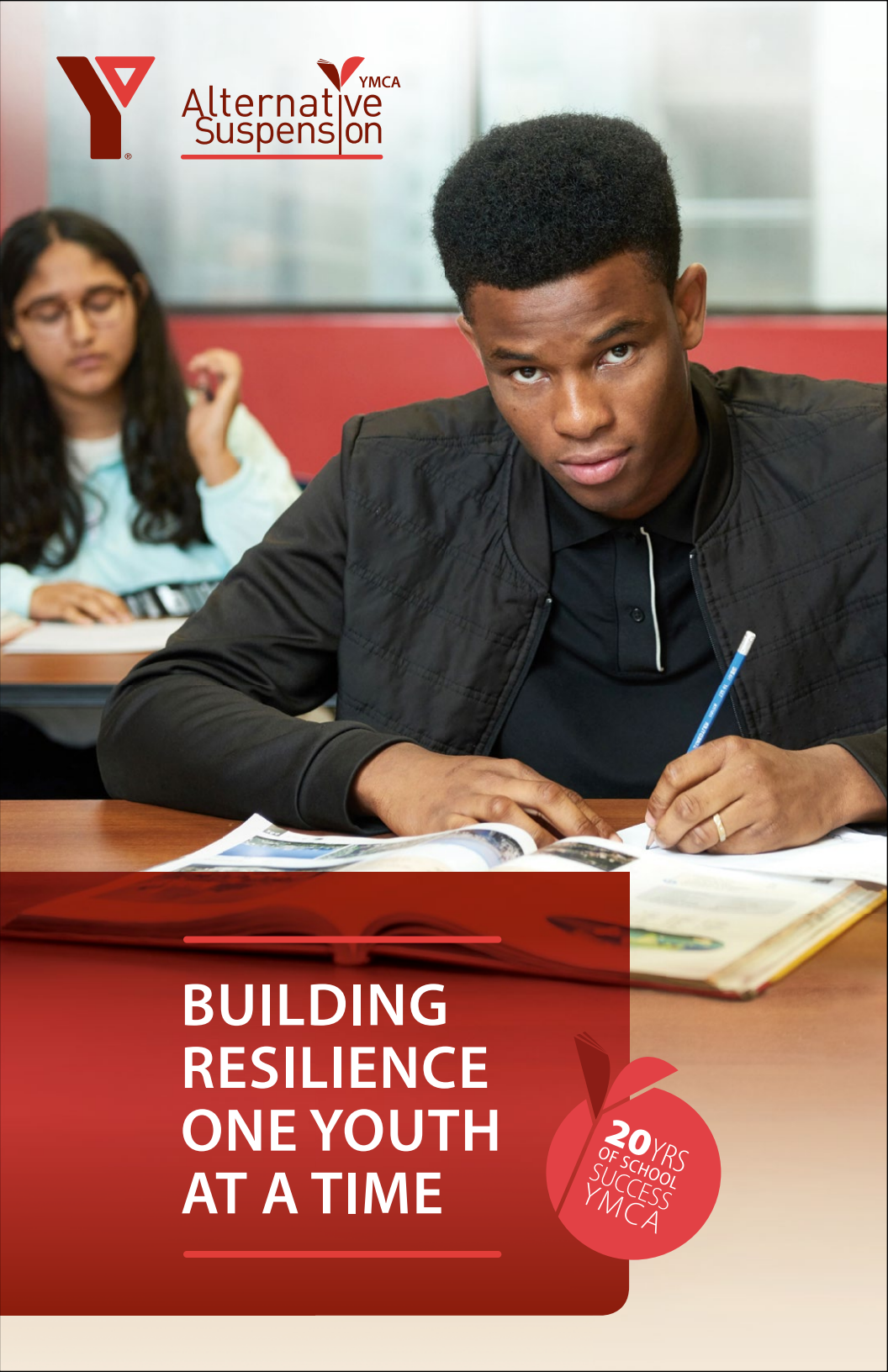




Alternative
Suspension YMCA



**BUILDING
RESILIENCE
ONE YOUTH
AT A TIME**



Encouraging the overall success of youth



// An external school suspension can be effective if it supports students, follows up on their learning and encourages them to reflect on their behaviour. Alternative Suspension provides this support and allows us to see our student progress. //

A school principal

The YMCA Alternative Suspension program:

Helps foster resilience, independence and the ability to stay in school among participants

Positively influences their motivation to learn

Reduces problematic behaviour

Ends the cycle of repeated suspensions



At the YMCA, we are dedicated to the growth of all persons in spirit, mind and body. We believe in the potential of youth and offer a variety of programs that help them thrive and overcome obstacles along the way.

The YMCA Alternative Suspension program aims to reduce future suspensions and disciplinary sanctions by offering participants an opportunity to turn their time away from school into a positive experience that encourages personal growth, the development of social skills and autonomy.



Seizing the opportunity

Suspension is often seen as a failure for both the student and the school. Alternative Suspension aims to make the student's time away from school a success, both personally and academically.

To achieve this goal, a youth worker supports students in the program by helping them to:

- Use this critical moment constructively
- Become aware of the root causes of their problem behaviours, and to reduce their aggressive, impulsive and disruptive conduct
- Acquire new knowledge and develop their soft skills
- Take a step back from school and identify what empowers and motivates them
- Catch up on schoolwork
- Learn about the community resources and post-secondary opportunities available to them



The three steps of the program



1

Cool down

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



2

Reflection

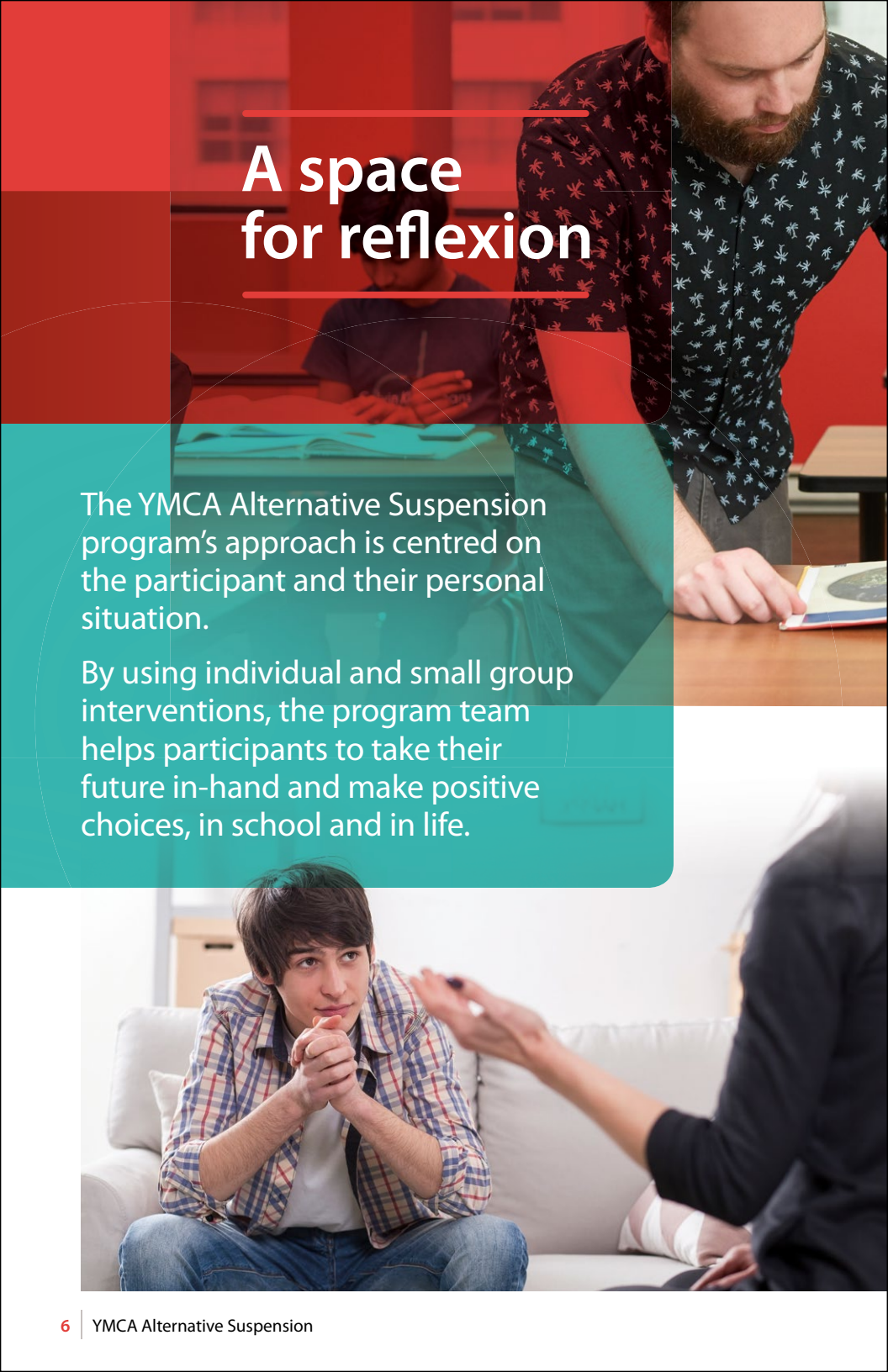
The program encourages students to reflect during one-on-one meetings and group workshops.



3

Commitment

Students are motivated to make changes that will have a positive impact on their school experience.



A space for reflexion

The YMCA Alternative Suspension program's approach is centred on the participant and their personal situation.

By using individual and small group interventions, the program team helps participants to take their future in-hand and make positive choices, in school and in life.



Created in 1999 by the YMCAs of Québec, the program is offered to high schools to support students who, for different reasons, are temporarily suspended from school.

A three to five day participation in the program helps facilitate a student's positive return to their school and social lives by:

- Highlighting and building on their strengths;
- Helping them to change their attitude towards school.

**YMCA Alternative
Suspension champions
school perseverance by
giving youth participants
a chance to reflect on their
situation and set their
positive path forward.**



Results that matter

The program is an established model in dropout prevention that encourages a harmonious return to the classroom setting.

YMCA Alternative Suspension works with schools and families to maximize its impact on the academic engagement and social environment of participants.

1 Problematic behaviour

The program has resulted in a positive shift in attitude and behaviour in 85% of participants in the medium term and 50% of participants in the long term.

// 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
An independent evaluation firm*

2 Schoolwork

According to a recent impact study, our participants are much more likely to succeed in school. **By the end of the school year, 44% of participants met or exceeded expected learning outcomes**, compared to only 29% of members of a comparison group.

// 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. //

A school principal



3 Suspension and disciplinary action

School administrators report that participants tend to receive fewer disciplinary actions after attending the program. **In fact, 64% of program participants were reported to have fewer disciplinary actions**, compared to 39.5% of members of a comparison group.

// Students are supported by a qualified youth worker as they work on their goals and seriously contemplate their harmful behaviour. It is easier for a student to reflect on their situation when they are away from school. //

A school principal

4 Parent involvement

More than 75% of parents of participants noticed a change in their child's behaviour after the program, while more than 65% said that communication and collaboration with their child's school had improved.

// My son, Anthony, was suspended because of his poor attendance record. He was angry, even sad about his suspension, but he eventually realized there were good reasons behind it and became aware of his responsibilities. He finished his school year and is going into grade ten next year. What a turnaround! //

Parent of a participant

Strengthened through partnership

Every year YMCA Alternative Suspension provides over 3000 youth – the equivalent of 60 school buses – a rewarding experience that contributes to their overall success.



The program model is recognized as being easily replicable, while remaining adaptable to various local contexts. Hundreds of partners have actively participated in the development of program sites in dozens of communities across Canada and around the world. These successes are the key drivers behind the program's continued growth.

Partners and their contributions have been essential in the program's success to date. It is thanks to their financial support and collaboration that youth receive the help they need, and deserve, while dealing with the challenges they face at school.

// It's hard to see your son lacking the motivation to wake up for school every morning. But to see how Ben lit up when returning from Alternative Suspension, talking about what he discussed in workshops... it was incredible to see how his demeanour changed. To have someone take the time to regularly touch base with Benjamin, to support us as parents and show him that there are those who care, despite his ongoing issues at school, really has positively impacted Ben, giving him the necessary tools moving forward in his final year of high school. //

A parent of a participant

// This place is just different. I was able to express my thoughts and enjoy my stay when I thought I wasn't going to. I learned that talking to someone really does help. I just felt brighter during my stay here, much more aware. //

A program participant





Alternative
Suspension YMCA

YMCA Alternative Suspension
helps youth from communities
across the country and abroad
to persevere at school every day.
Visit us online to find out more.

alternativesuspension.ca

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