



**Taking a
Step Back from
School to Get
Back on Track**

Back on track by the 

Helping Youth Persevere by Fostering Their Overall Success

Back on Track is a short-term, intensive program that offers support to high school students suspended from school for various reasons, transforming their time away from the classroom into a positive experience. Providing help adapted to their needs and academic, individual, and social support, the program promotes a structured return to school.





Builds resilience, autonomy, and the ability to persevere in school



Motivates students to stay in school



Reduces problematic behaviour



Ends the downward spiral by ensuring a successful reintegration into the school setting

The YMCA: Your Ally

At the Y, our many youth and school success programs offer group activities, mentoring, cultural exchanges, and various other resources to help youth build the skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life. Here, teens also find a sense of community and belonging as they meet other young people who understand them and adult allies they can count on.

A Preventive Approach

Back on Track is a 3- to 5-day program that offers students aged 12 to 17 who are having difficulties in school a chance to take a step back. It is an opportunity to transform a potential suspension or repeated suspensions into a positive and restorative experience. Students have the chance to focus on their personal growth and autonomy and integrate an environment that fosters self-worth, helps them develop their social skills, and promotes self-respect and the respect of others.

- Gain perspective and take a breath to stop the downward spiral
- Find motivation in a new, welcoming, and reassuring environment
- Receive the support of a qualified youth worker, through one-on-one meetings and small group workshops
- Start the reflection process and define goals
- Get back on track and back to social activities and school in a harmonious manner
- Benefit from helpful follow-ups with school staff and parents or guardians



In 3 Steps

1

Cool Down

Students find themselves in a new and structured environment, putting a stop to the downward spiral.

2

Reflection

The program encourages students to reflect during one-on-one meetings and group workshops

3

Commitment

The program motivates students to make changes that will have a positive impact in their school environment.



The program **guides** students in **reflecting on various aspects of their lives.**

A student can participate in the program:

-  If they are referred from school staff as an alternative solution to a suspension
-  If they are referred from school staff as a preventive measure
-  If they make a request directly to school staff asking to participate in the program without a referral



A Place to Reflect

Back on Track focuses on the student and their personal situation. Through one-on-one and small group interventions, program staff help teens assert what they want from their future and make sound decisions, both at school and in life.

The Back on Track youth worker supports students in:

- 👉 Making it through this difficult time in a constructive manner
- 👉 Becoming aware of behavioural issues and their root causes, and reducing aggressive, impulsive, or disruptive behaviour
- 👉 Learning new things and developing new social and personal skills
- 👉 Asserting what they want from school and identifying what makes them feel valued and what motivates them
- 👉 Catching up on school work
- 👉 Understanding the different resources available in their community better and visiting vocational training centres



Results That Matter

1

Decrease in problematic behaviour

The program has brought about positive changes in attitude and behaviour **for 85% of participants in the medium-term and 50% of participants in the long-term**, according to a 2019 study conducted by CAC International, an independent evaluation firm.

“It’s just really different here. I could freely express myself and I really enjoyed my time in the program, even if I didn’t expect to. I learned that talking to someone really helps. I just felt more switched on, more engaged here.”

– Anonymized participant



The program is an established model for school dropout prevention. By intervening in partnership with the schools and families, it maximizes the benefits on students' social and academic journeys.

“A significant proportion of the students referred to the program become more self-aware and conscious of the behaviour that has led to their suspension. These changes have produced quantifiable results. Given the profile of students referred to the program, the increase in school perseverance rates is notable.”

- CAC International

2

Keeping up with school work

After participating in the program, students are more likely to succeed in school. **Keeping up with school work while in the program** and the **follow-ups done once the student returns to school** are mechanisms designed to help students stay in school.

“The fact that someone takes the time to follow up regularly with Ben, supports us as parents, and shows him that people care about him despite his difficulties in school has a very positive impact. In the program, he found the tools he needed to graduate from high school.”

- Mother of Ben, a program participant



Results That Matter

3

Decrease in disciplinary measures

After participating in the program, students tend to receive fewer disciplinary measures. **In fact, 64% of program participants were reported to have fewer disciplinary actions, compared to 40% of members in a control group**, according to a 2017 study conducted by Malatest, an independent evaluation firm.



4

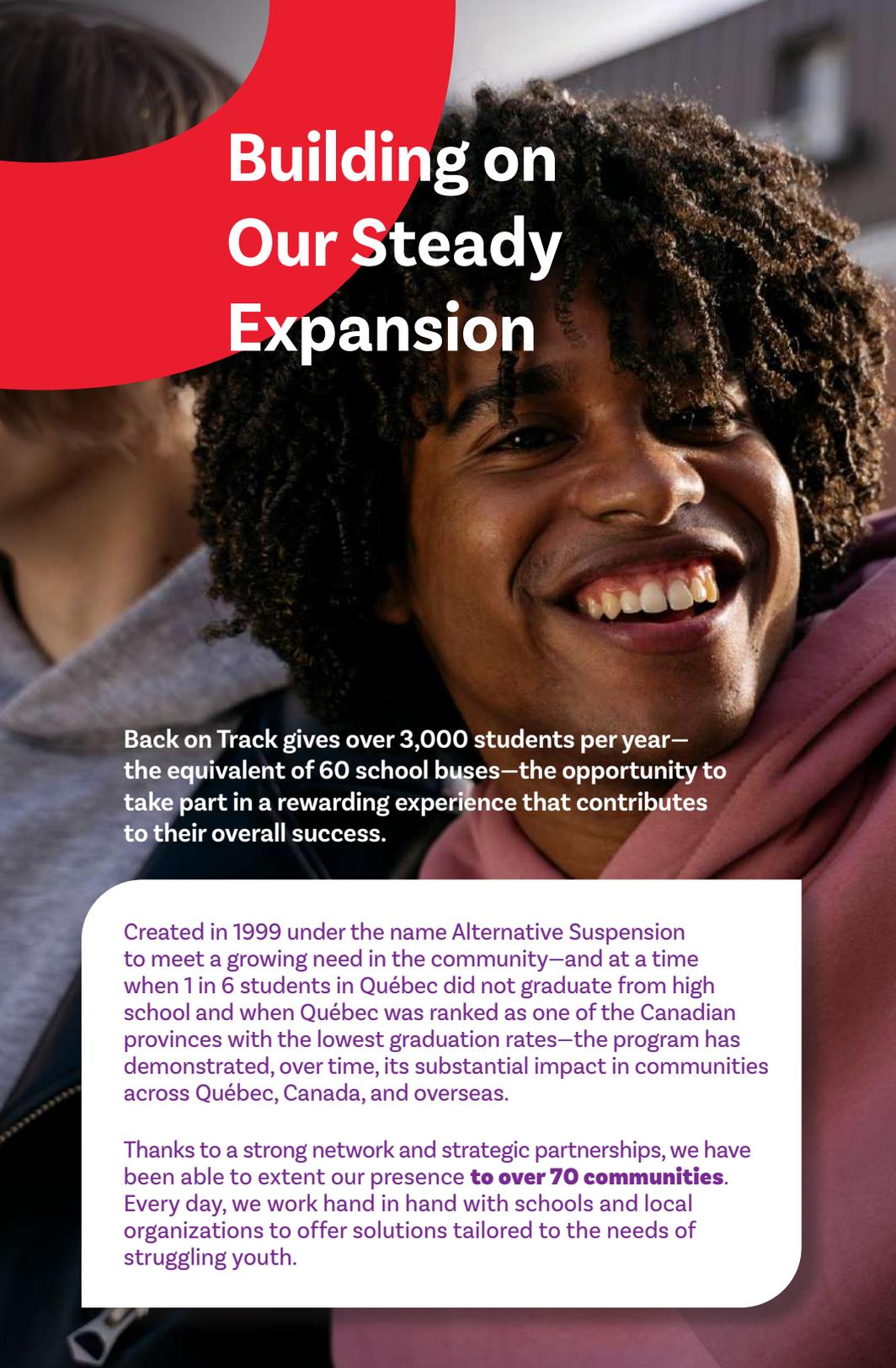
An improvement that also translates into the home

Parents and guardians noticed a change in their child's behaviour after the child participated in the program. **More than 65% of parents and guardians stated that collaboration and communication with the school also improved, according to Malatest.**

"YMCA Alternative Suspension is important for our school. Out-of-school, at-home suspensions are not effective. Students need support to reflect on their behaviour and follow up on their learning."*

– Anonymized principal of a partner school

*YMCA Alternative Suspension is the former name of the Back on Track program

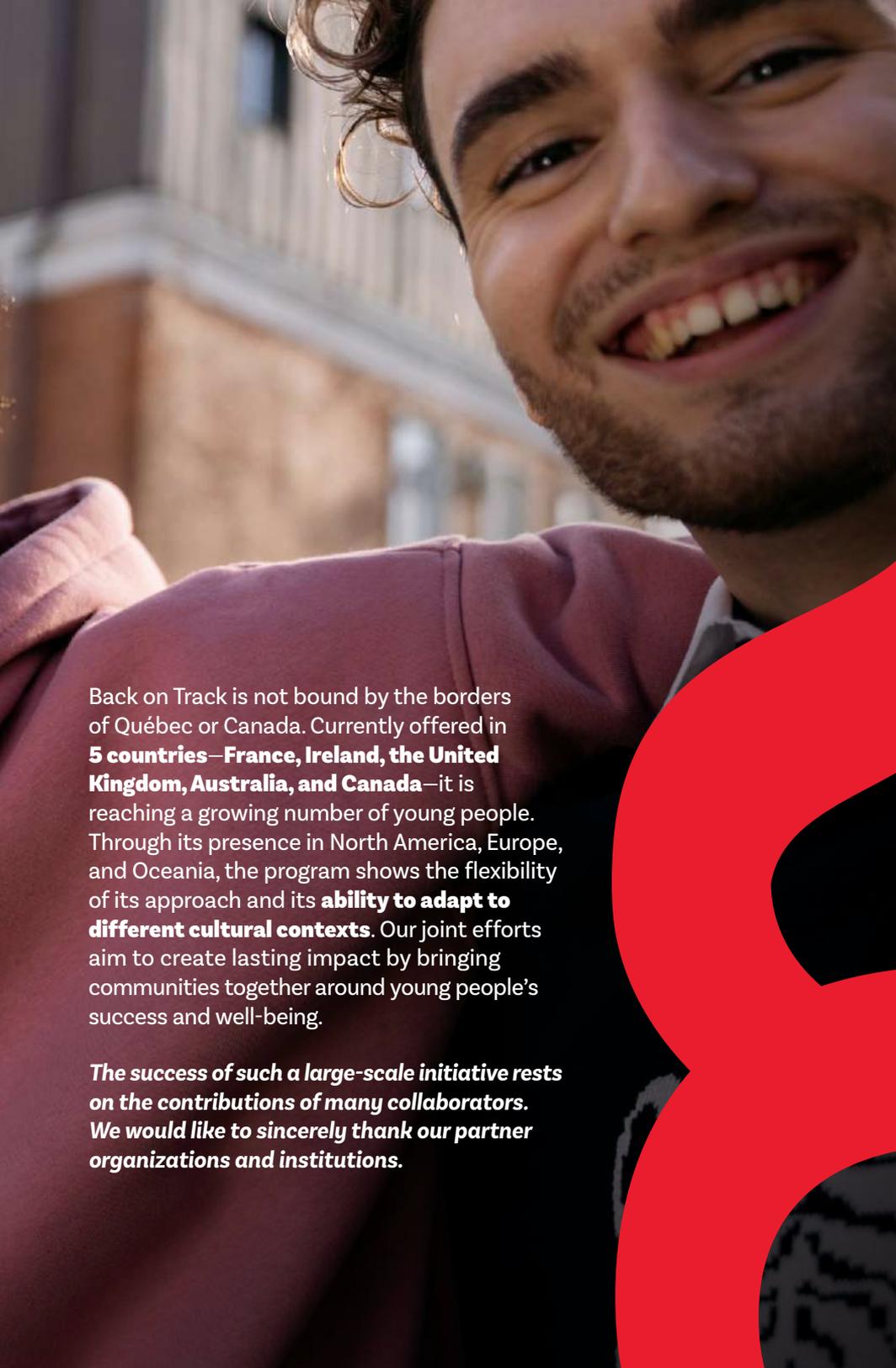


Building on Our Steady Expansion

Back on Track gives over 3,000 students per year—the equivalent of 60 school buses—the opportunity to take part in a rewarding experience that contributes to their overall success.

Created in 1999 under the name Alternative Suspension to meet a growing need in the community—and at a time when 1 in 6 students in Québec did not graduate from high school and when Québec was ranked as one of the Canadian provinces with the lowest graduation rates—the program has demonstrated, over time, its substantial impact in communities across Québec, Canada, and overseas.

Thanks to a strong network and strategic partnerships, we have been able to extent our presence **to over 70 communities**. Every day, we work hand in hand with schools and local organizations to offer solutions tailored to the needs of struggling youth.



Back on Track is not bound by the borders of Québec or Canada. Currently offered in **5 countries—France, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada**—it is reaching a growing number of young people. Through its presence in North America, Europe, and Oceania, the program shows the flexibility of its approach and its **ability to adapt to different cultural contexts**. Our joint efforts aim to create lasting impact by bringing communities together around young people's success and well-being.

The success of such a large-scale initiative rests on the contributions of many collaborators. We would like to sincerely thank our partner organizations and institutions.

Back on track^{by the Y}

Visit our website to learn more about the program.



Alternative Suspension™ is the former name of the program. Back on Track by the YMCA™ is the new name and a trademark of the YMCAs of Québec.