The Pathways to Resilience Project
Resilience Research Centre in collaboration with North-West University

Summary Report for the participants recruited to the School Group

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Pathways to Resilience Project is a research study being conducted by the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University in collaboration with North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) to better understand what patterns of formal services and informal supports from family and community work best in reducing risk and increasing well-being among youth. The study is taking place in Atlantic Canada, with sites in Nova Scotia and Labrador and internationally in China, South Africa, New Zealand and Colombia. In South Africa, the research sites are found in the QwaQwa and Bethlehem areas, located in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality in the in Free State province. The Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality is made up of five local municipalities, each composed of a number of towns. QwaQwa and Bethlehem form part of the local municipalities of Maluti-a-Phofung and Dihlabeng, respectively

We worked with 784 learners who agreed to participate. Based on our survey research with this sample of 784 learners, we have found:
- The average age of the learners who participated in our study is 16.7.
- Learners show high levels of resilience. Many have very positive things happening in their lives.
- 49.8 % of learners report taking a leadership role at least once a month.
- School learners have educational aspirations like obtaining a university degree. 38.2 % of learners hope to complete a university degree, while another 41.4 % hope to complete at least a master/doctoral degree.
- Only 22.4 % of learners report having skipped an entire day of school at least once in the past year.
- 74.7 % of school learners say they would go to one of their teachers for advice. The majority learners like their school.
- 83.6 % of learners are satisfied with the services they receive.
- In total, 11.8 % of learners report being bullied somewhat, and 7.2 % of learners report bullying others, and another 19.3 % report bullying others sometimes.
- 71.0 % of School learners believe they are treated fairly in their community.
- 51.9 % of learners do not feel safe in their neighbourhood.
- Overall, School learners are coping well even though they face challenges.

INTRODUCTION

In our research sites we work with a variety of community partners, including Department of Education representatives and teachers. These partners have helped us to identify three groups of youth: service-using youth, youth who are coping well with difficult lives (i.e., functionally resilient youth) and adolescent youth attending local schools. With their inputs, we want to understand:

- The culturally specific aspects of resilience (strengths and capacities) that young people in their community and schools use to cope with problems.
- The psychological, social and environmental risks that young people face.
- Young people's service use patterns (their use of mandated services like Child Welfare, and Special Educational Services), their use of informal supports available through their families and communities, and their use of informal services provided by local not-for-profit community organizations.

Our goal is to give communities, schools, governments, and service providers a very detailed understanding of how young people cope with adversity and the risks they face. We also hope to help service providers from many different agencies find ways to coordinate services, create new services young people say they need, and find ways young people can get connected to community and family supports.

In the South African study, 29 schools participated in total. 784 learners from 16 schools participated as part of the sample of adolescent youth attending local schools. They participated by completing a survey called the Pathways to Resilience Youth Measure (PRYM). This report provides a profile of these learners, based on their written answers in this survey. The service-using youth chosen to participate in the full Pathways to Resilience Study across South Africa are all multiple service users, meaning they are already using services and community supports. Our school samples help us to see whether youth who are using services are the same, or different, from other youth from their same communities. More detailed results from the larger study can be found in the final reports of the Pathways to Resilience Project. We will inform you when these are available and provide you with information on how to access them.

A word of caution: although we encouraged participants to answer as honestly as possible, we know that participants are sometimes inclined to give a more positive, or socially correct, answer when they complete questionnaires. For this reason we are following the survey research up with qualitative investigations (like interviews), to help us understand young people's processes of resilience more deeply. A report will be sent on our qualitative findings as soon as the qualitative study has been completed.

STUDENT PROFILE

In total, 784 learners completed the PRYM. A summary of demographic information is provided in Table 1. In summary, 54.4 % of the surveyed learners are female, and 45.6 % of the learners are male. The majority of the learners have an average of 1 sibling, and for the majority of learners, Sotho is their first language. The average age of the learners who participated is 16.7.

Table 1

|		Total sample
Average Age		16.76
Sex	Female	54.4 %
	Male	45.6 %
Average Number of Siblings		1

The majority of learners report that they **have people they look up to, they cooperate with** others, and they aim to **finish what they start** (see Table 2). 68.5 % of learners report being able to solve problems without harming themselves or others. **Regarding friendship** 64.0 % of learners reporting that they 'hang out' with their friends at least once a month. More learners report having close relationships with their friends, 60.5 % report feeling supported by their friends and 60.7 % of learners believe that their friends stand by them during difficult times. 60.3 % of learners report that it is somewhat true that they have one or more good friends.

Table 2: Positive Behaviours: Student Profile

	Does not describe me at all	Doesn't really describe me	Unsure	Sort of Describes me	Describes me a lot
I have people I look up to	7.2 %	5.1 %	5.0 %	10.7 %	72.0 %
I cooperate with those around me	7.0 %	12.6 %	4.4 %	13.5 %	62.5 %
I aim to finish what I start	6.1 %	7.9 %	4.8 %	19.7 %	61.6 %
I can solve problems without harming myself or others	21.4 %	6.2 %	3.9 %	11.6 %	56.9 %
I feel supported by my friends	11.9 %	17.5 %	10.2 %	18.0 %	42.5 %
My friends stand by me during difficult times	13.3 %	16.3 %	9.8 %	18.1 %	42.6 %

The majority of learners (79.2 %) report having opportunities to show that they can act responsibly and that they are becoming adults (see Figure 1), and that they can develop skills that will be useful later in life (77.5 %). Many learners also report taking a leadership role, with 49.8 % saying they assume a leadership role at least once a month.

Figure 1: Student opportunities for personal growth
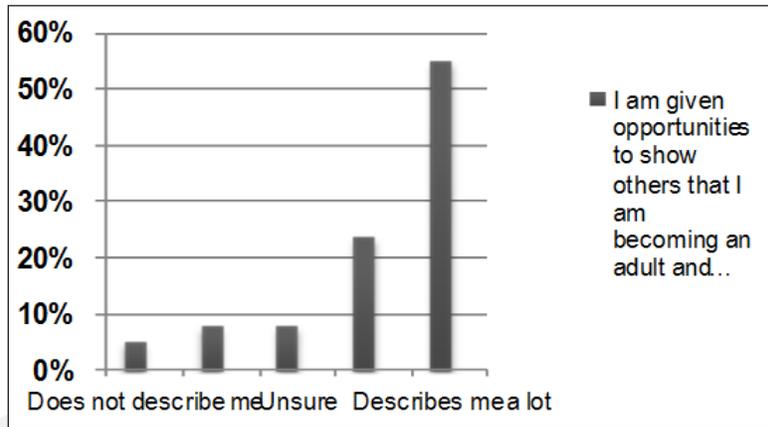
On average, 71.2 % of learners spend at least an hour a day on **homework**, and 61.6 % of learners report that they spend at least one to two hours a day **reading for pleasure.**

53.5 % of learners spend at least three hours a day **watching television** and 19.4 % of learners spend at least three hours on the internet on an average day. When asked about **electronic communication** (mostly sms communication or programs like Mixit), 40.5 % of learners report spending at least one hour on an average day talking to friends electronically, and 30.0 % spend under 1 hour talking to friends electronically. 29.6 % of learners do not use electronic tools to communicate with friends.

RISK AND RESILIENCE

We define resilience as a learner's ability to get the resources he or she needs to do well when facing life challenges. Resilience is their capacity, and the capacity of others to provide for young people, so they can improve their well-being in ways that make sense to them. Scores on measures of resilience and risk are presented in Table 3. The resilience measure is designed to reflect individual capacity, available relationships, connection to culture, contextual resources in the lives of youth, and youth engagement in pro-social behaviour. The risk measure shows the level of youth engagement in problem behaviours (i.e. theft, aggression, vandalism and substance use), a youth's ability to form age-appropriate relationships and levels of depression. Both resilience and risk scales have a range of 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher resilience or risk. Resilience and risk are inversely related; as resilience increases, risk is expected to decrease.

Table 3: Functionally Resilient Participants

	Mean
Resilience Score (out of 100)	82.378
Risk Score (out of 100)	17.487

The average resilience score for the learners is 82.378. This average score suggests that, in general, the learners who participated are resilient. They have individual strengths, and are supported to do well by positive relationships, connection to culture, contextual resources (like effective schools), and engagement in pro-social activities. Individual scores range from 7.86 to 100. Graph 1 below summarises the resilience scores of the school participants:

Graph 1: Total resilience score
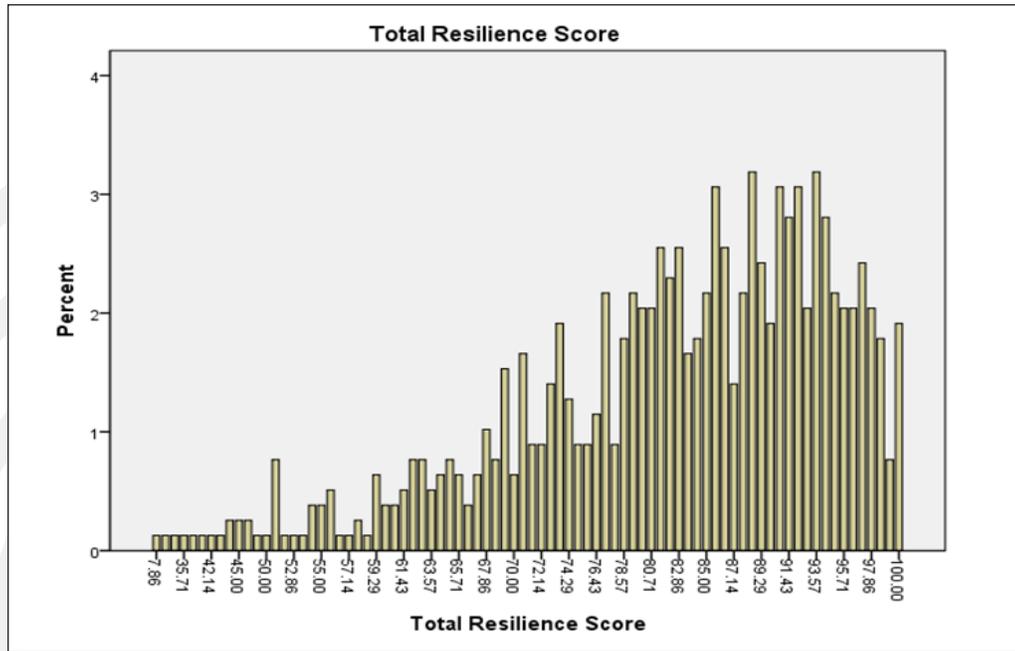
Resilience is next broken down into four categories: individual characteristics of resilience, relationships with parents or primary caregivers, relationships with peers and community and the resilience of the youth's contextual characteristics (see Table 4). High scores in context indicate an environment that is supportive, respectful, and welcoming.

Table 4

	School learners	
	Mean	**SD**
Individual Resilience (range 10-50)	36.728	6.680
Relationship with Primary Caregiver (range 6-30)	28.629	6.630
Relationship with Peers and Community (range 3-15)	11.443	3.244
Context (range 7-35)	33.607	5.485

Table 4 communicates that, on average, the youth who participated are mostly supported towards resilience by their context and strengths within themselves (like assertiveness, or hopefulness), as well as their primary caregivers. They are least supported by relationships with their peers and community.

Shifting our focus from resilience to risk, we found that the average risk score for the learners is 17.487 and individual scores range from 4.76 to 48.57 (out of 100) (see Table 3 above, and Graph 2 below). The lower the score, the fewer risks a youth faces.

Graph 2: Total risk score
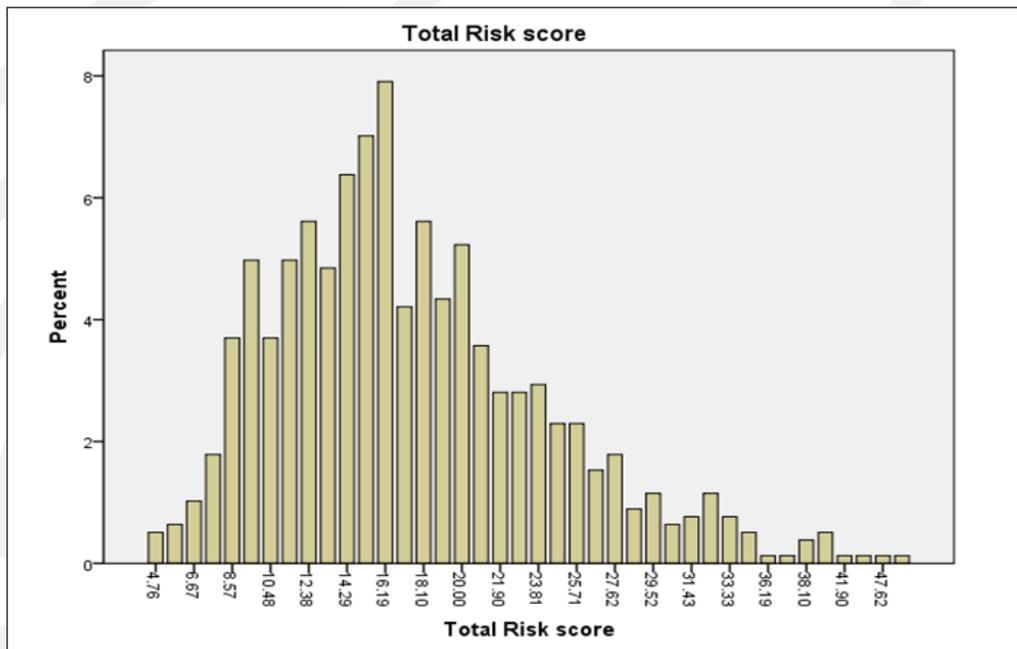
The overall risk score can be broken down and examined on a number of separate measures. For example, the survey includes a clinical screener of depression. 68.9 % of school learners are categorized as having minimal or no risk of depression, 28.9 % of learners have moderate risk of depression and 2.2 % have elevated levels of risk of depression.

Other risk behaviours are assessed through a Conduct Problems Scale. The Conduct Problems Scale is measured on a scale of 0-10 and youth are categorized as having normal (0-3), borderline (approaching high levels of problem behaviour) (4) or abnormal levels of problem behaviour (5-10). 11.1 % of school learners are classified as having abnormal levels of problem behaviour (e.g., regularly losing temper, fighting, lying, cheating, stealing, or bullying), whilst 77.8 % of the learners have minimal risk of problem behaviour, and 11.1 % of learners with a moderate risk of problem behaviour.

When we looked at peer problems, using a Peer Problems Scale which assesses a youth's ability to form age-appropriate peer relationships, we found that 26.7 % of school learners have minimal peer problems, 46.7 % have moderate peer problems, and 26.7 % report difficulty in forming age-appropriate relationships. In other words, many of the learners who participated are capable of forming relationships with their peers and of making friends, however a large number of learners appear to experience difficulty in forming appropriate relationships with their peers.

In addition to these risk measures, learners also reported the loss of a family member, trouble at school, failing a test, being sick, being fired and being involved in fights, and getting into trouble with the law as events that have made their lives more difficult in the past year.

## LEARNERS' OPINIONS ON SCHOOL

Educational Aspirations

Overall, learners have high educational aspirations, with 80.9 % of learners hoping to complete a university degree or higher, and 8.3% of learners aim to finish a college degree. An Additional 7.2 % of the learners indicate that they aim to finish high school.

When asked to indicate on a scale of 1-5 whether getting an education was important to them, 96.0 % of learners indicate that this statement describes. No learners indicated that this statement did not describe them at all. Parents and educators can be reassured that learners value the idea of education and are setting high goals for themselves in this regard.

Attachment to School

The majority of learners (91.3 %) report that they feel they belong at school (see Figure 2). When asked about being bullied, 11.8 % of learners report being bullied somewhat, and 7.2 % of learners report bullying others, and 19.3 % of learners report bullying others sometimes.

**Figure 2: I feel I belong at school**
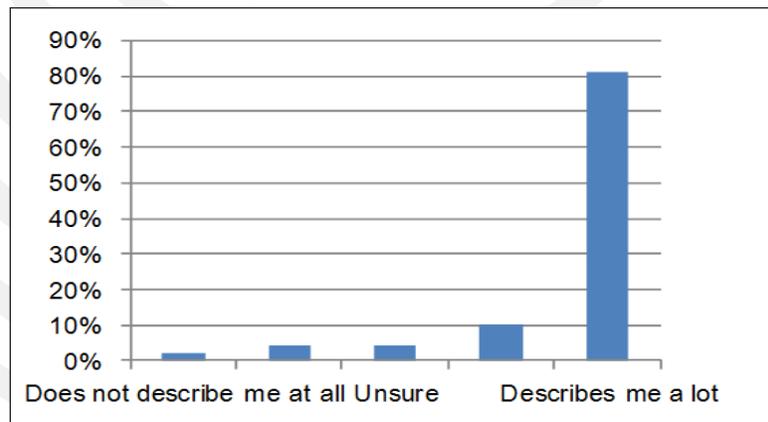
Learners' sense of belonging at their school is possibly reflected by their attendance as only 22.4 % of learners report skipping a full day of school at least once in the past year.

School Environment

Overall, learners appear to feel that school is a good place to be (see Figure 3). 71.2 % of learners feel that their family's religious and spiritual beliefs are respected by their schools (9.1 % feel that they were not, and 19.7 % were unsure). 62.0 % of learners feel that staff are sensitive to their cultural and ethnic background, with 9.7 % who disagreed. Additionally, 82.7 % of learners feel that staff speak in a way that they can understand, with 6.1 % disagreeing, and 11.2 % of learners undecided.

Figure 3: How would you describe your school?
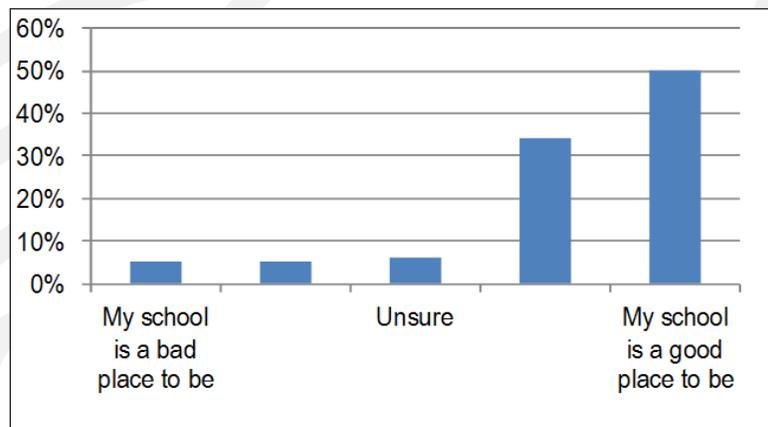
Service Use

The majority of learners at school have accessed health services, with 96.8 % of learners having accessed health services at least once. 76.8 % have accessed Social Services at least once, and 76.4 % of learners have accessed cultural and spiritual services, having spoken to a cultural or spiritual advisor, leader or elder at least once. 83.6 % of learners are satisfied with the services they receive. When asked about participation in community programs, a large number of learners identify sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and netball as things they are involved with. The youth also identified choir, music, dancing, youth clubs, and cultural and traditional activities as things they are involved with.

COMMUNITY

Learners have mixed feelings about their community. Only 13.8 % of learners feel their neighbourhood is very safe; 34.3 % feel it is somewhat safe and 51.9 % believe that it is not safe at all. When questioned about whether their neighbours would act if they saw a youth skipping school, 27.8 % of learners believe that neighbours would be unlikely to intervene and 72.1 % of learners believed that they would intervene. When asked whether they believe that their neighbours would report a child or young person being abused, 74.0 % of learners believe this likely to occur. Despite these positive actions from neighbours, they still feel their community is unsafe.

71.0 % of learners report being treated fairly in their community and 76.1 % believe that they know where to go in their community to get help. 78.2 % of the learners feel that it is important to serve their community (see Table 5). 73.8 % of learners report having volunteered their time in the last month.

Table 5 Youth opinions on their neighbourhood

	Does not describe me at all	Doesn't really describe me	Unsure	Sort of Describes me	Describes me a lot
I think it is important to serve my community	4.7 %	9.1 %	8.1 %	19.4 %	58.8 %
I know where to get help in my community	8.2 %	6.8 %	8.9 %	15.6 %	60.5 %
I am treated fairly in my community	12.0 %	8.6 %	8.4 %	18.7 %	52.3 %
I enjoy my community's traditions	11.4 %	11.2 %	9.0 %	16.9 %	51.5 %

As mentioned previously, learners place great importance on recreational programs including sports and the arts. Limitations to participating in such programs include not having transportation (30.4 %), not feeling comfortable participating (30.9 %), not getting parental permission (29.8 %), not having enough money (36.1 %), having too many responsibilities at home (49.8 %), and being busy working at a paying job (17.0 %).

CONCLUSION

The staff and parents of learners are doing a wonderful job of supporting their youth. The 784 learners sampled are well connected to their school and appreciate the efforts that are being made to make their education meaningful. The majority of learners who participated are engaged in learning, value education, and are avoiding serious problems, despite concerns about the safety of their communities. Furthermore, learners are accessing services when they are needed, in particular the health services, social services, and cultural or spiritual services. However, findings presented here do not necessarily mean that service providers are building youth's strengths as much as controlling crises and stopping problem behaviours (For more information in this regard, please refer to the international report "Research Update: Results from Phase One" [www.resilienceresearch.org]).

The young people themselves show a high number of strengths. In other words, learners appear to be coping well, even though they face some challenges. Our results suggest that the support learners get from their teachers and friends contributes to them doing well, although the analysis reported here does not account for the role that parents and caregivers may also play in the lives of these learners. This high level of coping learners display may also be because they are connected to the services they need.

There is much in this brief report to suggest that as a school community, is giving its learners what they need to grow up well. The research team looks forward to future opportunities to speak with these learners and watch how they develop over time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the learners and staff for welcoming us into their school and supporting our research. Special thanks to the school principals and the rest of the school administration for their support and collaborative efforts to ensure that this project was a success. We are also grateful to the Department of Education for granting permission for this research.