

The Facts on Education

Can We Accurately Predict a Student's Future Success?

Educators often feel that they can predict students' academic futures. For instance, they may think that they can tell how students will perform in Grade 8 or Grade 9 as early as Grades 1 or 2. There is research evidence to show that predictions about students' futures are often wrong.

There are strong links between characteristics of students, such as their socio-economic status or their school readiness, and their later achievement but these relationships do not hold for all individuals. Many studies show that these predictions turn out to be wrong much more often than most people think. Canadian data shows that more than 40 percent of students scoring at the bottom reading level at age 15 were in post-secondary education at age 21. Research also shows that the accuracy of predictions about students declines over time; that is, one year's achievement predicts the following year's quite well, but is less accurate in predicting achievement 3 or 4 years later.

The key thing that the research tells us is that students can and do change. With the right supports, students can achieve far more than anyone thought they could. Encouragement and support from both schools and families can also make those negative predictions less likely to be true.

Parents and educators should be cautious in assuming that the future of their child may be predicted based on their current performance. Secondly, parents should be actively involved in supporting and advocating for their child rather than accepting a negative future. This might include being optimistic with the child about the future, or the child's teacher identifying areas where home and school can work together.

For online resources on predictions as well as the research references that inform this issue, please visit:

www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education

Copyright information

You are free to reproduce and distribute this material in any form provided that you reproduce the entire commentary and credit to the two sponsors as follows:

The Facts on Education, (June 2011). "Can We Accurately Predict a Student's Future Success?" Produced by OISE and CEA.

www.cea-ace.ca



www.oise.utoronto.ca

