect with peer, community, or corporate mentors (e.g., from, Students Helping Students Bursary Program, Intact Insurance, Enbridge, EPCOR, and Tales and Talents) and receive mentoring and positive role modelling focused on building relationship and life skills.

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME (OST) PROGRAMMING



After-school programming that is tailored to the needs and age of the students at each school and includes arts and culture activities, academic support and tutoring, health and physical activities, and games and leisure activities. Spring break and summer programming are also offered at some AIFY schools.

SUCCESS COACHING



Coaching for students on problem solving, setting and achieving goals, and building resilience in order to foster student success in school and life.

MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY



Therapy for students and their families focused on skill-building related to emotions, behaviours, relationships, and mental health concerns.

ROOTS AND WINGS FAMILY SUPPORT



In-home support for parents focused on building relationships, parenting skills, and navigating and accessing other essential services (e.g., food, clothing, financial assistance, and mental health support) in order to promote healthy families.

Impacts of the AIFY Model of Support

1. SCHOOL COMPLETION

AIFY enhances students' ability to complete school by providing targeted supports that help them develop both academic and personal skills. OST programming and mentoring offer crucial learning support, while success coaches assist students with goal-setting and strengthening academic skills, empowering them to progress through school and achieve success.

- **High School Completion.** For every one-percentage point increase in average attendance, the odds of graduating high school increased by 7.1%. Students who spent three or more years in an AIFY school had the highest completion rate at 61.6%, compared to 42.1% for those who spent two years and only 34.2% for those who spent one year. AIFY helps students complete high school by providing tutoring, success coaching, and family support to overcome personal and academic challenges, enabling students to stay on track to complete their education. We analyzed the relationship between the length of time spent in an AIFY school and high school completion and found that **years spent in an AIFY school is a significant predictor of high school completion.**
- **Successful School Transitions.** The majority of **students who attend an AIFY elementary and/or junior high successfully transition to the next level of schooling (91% and 84%, respectively).** AIFY promotes successful school transitions – moving between elementary, junior high, and high school – by helping students prepare for what to expect in upcoming school transitions and connecting them to older peer mentors.

2. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

AIFY enhances students' connections to their school community through supports such as Out-of-School Time (OST) programming and mentoring opportunities, where students build friendships, engage in leadership activities, and access peer mentoring. **Students report feeling more connected to their school after engaging with AIFY supports.**

- **Student Attendance.** AIFY schools **maintain a strong average attendance rate of 81.4%, comparable to the district's average.** Many students report that AIFY supports are strong motivators for attending school, which in turn improves overall attendance rates. Supports include nutrition, mentoring, and mental health therapy. Family support workers also engage with families of students who demonstrate poor attendance, offering assistance to encourage consistent school participation.
- **Student Mobility.** AIFY schools are located in highly socially vulnerable neighbourhoods where many families are highly transient. AIFY supports such as OST and success coaching are important to help students transition into an AIFY school, adjust to their new environment, make friends, and catch up on curriculum.

3. ENHANCED STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE

AIFY's mental health services enhance students' mental health by providing them with skills to develop their emotional regulation, coping, and social competencies. Notably, after working with a therapist, **79% of AIFY students reached their expected level of change, signifying a substantial shift towards healthier functioning, wellbeing, and resilience.**

4. FAMILY WELLBEING

AIFY's family and mental health supports help parents navigate family challenges, leading to healthier family dynamics and better outcomes for children. Families' wellbeing is fostered by developing their parenting skills and adopting positive parenting behaviors. Notably, **100% of parents indicate that they make positive decisions after receiving support, compared to 16% before support.**

5. ADDRESSES BASIC NEEDS

AIFY helps families access critical resources to meet their basic needs. The program's nutrition support ensures students receive essential nourishment for daily functioning, while AIFY's family support workers assist struggling families in securing vital resources, such as food and clothing. **Meeting students' nutritional needs provides essential nourishment for healthy functioning in school.** Without proper nutrition, children are at risk for significant impairments to brain and developmental challenges (Prado & Dewey., 2014).

- **Barrier Free Access.** AIFY's in-school support gives families easier access to essential resources and supports. AIFY eliminates transportation costs, exclusionary criteria, and wait times that families might face when seeking assistance through external social agencies, improving their access to needed supports.

A full description of these findings are provided in the following section of the report: **Impacts of the AIFY Model of Support** on page 17.



AIFY Partners

Currently, 11 partner organizations comprise AIFY. Partners contribute operational staff, student and family programming, infrastructure, funding, and services, as well as governance and decision-making for the initiative.

Agencies



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area (BGCBigS) is a community organization committed to the healthy development of children, youth, and families. BGCBigS provides OST programming and mentoring in AIFY schools and sits on the AIFY operations and steering committees.



The Family Centre (TFC) is a counselling and therapy centre in Edmonton that works to foster healthy families in healthy communities. TFC provides mental health therapy, success coaching, Roots and Wings family support in AIFY schools, and sits on the AIFY operations and steering committees.



e4c is a community organization that works to move people living in poverty towards positive, healthy, and lasting change. E4c provides nutrition supports in schools and sits on the AIFY operations and steering committees.

SCHOOL DIVISIONS



Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) provides educational programming for children from pre-kindergarten to grade 12. ECSD has one school in the AIFY program and sits on AIFY operations and steering committees.



Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) provides educational programming for children from pre-kindergarten to grade 12. EPSB has seven schools in the AIFY program and sits on AIFY operations and steering committees.

OPERATIONAL PARTNERS



United Way of the Alberta Capital Region (United Way) is a community organization committed to building healthy communities by addressing poverty, education, and wellness. United Way is AIFY's key backbone organization that provides operations and steering support.



REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities works to support solutions to community safety and crime prevention. REACH sits on the AIFY steering committee.

FUNDERS



Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) supports philanthropy in Edmonton. ECF contributes funding to AIFY and a representative sits on the AIFY steering committee.



Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is a municipal/provincial partnership that works with not-for-profit organizations in Edmonton to deliver preventative social service programs. FCSS supports AIFY with funding and a representative sits on the steering committee.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION



The Community-University Partnership (CUP) for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families is a research center in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta that is committed to improving the development of children, youth, families, and communities through community-engaged research. CUP provides AIFY with research and evaluation support. CUP representatives sit on the AIFY operations and steering committees.



Researchers at **Concordia University of Edmonton (Concordia)** collaborate with CUP at the University of Alberta to provide AIFY with research and evaluation support. Concordia representatives sit on the AIFY operations and steering committees.



What is the Purpose of this Report?

Research and evaluation have been integral to the AIFY initiative since its inception, enabling operational partners to understand and quantify the impact of AIFY on student and families' lives as well as adapt their service provision in response to student and families' needs (see AIFY & CUP, 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; Haight et al., 2023; Haight et al., 2024). **The purpose of this report is to provide an in-depth review of the cumulative impact of AIFY over its eight-year lifespan.** This includes an overview of students' use of AIFY services over the years and the impacts of these services on students' access to:

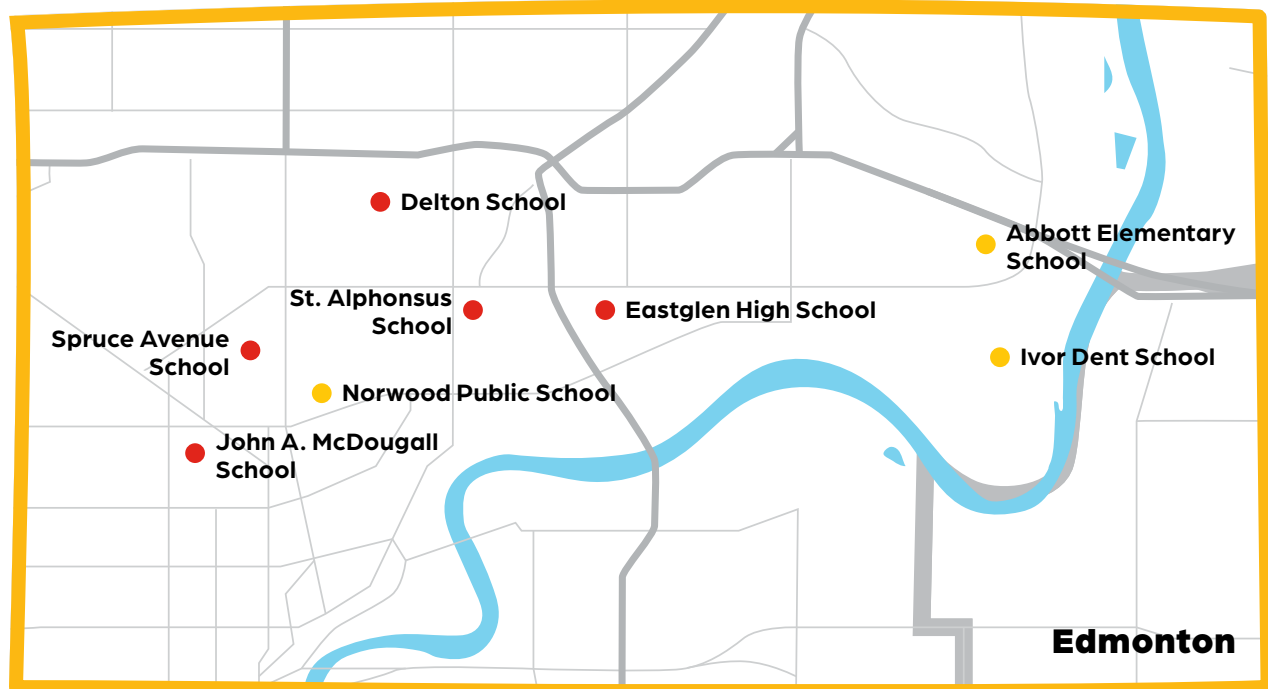
- students' success in school, including completing high school and transitioning between levels of school
- student engagement in school, including their attendance and mobility patterns
- student mental health and resilience
- family wellbeing
- basic needs

This analysis is based on long-term quantitative and qualitative data trends, which are discussed next.

AIFY SCHOOLS and POPULATION

Where are the AIFY Schools?

AIFY is active in eight schools, including four elementary schools, two combined elementary and junior high schools, one junior high school, and one high school. The AIFY initiative was first implemented in 2016 in five schools as a part of a five-year pilot program. AIFY expanded into three more schools in 2021 as research and evaluation revealed its positive impacts on student and family wellbeing and engagement (AIFY & CUP, 2021).



Years the Schools joined the Initiative: ● 2016 ● 2021

How is an AIFY School Chosen?

AIFY schools were chosen for the AIFY initiative based on social vulnerability criteria. Each year, the Edmonton Public and Catholic school divisions rank their schools based on levels of social vulnerability, which helps allocate additional funds and resources to schools that may have the greatest needs. These rankings are based on neighbourhood indicators of social vulnerability, such as median family income, lone parent status, and family transience. Schools are selected to be a part of AIFY because they are consistently ranked in the top 10, meaning they are in Edmonton's most highly vulnerable neighbourhoods. The rankings underscore the high needs within these communities and the value of AIFY supports in helping students and families reach their full potential.

Please note: St. Alphonsus is ranked as the most socially vulnerable school in Edmonton Catholic Schools, while Abbott Elementary holds the same distinction in Edmonton Public Schools. Although both schools face significant social vulnerability, direct comparisons between schools are not possible, as the divisions do not assess vulnerability in a way that allows for cross-division comparisons.

→ WHAT DOES SOCIAL VULNERABILITY MEAN?

Social vulnerability refers to an individual's social environment—such as their employment status, income level, sources of social and emotional support—which can potentially act as a predictor to vulnerability, such as in response to changes in circumstances, disasters, or health issues (Mah et al., 2023).

"I think this is an amazing strategy [AIFY] to bring accessible mental health support and many other supports to a community that struggles with poverty, crime, and a lack of resources, and this will change the trajectory for many students as they grow up. I wish the AIFY supports were available to every school across Canada!"

(Agency Staff)



What Supports are Offered in AIFY Schools?

AIFY schools provide comprehensive wraparound services to students and families, with some variation in service delivery across the schools. All AIFY schools have one or more part-time nutrition support workers, one part- or full-time success coach, one part- or full-time mental health therapist, and one part- or full-time Roots and Wings family support worker. Most schools have a part-time mentoring facilitator (7 schools) and an OST coordinator (5 schools). For the schools that do not have on-site OST programming, they have nearby sites that offer OST programming within walking distance to their schools.

The Structure of AIFY Supports in Schools as of 2023/24

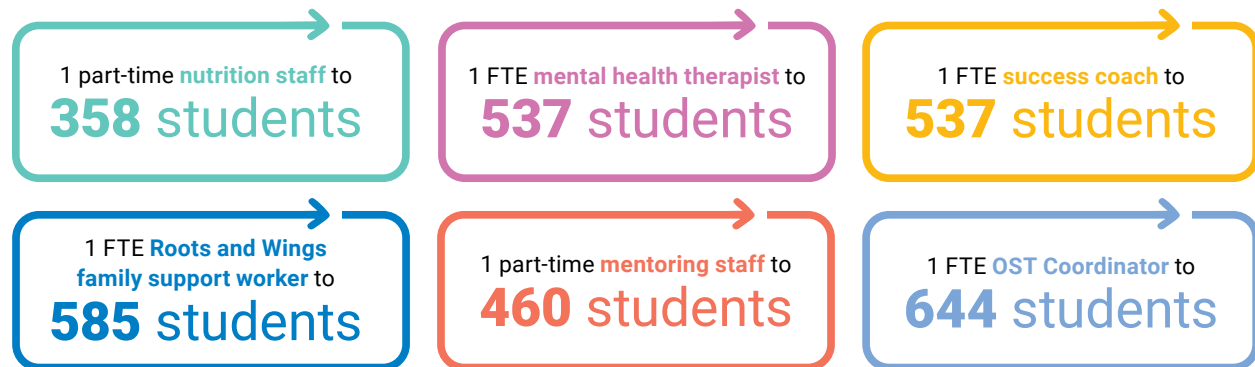


"I wish there was more [AIFY staff]. Because there are so many kids."

(Parent, 2023)

The variation in service delivery across schools is largely due to funding and resource constraints. Limited funding for AIFY staff positions often results in a high student-to-staff ratio across the AIFY schools, which can lead to situations in which demand for support exceeds available staff. Both AIFY staff and parents frequently highlight the critical role of AIFY and underscore the ongoing need for adequate funding to sustain staff positions.

All Schools: Ratio of AIFY Staff to Students as of 2023/24



Note: Not all students in the school access comprehensive AIFY supports. The proportion of students accessing supports is outlined in the Service Use section on page 14.

Despite these challenges, AIFY staff are working to maximize support for students and families. These efforts include prioritizing students based on their level of need, providing support on a temporary basis or in group settings to extend reach to as many students as possible, and collaborating across the teams of AIFY agency staff to enhance service delivery. AIFY's strategic partners continuously work to enhance funding that will extend AIFY's reach and facilitate expansion.

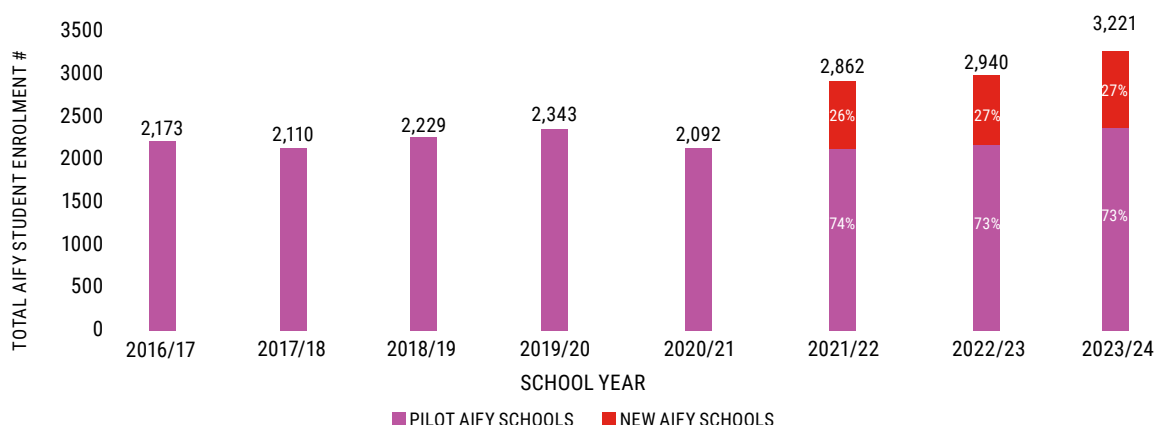
"One of the benefits of [AIFY]...is [that] we each have different resources and different abilities and areas that we can give...we're able to cover a lot more of the needs."

(Agency Partner)

What is the Student Population?

Currently, the total AIFY student population includes 3,221 students across eight schools (2023/24). The student population increased by approximately 26% in 2021 when AIFY expanded into three new schools (the addition of new AIFY schools is highlighted in orange), and increased again during the 2023/24 academic year. The student population also varies across AIFY schools, ranging from 195 students (Abbott Elementary) to 966 students (Eastglen High School). In larger school communities located in neighbourhoods with high social vulnerability, there is a greater need and demand for support.

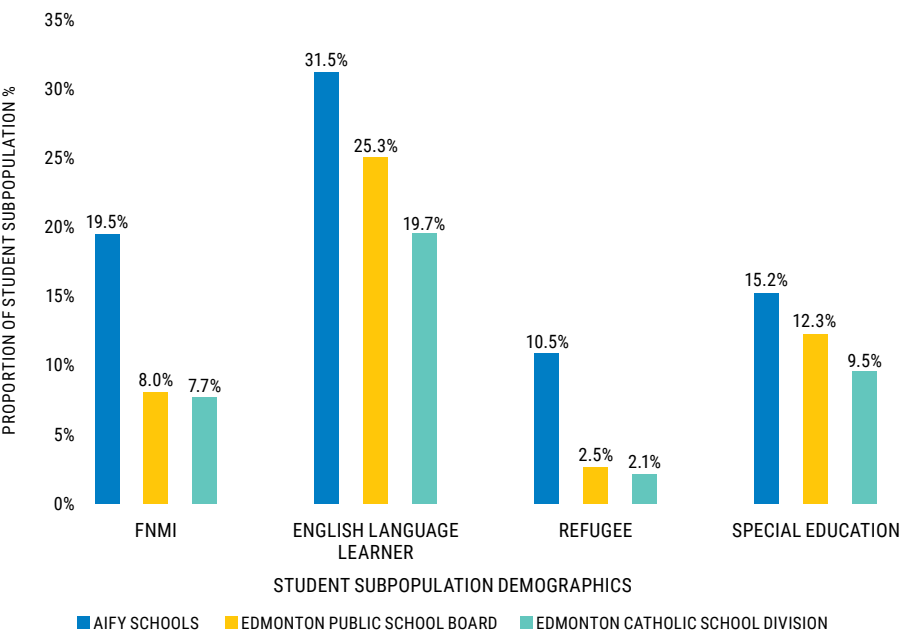
Total Student Population Across AIFY Schools



What are the Student Demographics?

Among students in AIFY schools, there are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI) students, English language learners, refugees, and students with special education needs. There is also overlap in students who identify with more than one of these specific populations. Currently, self-identified **FNMI students** represent about **one-fifth** of the student population, **English language learners** represent **one-third**, **refugees** represent **one-tenth**, and **students with special education needs** represent **15.2%** (2023/24). **AIFY schools have higher proportions of these student demographics than division averages**, highlighting the breadth and diversity of needs at AIFY schools.

Subpopulation Demographics Compared to the School Divisions in 2023/24



It is important to acknowledge the diversity of students and families that make up AIFY school communities because this connects to the varied complexity of student experiences and needs. For example, refugee or newcomer families often face the challenge of learning a new language and navigating new education, health, and social systems without an established support network. Children with disabilities may face a greater risk of struggling with schoolwork without inclusive supports. Experiences of discrimination, racism, and intergenerational trauma can also affect the health, wellbeing, and ability to learn of racialized and minority children (Merolla & Jackson, 2019; Priest et al., 2024). Accordingly, AIFY supports and resources are required to make the school community an inclusive environment that sets all students up for success.

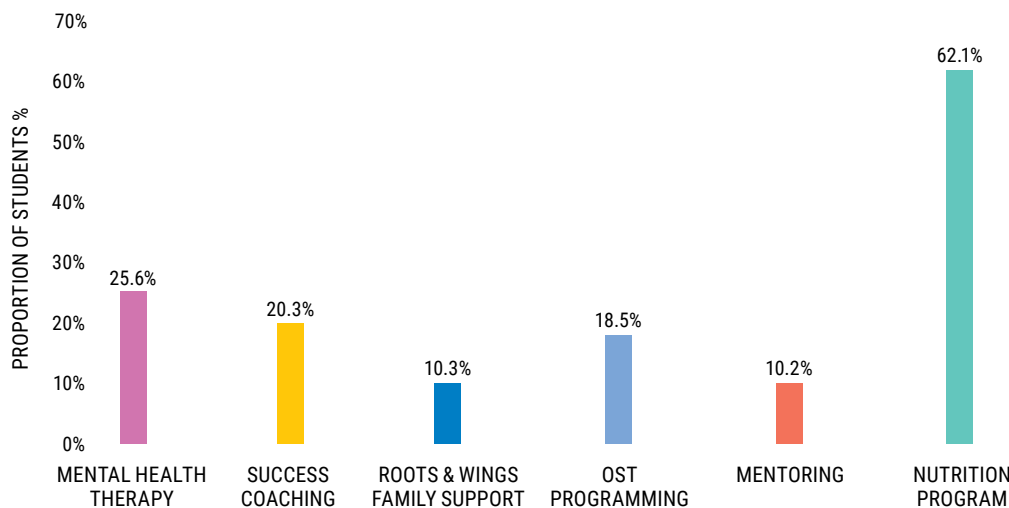
“[A]s a classroom teacher, I have 23 kids all with their own varying degrees of high needs. And it’s nice that there is a group of other adults who want to invest in the wellbeing of the kids. People I can go to and say, ‘Hey, I need your help, because I can’t get to this kid right now.’ And they can take them and give them the support that they need at that moment.”

(Teacher)

AIFY SERVICE USE

AIFY's comprehensive wraparound services are in high demand. In the most recent year (2023/24), over two-thirds of AIFY students were enrolled in the nutrition program, about one-quarter of students and families used mental health therapy and success coaching, close to one-fifth of students used Out of School Time (OST) programming, and over one-tenth of students and families used mentoring and Roots and Wings family support.

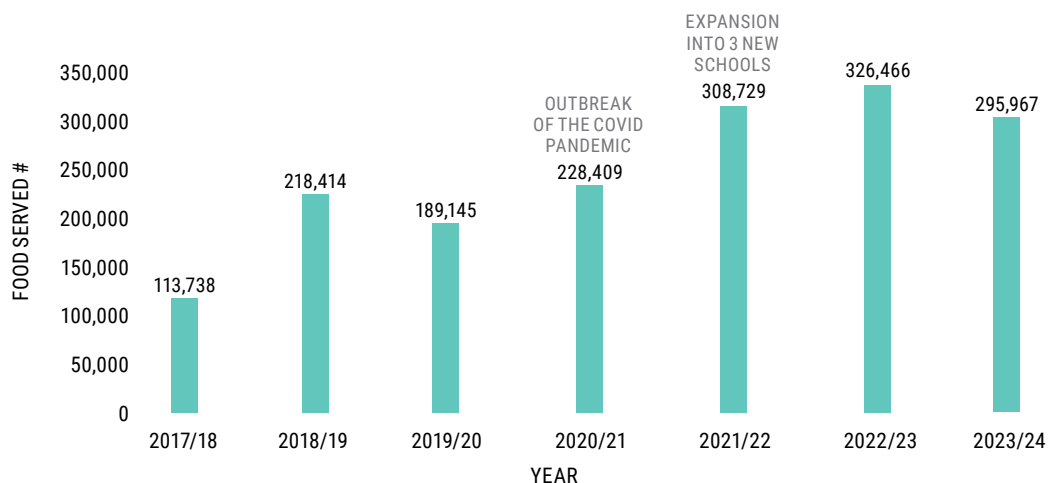
AIFY Service Use in 2023/24



Note: Success Coaching, Mental Health Therapy, and Roots and Wings Family Support include any use of these services on a short-term or formal basis and in individual or group settings.

Additionally, many students who are not formally registered in the nutrition program are able to access meals and snacks in school. **There were 295,966 meals served to AIFY students** in the past year. The number of meals served to students has gradually increased over the years, consistent with the expansion of AIFY into additional schools. Notably, during the pandemic, the nutrition program adapted to also include food baskets, which were sent home to families struggling with food security.

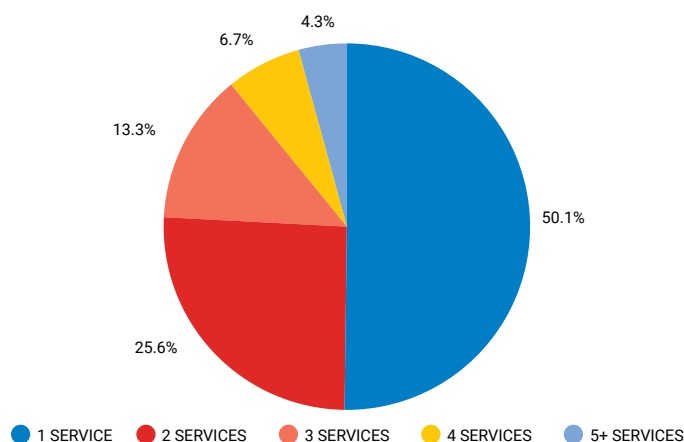
Meals Served in AIFY Schools Over 7 Years



How Many Students Access Multiple AIFY Supports?

Many students access more than one AIFY service at their school. In the last school year (2023/24), **50% of students who accessed AIFY supports used multiple supports** (excluding nutrition supports because they are accessed by most students). This highlights the value of providing a range of services that address the holistic needs of families.

Proportion of Students Accessing Multiple Services in 2023/24



Note: This excludes nutrition services, since they are accessed by most students in the school.

How did the Pandemic Impact AIFY Service Use?

AIFY service use was affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which profoundly impacted families, schools, and communities. During the 2020/21 school year, families had the option of in-person or online learning; however, instruction periodically shifted entirely to online formats in response to evolving public health directives. The transition to online learning notably disrupted the delivery and utilization of AIFY supports.

In response to these changes, AIFY partners rapidly adapted their service delivery models to ensure continued support for students and their families (see AIFY & CUP, 2020). This adaptation included providing families with computers to enable remote learning, distributing food packages to those facing food insecurity, and moving AIFY programming (i.e., mental health services, OST, and mentoring) from in-person to virtual delivery in accordance with public health measures. Innovative solutions were also employed to support students virtually. For example, as a part of OST virtual programming, activity packages were sent to homes with arts and crafts materials for students to do together during OST hours.

The ability of AIFY partners to nimbly adapt and support students during this time demonstrates the depth of the collaboration between agencies, and their commitment to the AIFY initiative.

“Everyone just remained focused on the wellbeing of families during this extraordinary time” (Operations Partner)

→ IN THE LIT:

Wraparound models of support, such as AIFY, continue to demonstrate their effectiveness and ability to adapt as needed in face of significant changes to our environments. For example, Pollack, Theodorakakis, and Walsh (2021) found that schools with established wraparound supports before the pandemic (also known as integrated student supports) were able to leverage their existing processes and relationships to maintain thorough and comprehensive levels of support for children and families in these school communities.

RESEARCH and EVALUATION METHODS

To understand the impact of the AIFY initiative on students, families, and the school communities over the past eight years, we conducted an analysis of long-term data trends. A multi-methods research design was conducted, which involved exploring multiple sources of quantitative data (e.g., surveys and statistics) and qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups, documents) that were collected for AIFY between 2016 and 2024 (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study was conducted by researchers from the University of Alberta (CUP) and Concordia University of Edmonton, in partnership with AIFY partners, following a community-based participatory research and evaluation approach. This approach prioritizes equitable collaboration between researchers and communities affected by the research (Israel et al., 2005), and the evaluation team worked closely with AIFY partners on all aspects of the evaluation, including identifying research priorities, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting and reporting on findings.

Three primary sources of data were used: (1) secondary school data and (2) agency data provided by the schools and agency partners, as well as (3) primary interview and focus group data collected by the evaluation team.

Data Sources



SCHOOL DATA

including statistics on student enrolment, demographics, attendance rates, mobility rates, school transition rates, high school completion rates, and the use of AIFY services over eight years between 2016 and 2024



AGENCY DATA

including statistics on use of AIFY services, as well as survey and interview data collected by agency partners on student and family perspectives of the impact of these services over eight years between 2016 and 2024



INTERVIEWS and FOCUS GROUP DATA

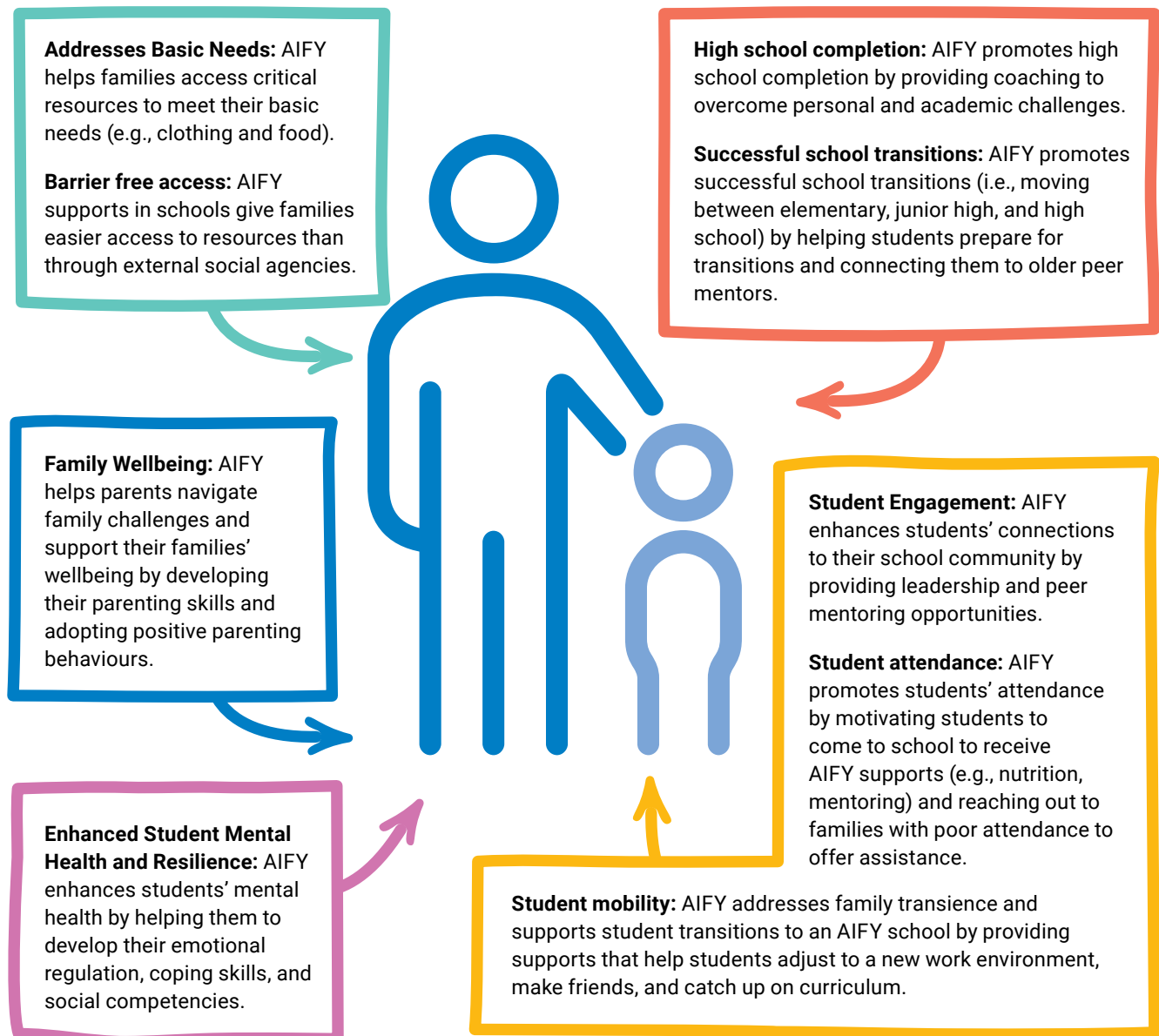
collected by the evaluation team with AIFY students, AIFY alumni, parents/caregivers, teachers and school administrators, and AIFY agency staff who on their perspectives of the AIFY initiative over eight years between 2016 and 2024

School and agency data were provided to the AIFY evaluation team by school and agency partners and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Interview and focus group data were collected by the evaluation team and analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which involves identifying and describing patterns and meanings in qualitative data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Data analysis was also guided by the AIFY's philosophy and the extent to which it is meeting its aims of supporting the health and wellbeing of students and families, helping students achieve their potential in school, and supporting students to complete high school. Different data sources were integrated in the writing stage to produce a comprehensive narrative on the impacts of the AIFY Initiative (Fetters et al., 2013). Data were also reviewed by AIFY strategic partners to ensure the interpretation is comprehensive and accurate.

IMPACTS OF THE AIFY MODEL OF SUPPORT

Overview of Impacts of the AIFY Model

AIFY promotes students' ability to complete school by providing supports to help students develop their academic and personal skills.



Supporting Students to Complete School

Students can struggle to complete high school due to personal and life challenges. AIFY provides essential support to help students develop both academic and life skills, helping them to successfully complete their education journey. High school students receive learning and homework assistance through OST programming and mentoring, which helps them better understand class concepts and manage their assignments. Additionally, success coaches work with students to cultivate skills necessary for academic success and effective workload management. AIFY staff also offer high school students guidance on vital competencies, such as time management, job and university application processes, and overall graduation planning. Students share that this support is instrumental in helping them set and achieve their goals.

"[AIFY] helped me academically...My parents didn't graduate high school. So as soon as I passed ninth grade...they couldn't really help me academically...So, I think it was really, really, really imperative to have volunteers and staff through OST that were accessible. You know, I'm just going to walk down the hallway to the library, where I had adults that could help me with my math. I'm not a math person...But I passed, because, you know, I had these accessible tutors...to help me with it."

(Alumni)

Supporting students to complete high school

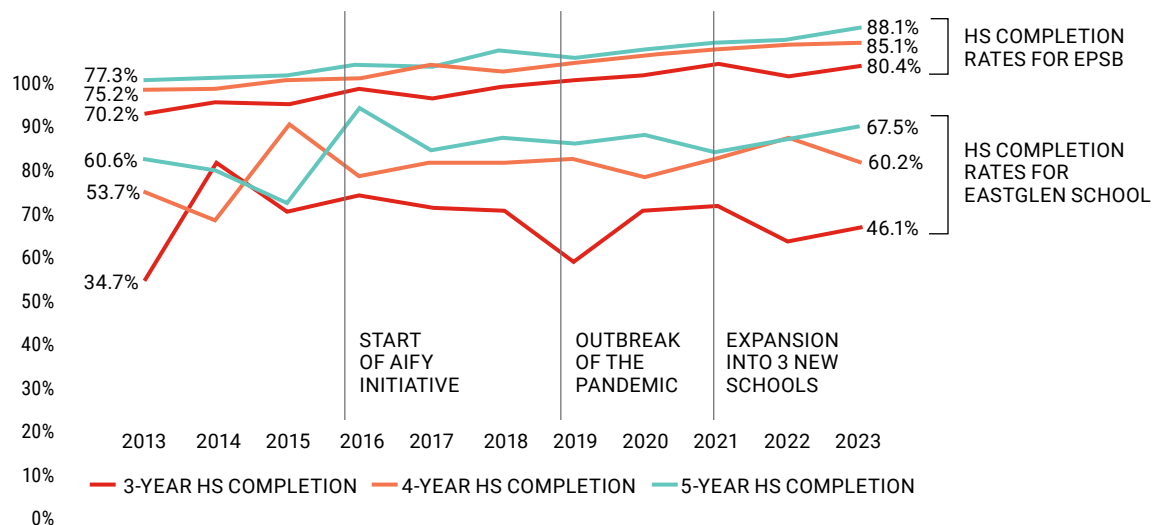
High school completion is a key indicator of school success and is associated with economic and employment benefits in adulthood (Belfield & Levin, 2007). AIFY supports students in completing high school and preparing for life after graduation through tutoring, success coaching, and family support. Students emphasize that these supports play a meaningful role in helping them to overcome personal and academic challenges, stay in school, and complete high school.

"I was like I can't stay at home anymore. I need to leave...I am freaking out. I need to drop out of school. And I need to go find a second job...I just explained everything that was happening...They were like, 'AIFY is here to help you'"

(Student)

The school divisions monitor annual high school completion rates using three measures: completing high school in three years (which is the expected timeline for completing high school), completing within four years (which is one year delayed from expected completion), and completing within five years (which is two years delayed from expected completion). For all measures of high school completion, **the proportion of students completing high school in AIFY schools has gradually increased over the years**. Specifically, 3-year high school completion increased from 35% in 2013 to 46% in 2023 (up by 11%), 4-year high school completion increased from 54% to 60% (up by 6%), and 5-year high school completion increased from 61% to 68% (up by 7%).

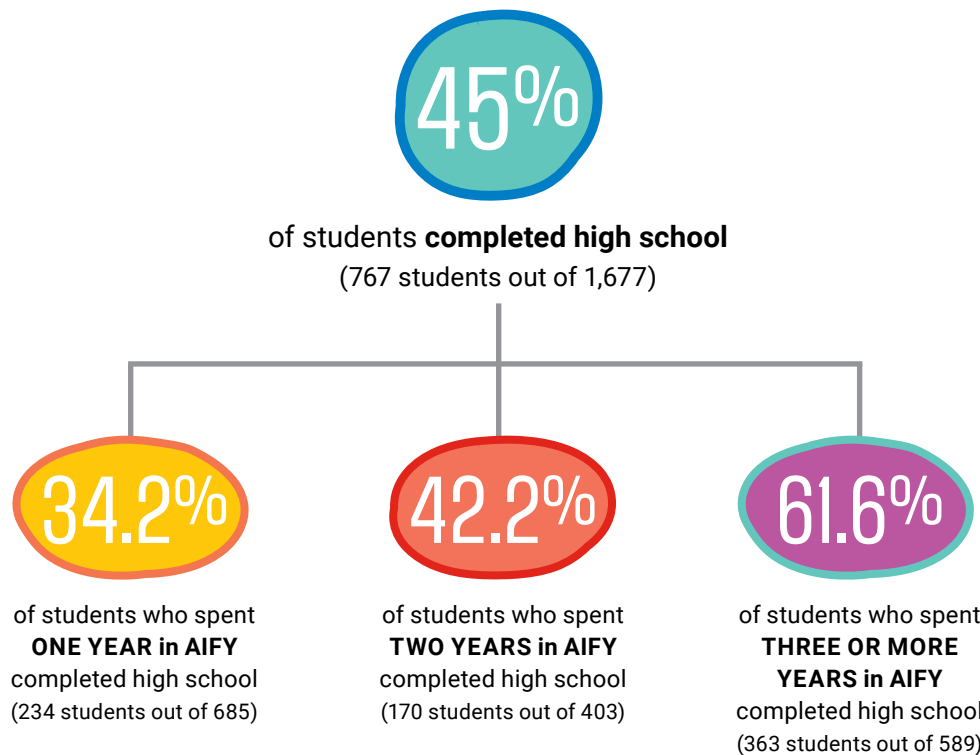
AIFY Eastglen High School Completion Rates Compared to EPS, Over 10 Years



Note: Eastglen is the only AIFY high school and located within the EPS division. As such, high school completion rates are compared exclusively to those within the EPS division.

There is also a relationship between spending time in an AIFY school and completing high school. We analyzed the association between spending different amounts of time in an AIFY school and high school completion and found that **years spent in an AIFY school is a significant predictor of high school completion ($p=0.000$, chi-square=98, $df=2$; see Appendix A for methods)**. Students who spent three or more years in an AIFY school had the highest completion rate at 61.6%, compared to 42.1% for those who spent two years and only 34.2% for those who spent one year.

High School Completion by Years Spent in Schools



Supporting School Transitions

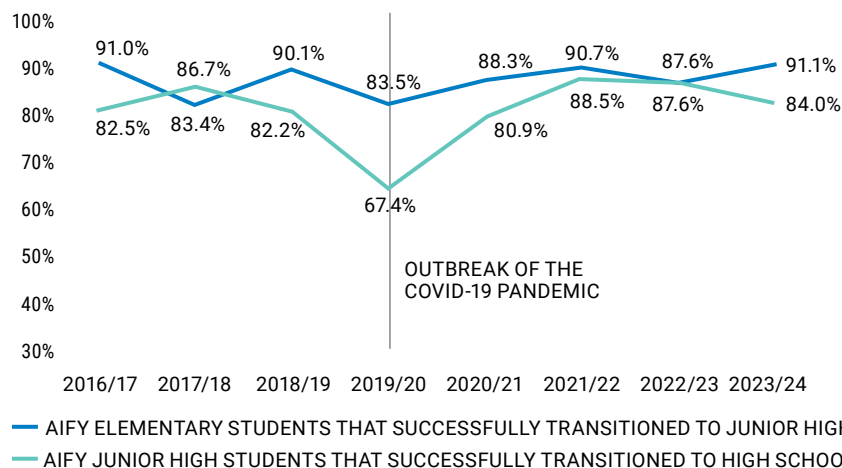
Transitioning between different levels of school—elementary, junior high, and high school—are essential for students to progress in their education. However, these transitions can represent a challenging time for students due to changes in their school environment, such as school friendships and new teachers. As a result, a decline in academic performance and wellbeing can occur (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). In response, AIFY also makes concerted efforts to support students with school transitions. The AIFY initiative encompasses multiple school levels, with the AIFY elementary schools feeding into the junior high schools, which then feed into the high school, allowing students to benefit from AIFY supports throughout their academic career. Agency staff also work with students to help prepare them for their transition to junior high or high school, often by connecting younger students with older ones so they can find out what to expect in their next school. Staff say this support is helpful for preparing students for the next level of schooling.

“My kids are in Grade 6, and All In For Youth has been really great with supporting the kids transitioning into junior high.”

(Teacher)

In the past year, 91.1% of AIFY elementary students successfully transitioned to junior high school and 84% of AIFY junior high students successfully transitioned to high school within the Edmonton Public School division. Edmonton Public Schools tracks school transitions for students who remain within their division; however, they cannot monitor those who leave the division. As a result, data on students who fail to transition to the next level of schooling includes those who move to another school division or permanently withdraw from school. Transition rates have remained fairly consistent over the years, with the exception of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. **Accordingly, most students are successfully progressing from elementary to high school, which is a necessary step for completing school.** Additionally, a large portion of students transition within AIFY schools. Of students who successfully transitioned in the 2023/24 academic year, 62% of the AIFY elementary students moved on to an AIFY junior high school and 46% of the junior high students moved on to an AIFY high school, showing a progression of students throughout AIFY schools where they can continue to benefit from AIFY supports.

School Transitions for AIFY Elementary and Junior High Students, Over 8 Years



Note: The data includes elementary students from Delton and JAM schools for Years 1-5 (2016-21) and based on Abbott, Delton, Ivor Dent, JAM, and Norwood schools for Year 6 and onwards (2021/22). Based on junior high students from Spruce Ave for Years 1-5 (2016-21) and based on Ivor Dent and Spruce Ave for Years 6 and onwards (2021/22).

Student Engagement

Alongside family, the school community is crucial in shaping children's development. Schools can positively influence not only academic learning but also social and emotional growth (Grover et al., 2015). However, many students face challenges in becoming engaged, forming friendships, and finding a sense of belonging within their school. In response, AIFY's services are crucial in enhancing students' connections to their school community. Through OST and mentoring, students have opportunities to build friendships and engage in leadership activities such as organizing school events, and older students can mentor younger peers. Students consistently report feeling more connected to their school after engaging in these programs.

Additionally, students can access mental health therapists and success coaches to help them navigate difficulties with peer relationships. A survey revealed that students also feel a greater sense of belonging in their school after receiving support from a success coach.

"OST helped me make friends because it was an easier environment to make friends"

(High School Student)

"I feel like I belong"

Endorsed by 77% of students after receiving support compared to 26% before

Supporting student attendance

One major barrier to student engagement is poor attendance. Absenteeism often signals underlying challenges at school, at home, or within the community and can disrupt students' engagement and progress in school (Kearney et al., 2022). It's also a significant concern because attendance is closely tied to high school completion rates. In our analysis of the AIFY student population, we found a significant association between average attendance and high school graduation. Specifically, for every one-percentage point increase in average attendance, the **odds of graduating high school increased by 7.1%** (see appendix A for methods). This finding suggests that even small improvements in attendance in AIFY schools can have a meaningful impact on a student's likelihood of graduating.

Staff and families highlight AIFY's role in improving student attendance. Staff observe that the nutrition program motivates students who face food insecurity at home to attend school. Moreover, students often express increased motivation to attend school on days they receive AIFY services, such as OST and mental health therapy. Additionally, AIFY family support workers proactively reach out to families of students with poor attendance and offer assistance and resources to encourage consistent school attendance, all of which makes it easier for families to make it to school and promotes students' attendance.

"The only reason I come to school is for this group on Tuesdays [Success Coach Group]."

(Student)

"Out of the kids that I've had, especially the ones who regularly see either the success coach or mental health therapist, [I] definitely see more engagement in class, sometimes more attendance."

(Teacher)

→ IN THE LIT

Research highlights that a positive school environment—one that is safe, fair, encourages student participation, fosters positive relationships, and is welcoming—helps cultivate a strong sense of community and promotes students' emotional wellbeing and positive self-concept (Grover et al., 2015).

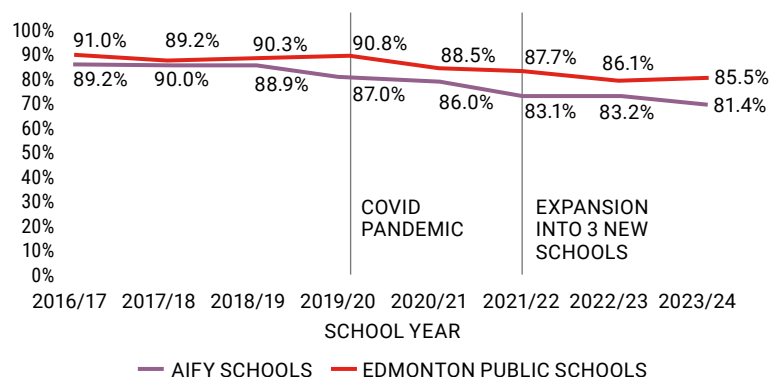
For each one-percentage point increase in average attendance among AIFY students, the odds of completing high school increase by 7.1%.

The current attendance rate across AIFY schools is 81.4%, just 5% below the division average of 86.5% for the 2023/24 year. Attendance declined following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which was consistent with a broader division trend. Despite this trend, AIFY schools maintain a relatively strong attendance rate given that AIFY schools serve some of the most socially vulnerable communities in Edmonton, with students attending school the majority of the time (81.4%). Staff in AIFY schools believe that attendance rates would be lower without AIFY staff actively working to bring students to school.

“... a huge part of what [AIFY has] taken on is getting kids to school. Like we’ve had kids with attendance issues that are coming to school now, and are in our building.”

(School Administrator)

Student Attendance Over 8 Years, Compared to Edmonton Public Schools



Addressing student mobility

Another key barrier to school engagement for students is high mobility. Student mobility refers to the movement of students in and out of schools, which can result from transferring to another school or division, relocating to a different area, or withdrawing from school. AIFY schools are located in highly socially vulnerable neighbourhoods where many families experience high transience and these frequent changes in schools can be challenging for students and make it more difficult for them to engage in school and continue with their studies (Jelleyman & Spencer, 2008).

AIFY supports such as OST and success coaching are available for students transitioning into an AIFY school to help them adjust to their new environment, make friends, and catch up on curriculum. These supports help students navigate these transitions and stay consistent in their schooling. **In the 2023/24 school year, the mobility rate in AIFY schools was approximately 54%, including students transferring in between schools in their division, leaving their division, or withdrawing from school.** This is substantially higher than the division average. Although mobility decreased slightly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, it increased again in 2022. This high level of mobility reinforces the critical need for AIFY supports to assist students with transitions, and promote their engagement in school.

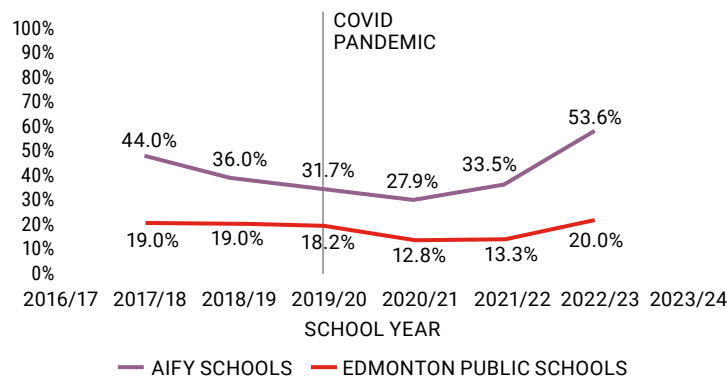
→ IN THE LIT

Moving more frequently is associated with an increase in behavioural problems (e.g., drug use, teenage pregnancy) and emotional problems (e.g., loneliness, depression) in adolescents (Jelleyman & Spencer, 2008). A recent study also found that a higher number of residential moves is associated with more delinquency and educational problems among boys (Schmidt, Krohn, & Osypuk, 2018).

"If you don't have that help, then everything will just pile up on you, and you'll feel too stressed to come back. I know for a fact that this happens because it happened to me last year...I just didn't want to come to school...So when you don't have anybody to help you then you don't want to do anything."

(High School Student)

Mobility for AIFY Schools Compared to Edmonton Public Schools, Over 8 Years



Fostering Student Mental Health and Resilience

Childhood is an important development period for fostering mental wellbeing and tackling mental health challenges. Poor mental health during this stage can lead to negative health and social consequences, such as disengagement from school and difficulties in personal relationships (Family and Community Support Services, 2022). AIFY's mental health therapists provide students with guidance, support, and practical tools to navigate mental health challenges. Students report that these services significantly enhance their mental health and wellbeing. Parents and AIFY staff also observe that students who receive mental health support exhibit better emotional regulation, enhanced coping skills for both personal and academic challenges, and improved emotional and social competencies. Specifically, mental health therapists use a tracking system "My Outcomes" to monitor student outcomes based on wellbeing, interpersonal relationships, and overall functioning. Data indicate that approximately **79% of clients reached their expected level of change** after working with a therapist, signifying a substantial and positive shift towards healthier functioning and resilience.

"[The mental health therapist] is someone that you go and talk to if you feel any kind of strong emotions... You can go and talk to her and like get some advice to deal with what you're going through. And not just hurt yourself or hurt someone else. It really helps [to] process everything. So that's why I feel it is really important."

(Junior High Student)

→ IN THE LIT

Students come to schools with diverse needs and strengths, and their learning is shaped by their physical and emotional health, family support, and social emotional development (Bowden et al., 2020).

After working with a therapist, 79% of clients achieved their expected level of progress, indicating a significant and positive shift toward improved functioning and resilience.

Strengthening Family Wellbeing

Families may struggle with socioemotional challenges, such as family relationships, conflict, and traumatic events (City of Edmonton, 2024). Through AIFY's family and mental health support services, families receive support from a family support worker or mental health staff to navigate these challenges. Parents say that this support helps them to develop parenting skills, adopt and model positive behaviours, and support their families' overall wellbeing. In fact, a survey revealed that parents feel more capable of making positive decisions, better able to reach their goals, and more hopeful for the future after they receive AIFY family support, strengthening and promoting overall family wellbeing.

"I make positive decisions for myself"

Endorsed by 100% of caregivers after receiving support compared to 16% before

"I know how to reach my goals"

Endorsed by 83% of caregivers after receiving support compared to 0% before

"I have hope for the future"

Endorsed by 100% of caregivers after receiving support compared to 0% before

Addressing Basic Needs

Families often struggle to afford essential needs (e.g., food, clothing, and housing), with research indicating that approximately 22% of children in Alberta lack adequate access to food, aggravated by rising inflation and the cost of living (Edmonton Community Foundation, 2023). In response, AIFY helps families access critical resources to meet their basic needs. The nutrition program provides students with the essential nourishment needed for daily functioning, healthy growth and development, and effective learning. Additionally, AIFY family support workers help struggling families access resources to support their individual family needs, such as warm clothing for the winter and getting connected to the local food bank. This support is crucial for families, with many parents expressing that, without this assistance, they would struggle to provide for their children or maintain financial stability.

"Having this program gives us some really huge relief...The parents don't have to struggle as much."

(Parent)

"We've met families...And they're worried because their kid doesn't have new shoes...and they're embarrassed. And we'll say, oh we can find your child some shoes...and clothes."

(Teacher)

"If you don't have food in your body, the rest of the day you can be thinking about the hunger, especially at school. Like me personally, I wouldn't be able to focus at all if I'm hungry. Being able to go and get food or snacks when you need is really helpful."

(High School Student)

→ DID YOU KNOW?

- More than 2.1 million children under the age of 18 in Canada report that they experienced some level of food insecurity (Statistics Canada, 2023)
- 33% of food bank clients are children (Food banks Canada 2024)
- Many low income families spend 80% of their income on food and housing. This leaves little left to meet other basic necessities (Food Banks Canada, 2024)

Removing barriers and supporting access to critical supports

Families report that the in-school supports provided by AIFY (e.g., nutrition, mental health therapy, etc.) facilitate easier access to essential resources than they would get through social agencies. While external agencies can offer some similar services, families often find these services difficult to navigate due to complex procedures, exclusionary criteria, and lengthy wait times. In contrast, AIFY's in-school services remove barriers related to cost, transportation, and time, allowing families to meet their basic needs more quickly.

Additionally, when families require assistance beyond the scope of AIFY's services, family support workers help them navigate external systems and access additional resources, such as finding employment opportunities, securing disability assistance, and finding affordable housing. Parents say that this support ensures that they can more easily connect with needed external services, particularly for those who are newcomers or unfamiliar with the complexities of the social support system.

"I don't think the growth that we've seen out of [my son] would be here if these programs weren't readily available inside the school on a daily basis"

(Parent)

"For my family...It's a new country, a new culture, a new language...so you really need to get [someone] that can bring you support...information about how it works."

(Parent)





MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE

Over the past eight years, AIFY has changed the life trajectory of many students and families with its collaborative model of supports. AIFY partners are dedicated to enhancing the wellbeing of children, families, and schools and are continually refining their strategies based on emerging research and evaluation findings.

This year, the AIFY operational team shifted the evaluation focus to the long-term impacts of the initiative and has been mobilizing this knowledge to a wide range of audiences. This has included government decision makers, school administrators, front line service providers, to the families in AIFY schools. Each opportunity to mobilize learning and evidence from the AIFY evaluation was developed and implemented collaboratively among school and agency partners and the evaluation team. Examples of Knowledge mobilization materials developed this year include:

1.

An **AIFY orientation package** for school leaders and front line staff to use for the purpose of introducing new students and families to the available supports and services at AIFY schools.

2.

An **AIFY online repository** designed to store and share evidence-based reports, presentations, and communication tools among AIFY partners, enhancing our ability to share these materials and effectively communicate and advocate for the AIFY initiative.

3.

Two peer-reviewed journal articles on the impacts of the AIFY initiative published in Open Access journals, which widen the reach and awareness of AIFY's collaborative model. A third peer-reviewed article has also been accepted for publication and is expected to be released during the 2024/25 year.

Contributions to the Lit

The first AIFY publication explored the role of **AIFY's school-based mental health supports in supporting students' mental health and wellbeing** (Haight et al., 2023). Findings demonstrate that AIFY mental health services, which recruit school-community partnerships on the delivery of services and take an ecological, wraparound approach, meaningfully meet the mental health needs of children and youth. This adds to the evidence base on types of early mental health interventions that are effective in supporting children and youth (Fazel et al., 2014; García-Carrión et al., 2019; Hoover and Bostic, 2021).

The second publication **examines key factors that foster successful school-community partnerships to better support vulnerable students** (Haight et al., 2024). Findings identify the importance of value-based training, mutual recognition of expertise, school leadership, established and flexible communication channels, and staff resources for effective collaboration between school and agency partners. This research underscores AIFY's collaborative approach to supporting students and provides practical recommendations for other school-community partnership models.

Finally, a third publication, *Wraparound in Practice: A Program Description of a School-Based Wraparound Model of Support for Children and their Families in Canada* (Daniels et al. 2024), will be released later this year. This **provides a comprehensive overview of the AIFY model of support**, including the process of its implementation, its partnership and model of support, and how AIFY has adapted over the years. This publication provides valuable insights into the practical implementation of a school-based model of wraparound support for children and families in the Canadian context.

LOOKING FORWARD

In Year 9, the partners and evaluation team will continue to ask questions of AIFY's long-term data sets and focus on contextualizing findings. We hope to examine additional variables within our long term data sets that may impact high school completion rates. Additionally, at this stage of the initiative, we are able to explore the long-term systemic impacts of AIFY in the school and social support systems.

In conjunction with further analysis, **AIFY will continue targeted knowledge mobilization activities that enhance awareness and support of the model and help partners advocate for AIFY's sustainability and expansion.** AIFY is an investment in prevention as much as it is an investment in intervention. Research demonstrates that models that focus on holistic and preventative supports such as AIFY not only significantly reduce problem behaviours in the classroom but also prevent them from occurring as well as enhance academic achievement (Government of Alberta., 2024; Luisellii, Putnam, Handler & Feinberg., 2005). Furthermore, studies show that early student support yields a return on investment that ultimately saves future government spending (Bowden et al., 2020). One study estimates a conservative return of \$3 for every \$1 invested in comprehensive school support models, reducing costs in welfare, healthcare, and the judicial system later in life (Bowden et al., 2020). The AIFY model is funded by foundations, donors, the City of Edmonton Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), United Way, and by school divisions and agency partners. However, sustainable funding sources remain an essential priority to enhance staff capacity and expand the initiative to more schools in Edmonton.

The future of All In for Youth is bright. After years of establishing a successful collaborative model, the momentum of the All In for Youth initiative continues to be strong. In the face of uncertainty and changing policies, the partnership alliance has evidence of a successful and impactful preventative model. We can look forward to the future of not only a sustainable, but an expanding program. AIFY partners remain committed to strategic initiatives in order to create changes today that will influence generational shifts for students and their families for years to come.



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APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Testing the Relationship Between Attendance and High School Completion

We conducted a binary logistic regression using SPSS Version 29.0.2.0(20) to examine the effects of AIFY students average attendance rates on high school completion. The analysis was based on a sample of 1,679 students who attended an AIFY school between 2016 and 2023 and had the potential to complete high school by 2023. Recognizing that students may take up to five years to graduate, the sample included students who were eligible to complete high school within a five-year period, accounting for both on-time (three years) and delayed (four or five years) graduation timelines.

The overall model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 413.165, p < 0.001$) and showed a good fit, as indicated by the -2 Log Likelihood of 1899.442 and Nagelkerke R^2 value of 0.292, suggesting that 29.2% of the variance in high school completion is accounted for by attendance rates. The Hosmer and Lemeshow Test was non-significant, also showing good model fitness, $\chi^2(8) = 4.516, p < 0.808$, and the model correctly classified 69.5% of cases, indicating adequate predictive accuracy. The analyses met the required assumptions for binary logistic regression, including a binary outcome variable, independence of observations, linearity of logit, no multicollinearity, sufficient sample size, and absence of outliers.

We found that attendance was significantly associated with high school completion ($B=0.68, SE=0.004, Wald=262.013, df=1, p < 0.001$). For each one-percentage point increase in average attendance rate, the odds of completing high school increase by 1.071 (95% CI: 1.062, 1.080) or 7.1%. This suggests that even marginal increases in attendance can meaningfully increase the likelihood of high school completion among AIFY students.



Testing the Relationship Between Spending Time in an AIFY School and Completing High School

We conducted a decision tree analysis using SPSS Version 29.0.2.0(20) to examine the relationship between years spent in an AIFY school and high school completion. The analysis was based on a sample of 1,679 students who attended an AIFY school between 2016-2023 and had the potential to complete high school by 2023. Recognizing that students may take up to five years to graduate, the sample included students who were eligible to complete high school within a five-year period, accounting for both on-time (three years) and delayed (four or five years) graduation timelines. High school completion was categorized as a binary variable of no completion and high school completion. Years spent in an AIFY school were categorized as one year, two years, and three or more years in an AIFY school. The model achieved a classification accuracy of 62.4%, with a specificity of 75.2% and a sensitivity of 62.4%.

We found that years spent in an AIFY school is a significant predictor of high school completion ($p=0.000, \text{chi-square}=98, df=2$). Students who spent three or more years in an AIFY school had the highest completion rate at 61.6%, compared to 42.1% for those who spent two years and only 34.2% for those who spent one year.