



“11 & Under Initiative” and “Twelve & Up” School Engagement Officer Component

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

Prepared for:



Prepared by:

Dr. Chad Nilson

LSCSI@hotmail.com 306-953-8384



Living Skies Centre
for Social Inquiry

June 2017



Living Skies Centre
for Social Inquiry

This special analysis of the *School Engagement Officer Component* has been provided by the Living Skies Centre for Social Inquiry at the request of TRiP. For further information on this initiative, please contact:

Lance Dudar, Coordinator
The Regina Intersectoral Partnership (TRiP)
1600 – 4th Ave
Regina, SK
306-523-3024
lancedudar@gmail.com

or

Wendy Stone
Crime Prevention Strategist
Regina Police Service
Regina, SK
306-777-6646
wstone@reginapolice.ca

To reference this report, please use the following cite:

Nilson, C. (2017). *11 & Under Initiative and Twelve & Up: School Engagement Officer Component (Special Analysis)*. Prince Albert, SK: Living Skies Centre for Social Inquiry.

“11 & Under Initiative” and “Twelve & Up” School Engagement Officer Component

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

Submitted by:
Dr. Chad Nilson
Living Skies Centre for Social Inquiry

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An integral part of The Regina Intersectoral Partnership’s (TRiP) delivery of both the *11 and Under Initiative (11UI)* and *Twelve and Up (twelve&up)* program is the School Engagement Officer (SEO). This position, funded as a two-year pilot position, is designed to help reduce the personal, situational, and systemic barriers to school engagement, attachment, and achievement. Although part of the broader TRiP team of sector specialists who collaborate to identify and meet the needs of at-risk youth, the SEO plays a specific role in mitigating conditions, attitude, and risks that lead to school disengagement (i.e. lateness, absenteeism, disinterest, achievement).

Although a more thorough evaluation of TRiP’s implementation of both the 11UI and twelve&up programs is currently underway, there is strategic value in providing a special analysis of the SEO position. As such, this short analytical brief provides an overview of the SEO position, provides a quantitative understanding of the clientele being supported by the SEO, examines client outcomes, and summarizes some of the perspectives held on this position.

The intent of this special analysis is not summative in nature. In other words, it does not determine whether or not the SEO position is effective or ineffective. Rather, the intent is to provide an objective understanding of the contributions of the SEO position to the broader TRiP initiative. In that, this document will highlight some of the benefits to TRiP clients and partner agencies involved in the 11UI and twelve&up initiatives.

2.0 ABOUT THE POSITION

The SEO position was designed to target school disengagement, as past research finds school truancy to be one of the leading catalysts of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity among youth¹. Past evaluations of the 11UI initiative², supported by additional research on youth vulnerability³, identified that a proactive and assertive effort to reduce the barriers to school engagement was required to improve overall success of the TRiP model.

¹ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/truancy/index.html>.

² Wright, K. (2014). *11 & Under Initiative (11UI) Evaluation, 2013-2014: Final Draft*. Regina, SK.

³ TRiP. (2014). *The 11UI Conceptual Framework—Regina Intersectoral Partnership: Prevention and Reduction of Crime*. Regina, SK: The Regina Intersectoral Partnership.

By design, this position was focused on accepted TRiP referrals in two areas. The first was children and youth with significant school absenteeism, lateness, and/or other disengagement behaviours. The second was youth being released, or who have recently been released, from custody. During the evaluation period, a majority of clients supported by the SEO fell into the former of the two categories.

With respect to engagement, the SEO becomes involved in client files through one of two ways. The second is when at the Intersectoral Collaboration Team (ICT) meeting, a new referral identifies that school attendance, achievement, or engagement are concerns for the client. The second is when the TRiP team of sector specialists is already working on an open TRiP case, and during their collaborative support, recognize the need for additional supports by the SEO.

Once involved, the SEO undertakes a variety of supportive actions with and on behalf of that student. Some of these actions include the following:

- well-being checks/home visits
- development and monitoring of student incentive charts
- delivery of incentives (e.g., hot lunch, special treat)
- reduction of barriers (e.g., registration fees, transportation)
- support school in addressing behavioural issues
- provide parents with reminders and encouragement
- support family through barrier reduction and risk mitigation
- monitor student progress
- participate in case conferences with other sectors/agencies
- provide pro-social activities for students (e.g. reading, sports, lunch-outings)
- provide positive role-modeling
- direct support to students in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and at-school specific events

3.0 CASE INVOLVEMENT

To gain an understanding of the type of cases involving support from the SEO position, a special analysis of data from the *TRiP Client Database* was conducted. This analysis involved a separation of files involving the SEO from those not involving the SEO. Following this, basic descriptive frequencies for each cohort were generated. The data examined herein are from TRiP client files that were open and/or closed between September 1, 2015 and May 31, 2017.

As Table 1 shows, of the 77 files involving the SEO, a slight majority were still open at the time of this analysis. Further data show most of the files involving the SEO were referred from the education sector (see Table 3). Similarly, once a TRiP file becomes open, most continue to be led by the education sector (see Table 3).

Table 1. File Status (as of May 31, 2017)

Referral Source	SEO Involved (N = 77)		SEO Not Involved (N = 283)	
	N	%	N	%
Open	46	59.7	54	19.1
Closed	31	40.3	228	80.6
Wait-List	0	0.0	1	0.4

Table 2. Referral Source

Referral Source	SEO Involved (N = 77)		SEO Not Involved (N = 283)	
	N	%	N	%
Catholic Education	13	16.9	35	12.4
Public Education	33	42.9	100	35.3
Justice	4	5.2	18	6.3
Police	13	16.9	57	20.1
Social Services	3	3.9	7	2.5
Health	4	5.2	33	11.7
Caregiver	7	9.0	26	9.9
Outside Agency	0	0.0	7	2.5

Table 3. Lead Sector

Referral Source	SEO Involved (N = 77)		SEO Not Involved (N = 283)	
	N	%	N	%
Catholic Education	10	13.0	12	4.2
Public Education	49	63.6	79	27.9
Justice	3	3.9	6	2.1
Police	0	0.0	1	0.3
Social Services	9	11.7	11	3.9
Health	6	7.8	10	3.5
No Lead	0	-	164*	58.0

* Cases that are closed, rejected, or in the referral stage do not have Leader Sectors assigned.

4.0 CLIENT OUTCOMES

While the main purpose of this special analysis is merely to demonstrate the nature and type of client cases involving the SEO, some insight into client outcomes may also be valuable. To examine client outcomes, a number of different methods were used. The first of these involved case studies of 30 non-randomly selected student files with SEO involvement (chosen alphabetically). The source of data for these case studies were the *School Engagement Summary* forms completed by the SEO during her provision of monitoring and support for each client.

Data gathered from these forms included the original problem requiring SEO involvement (e.g. absenteeism, lateness, both, other); the number of actions (e.g. visits, meetings, advocacy, trouble-shooting, incentive delivery) performed by the SEO per client; and the current status of the client relative to their original problems. The latter of these variables was determined through a coding scheme involving the following categories of client progress towards school engagement: *worsened*, *stayed same*, *improved*, and *undetermined*⁴.

As Table 4 demonstrates, the most common presenting problem among clients in the study group was “absenteeism” ($n = 13$), followed by “other” ($n = 9$), and to a lesser extent “lateness” ($n = 4$) or “both absent and late” ($n = 4$).

⁴ An inter-coder reliability test was conducted to verify accuracy of the evaluator’s coding scheme.

Another finding highlighted in Table 4 is that there was quite a range of actions within the study group. On the low end, the SEO undertook 3 actions for one client. On the high end, the SEO undertook 57 actions for one client. Much of this range has to do with the time in which a client is enrolled in the program, their receptiveness to the SEO's support, and the involvement of other TRiP staff in a client file. For nearly half ($n = 16$) of the clients in the study group ($n = 30$), the SEO undertook between 3 and 10 actions for each client. For a slightly less number of clients ($n = 14$) in the same study group ($n = 30$), the SEO undertook between 11 and 57 actions for each client.

Finally, Table 4 reports on the current status—as interpreted by the progress notes captured in the *School Engagement Summary* form. Within the study group ($n = 30$), almost half ($n = 14$) of all clients appeared to have *improved* their overall engagement in school. Indicators of such improvement included “attending class”, “coming to school on time”, “being less disruptive in class”, “following incentive plan”, and “showing more respect”. In contrast, the progress of 5 clients was coded as having *worsened*. Indicators for this outcome include “quit coming to school”, “behaviour has deteriorated”, “student has become disengaged”. As Table 4 also shows, some clients showed neither progress nor a worsening in their status. Consequently, these files were coded as *stayed the same*. Finally, there were 5 cases marked as *indeterminate* because there was insufficient information within the most recent School Engagement Summary to make a fair and accurate determination of progress.

Table 4. Presenting Problems, Actions, and Progress of SEO Client Files ($N = 30$)

Variable	Variant	N	%
Presenting Problem	Absenteeism	13	43.3
	Lateness	4	13.3
	Both	4	13.3
	Other	9	30.0
SEO Actions	10 or less	16	53.3
	11 to 20	6	20.0
	21 or more	8	26.7
	Lowest	3	na
	Highest	57	na
	Average	17.1	na
Client Progress	Improved	14	46.6
	Same	6	20.0
	Worsened	5	16.7
	Indeterminate	5	16.7

Another method used to track client outcomes is an examination of data gathered from the *Post-TRiP School Report*. This report, to be completed by school staff, gathers data on student attendance, student behaviour and student performance.

As Table 5 illustrates, of the 20 clients who both received SEO support and have a completed *Post-TRiP School Report* in their file (as of May 31, 2017), the attendance of 18 clients either “stayed the same”, “improved”, or was considered “good”. In contrast, only 1 client had poor attendance following SEO support.

Table 5. **Post-Support School Attendance**

Referral Source	SEO Involved (N = 20)*		SEO Not Involved (N = 33)*	
	N	%	N	%
Poor	1	5.0	1	3.0
Same	6	30.0	10	30.3
Sporadic	1	5.0	0	0.0
Improved	6	30.0	9	27.3
Good	6	30.0	13	39.4

*N = number of client files closed and rated on school attendance.

Regarding school behaviour following TRiP support, 6 clients were observed to have “improved” their behaviour, 7 stayed the “same”, 2 were considered “good”, and only 3 were considered to have “poor behaviour” following TRiP support.

Table 6. **Post-Support School Behaviour**

Referral Source	SEO Involved (N = 21)*		SEO Not Involved (N = 35)*	
	N	%	N	%
Poor	3	14.3	1	2.3
Same	7	33.3	3	8.6
Average	3	14.3	8	22.9
Improved	6	28.6	7	20.0
Good	2	9.6	16	45.7

*N = number of client files closed and rated on school behaviour.

With respect to overall school performance among clients supported by the SEO position, school staff examined both strength in literacy and in numeracy. Results of the analysis reveal that 15 of 19 clients fall between “beginning” or are currently demonstrating strong performance in school. In contrast, 4 clients demonstrate “insufficient” performance or no change in performance.

Table 7. **Post-Support School Performance**

Referral Source	SEO Involved (N = 19)*		SEO Not Involved (N = 32)*	
	N	%	N	%
Insufficient	1	5.3	0	0.0
Same	3	15.8	3	9.4
Beginning	3	15.8	5	15.6
Progressing	6	31.6	9	28.1
Improved	1	5.3	3	9.4
Meeting	4	21.1	11	34.3
Good	1	5.3	1	3.1

*N = number of client files closed and rated on school performance.

An important note in examining Tables 5, 6, and 7 is that readers should not interpret the comparisons between *SEO Involved* and *SEO Not Involved* in relative terms. There is a high probability that clients presenting problems with school engagement are automatically referred to the SEO. As such, we must accept the likelihood that clients supported by the SEO (as reported in Tables 6, 7, 8) may have faced additional barriers to school engagement than clients not served by the SEO, and consequently, require

different intensities of support to reach comparable outcomes as clients not requiring support of the SEO⁵.

As the TRiP team continues to work with vulnerable youth, client files become closed for a variety of reasons. These could be because the client is stabilizing and no longer needs supports. It can also mean that a client has failed to engage in services, or simply has refused services all together. Table 8 shows that of the 31 client files that have closed where the SEO was involved, slightly over half (54.8%) of these files have been closed because the student moved away or was not engaging. In contrast, at least 32.3% of client files with SEO involvement, were closed because the student had either “stabilized” or had the “potential to stabilize”.

Table 8. Reason for Case Closure

Reason for Closure	SEO Involved (N = 31)*		SEO Not Involved (N = 228)	
	N	%	N	%
In Custody	2	6.5	15	6.6
Moved Away	6	19.4	17	7.5
Not Engaging	11	35.5	55	24.1
Refused Consent	0	0.0	2	0.9
Refused Services	0	0.0	31	13.6
Screened Out	1	3.2	15	6.6
Unable to Locate	0	0.0	13	5.7
Potential to Stabilize	7	22.6	39	17.1
Stabilized	3	9.7	9	3.9
other	1	3.2	32	14.0

The final outcome measure available for this special analysis is the *Vulnerability Score* of students who received SEO support. Upon both entering and leaving TRiP, clients are scored using a *Risk-Based Needs Assessment Tool*. This tool was designed to rate students on their risk factors, life experience, self-identified risk factors, community engagement, school engagement, and school absenteeism. As Table 9 shows, among the 27 clients who were supported by the SEO position and received both a pre-and post-assessment score, over half (66.7%; n = 18) were able to improve their vulnerability score.

Table 9. Reduction in Vulnerability Score

Improve Score	SEO Involved (N = 27)*		SEO Not Involved (N = 58)*	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	18	66.7	38	65.5
No	9	33.3	20	34.5

*N = number of client files closed and scored.

⁵ One question worth further investigation is that if we can assume that TRiP clients supported by the SEO face additional barriers to school engagement than do TRiP clients not supported by the SEO, is it the work of the SEO that has yielded similar outcomes in school attendance, school behaviour, and school performance once TRiP files are closed? After all, Tables 5, 6, 7 do show similar client outcomes between *SEO Involved* and *SEO Not Involved* clients.

5.0 FEEDBACK

To provide additional understanding of the SEO position, various sources of qualitative data have been compiled for this special analysis. These sources include human service providers, parents, TRiP staff, and clients. Collection of these data also involved multiple methods. For the purposes of this special analysis, data were gathered from letters and emails sent to TRiP by clients and other human service providers; completed surveys the evaluator received from human service providers; interviews the evaluator conducted with TRiP staff; and feedback from parents that was captured through TRiP's ongoing reporting process.

The first source of feedback explored herein is anecdotal letters and emails from human service providers and clients engaged by the SEO. In their efforts to gather a better understanding of the SEO component, TRiP staff reached out to human service providers and their clients to hear perspectives on the position. To share their remarks, Table 10 summarizes the comments by clients and human service professionals made about the SEO position.

Table 10. **Feedback TRiP Collected on SEO Position by Data Source**

Data Source	Summary of Feedback
Clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ever since I started working with [<i>the SEO</i>], I've been given a lot of opportunities for camps and sports that I wouldn't have had before. I think it is cool. • She helps me do things I couldn't do because I had no money or access. It makes me feel better about myself. • She helps me read and improve my reading strategies. • My mom hasn't been so stressed knowing that I have more support and someone to talk to.
Human Service Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of our students have viewed the police in a very negative light. This has really changed that, by having a police officer build a relationship with them—and to be someone they can count on for support and trust. • Developing this relationship with a law enforcement officer has been critical to our student's success. Our student values [<i>the SEO</i>] as a safety net, and as someone to go to during ups and downs. • [<i>The SEO</i>] goes above and beyond for one of our most at-risk female youth. As a result, our student attends school every day. She feels better going to high school knowing that there is one connection in her life that will remain safe. • Since our student has begun working with [<i>the SEO</i>], his attendance has improved and he has gained more confidence. During class discussion, he is more engaged and eager to participate. • This is a great testament to the solid, professional, and leadership-inspired policing that should be done on a daily basis. • Since the involvement of [<i>the SEO</i>], our student has improved her pro-social behaviours. • Our student has been showing improved work habits in class to earn her special time with [<i>the SEO</i>]. • We are seeing signs of maturity and are reaffirmed of the right direction for this child after each interaction with [<i>the SEO</i>]. • Lately, our student has started to talk about careers and futures, which is amazing. Prior to that, she didn't think nor care much about the future. • This position has helped students increase their attendance and engagement in school.

The other sources of feedback on the SEO position involve three different cohorts: human service providers that participate in TRiP's custom coordinated case conference (C4) group ($n = 10$), parents ($n = 5$), and TRiP staff ($n = 8$). The data gathered from human service providers was collected through an emailed survey sent by the evaluator (*C4 Participant Survey*). Data from parents was collected through the ongoing reporting process (*Caregiver Survey*). Finally, feedback from TRiP staff was gathered through face-to-face interviews conducted by the evaluator in March of 2017.

Specific questions about the SEO position were not posed to any of these three cohorts. However, through a concentrated analytical process, feedback about the SEO position was pulled from the three different sets of data. Similar to the previous table, Table 11 summarizes observations of the SEO position from human service providers, parents, and TRiP staff.

Table 11. Feedback Evaluator Collected on SEO Position by Data Source

Data Source	Summary of Feedback
Human Service Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our own clients have really been supported by [<i>the SEO</i>], particularly in ways that we could not. • The position has helped support parents who struggle with getting their child interested in and committed to school. • [<i>The SEO</i>] helped to open up sport and recreation activities for children that their families could not afford. • Our students have increased their time at school from as little as 40 minutes to full days. • A strong relationship between [<i>the SEO</i>] and our students has really increased school engagement for those children. • [<i>The SEO</i>] has actually served as a third-party bridge between families and schools. This has been helpful, especially with hard-to-reach families. • [<i>The SEO</i>]'s incentives for students has not only promoted attendance and punctuality, but has given children access to recreational opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise. • There is value in the police playing this type of role in the community—instead of just chasing criminals. • While I see tremendous benefit to helping families reduce the barriers to school engagement through a dedicated position, I am still not certain of why a police officer should hold this position.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped my son overcome challenges getting to school. • Built a strong relationship with my kid, which he responded well to. • It would have been nice if [<i>the SEO</i>] would have been involved last year when my child was missing school more. • [<i>The SEO</i>] really helped my son get a chance to go to camp and do sports.
TRiP Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEO position helps build strong relations between at-risk youth and the police. • It has helped to better engage the Regina Police Service with the community—as an agency that vulnerable youth can trust. • The ongoing support of the SEO actually helped parents pull it together more—they felt more accountable to make an effort and get their children to school. • [<i>The SEO</i>] helps TRiP itself offer more persistent support and encouragement to families who need it the most. • [<i>The SEO</i>] role has provided youth a positive experience with police. • It has moved the police from a traditional reactionary role to a truly prevention-based role in the community. • The downside of the position is that families—and even schools for that matter—take a step back from encouraging attendance and expect our SEO to do the heavy lifting. • We could use more structure around the SEO position, simply to make access to that support more predictable for new families joining our programs. • Having a police officer in this role makes school attendance the interest of more than just educators—but that of the broader community safety network in Regina. • The SEO's involvement helps highlight to youth and their parents, the importance of school attendance and engagement. • The SEO position provides a unique incentive-driven approach to get kids back into their desks—this is a rare but effective technique in our broader network of social and community services.

6.0 ANALYSIS SUMMARY

As mentioned in the opening section of this brief report, the purpose of this special analysis is to shed light on the impact and contributions of the School Engagement Officer position within the overall TRiP initiative. The findings presented herein are not summative, nor are they meant to be conclusive in any manner. What they do provide, however, is a qualitative and quantitative understanding of the work of the SEO, the observed impact of this position on clients of TRiP, and the benefits of this position from the perspective of human service professionals, parents, and TRiP staff.

Through this analysis, we have learned that the SEO position is intended to build rapport with high-risk youth who are vulnerable to school disengagement. Once rapport is established, the SEO works with youth and their families to reduce barriers to school engagement, improve access to pro-social activities, establish and offer incentives, and monitor student progress.

During the referral/intake process, a majority of clients that the SEO becomes involved with are referred from the education and policing sectors. Moving forward, the education sector continues to take the lead, with the SEO playing a key role in the ongoing coordinated support of that client. At the time of this special analysis, the SEO is involved in 46% ($n = 46$) of the 100 files currently open with TRiP. Of all closed files ($n = 259$), the SEO was involved in 11.9% ($n = 31$) of these⁶.

The leading problem to address in the files involving the SEO was school absenteeism. To mitigate this issue, the SEO undertook a variety of actions, including family visits, meetings with human service professionals, mentoring, reading breaks, client advocacy, sports, recreation, troubleshooting, progress monitoring, and incentive delivery. On average, the SEO performed 17 actions with each client, with a range from 3 actions on the low end to 57 actions on the high end.

With respect to client outcomes, a case study analysis of 30 student files involving SEO support revealed that 46.6% of clients *improved* their overall progress towards school engagement, while 20% stayed the *same*. Quantitative results from internal program reporting completed by school staff report that attendance has *improved* or is considered *good* among 60% of youth supported by the SEO. Similarly, at least 11 of the 21 SEO clients with completed files show in-school behaviour to be *average, improved, or good*. Finally, school staff report that of the 19 SEO clients with completed files, 15 (79%) of them exhibit school performance (numeracy and literacy skills) that is considered *beginning, progressing, improved, meeting, or good*.

Additional data on closed client files involving SEO support show that 32.3% of clients end up stabilized or establish the potential to become stabilized. Relative to those files without SEO involvement, only 21% of clients without SEO support end up stabilized or demonstrate the potential to stabilize. Of all closed files involving support from the SEO ($n = 27$), 66.7% showed an improvement in the client's *overall vulnerability score*, indicating an increase in community engagement, increase in school engagement, and/or reduction in risk factors.

⁶ One possible explanation for why the SEO has only been involved in 11.9% of *closed files* is because the SEO tends to be involved with harder-to-engage clients, who also happen to require longer coordinated care periods to stabilize. Another explanation is that the total closed files ($n = 259$) also includes "rejected cases" that the SEO would never have had a chance to engage.

Turning to qualitative data examined in this special analysis, one source of data explored in this brief report was a collection of emails and letters that TRiP staff gathered from human service professionals and clients. Feedback within that dialogue indicated that the SEO position helped improve client access to recreation, sports, and community events. The dialogue also revealed that the SEO position has helped to build strong relationships between at-risk youth and the Regina Police Service. Some responders to TRiP's request for information revealed that the SEO provides support to youth in ways that they are traditionally not supported. According to observers, this has resulted in improved attendance, school behaviour, and overall school/community engagement.

Finally, qualitative data gathered by the evaluator provides additional understanding of the contributions that the SEO position brings to TRiP. Feedback from human service providers suggests that the SEO position serves as an extra resource that schools can access from outside of their own sector. The SEO was described as being effective at engaging clients and getting them involved in pro-social activities within the community. Additional feedback from human service professionals also points to the strong relations that the SEO is building between the Regina Police Service, at-risk youth, and the broader community.

Parents of TRiP clients explained that the SEO has helped their child overcome barriers to education and pro-social activities. According to some parents, the support of the SEO has also helped children/youth build confidence, make better personal decisions, and genuinely want to improve behaviour and performance.

Interviews with TRiP staff revealed the SEO to be a valuable asset to the TRiP team. In particular, the position was described as one that provides concentrated support to high-need children/youth in the community. Other feedback indicates that the SEO position allows the police to play a genuine role in prevention, and as part of that process, build strong relationships with a highly vulnerable cohort. Requiring additional attention is more clarity on why the position is filled by a police officer, and what options are available to better organize and structure the SEO service delivery model to ease SEO access for new clients to TRiP.

Overall, the findings of this special analysis suggest that there are both measurable and observable impacts and contributions of the SEO position which are positive. Quantitative data from multiple reporting sources, and qualitative data collected from four different cohorts, suggest that the SEO position brings great value and strength to the TRiP model. Further summative analysis may yield more accurate understandings of the SEO's overall effectiveness. For the purposes of this evaluation brief, however, there is sufficient evidence for continued support of the SEO component as part of the broader TRiP approach to delivering the 11UI and twelve&up programs in Regina.