

# Dropout Prevention in Upper Secondary

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# In Sweden (2018)

99% enter upper secondary

68% diploma after three years

77% diploma after four years

An overall target in the Europe 2020 strategy is that dropout rates will be less than 10 percent. In Sweden, the proportion of people aged 18– 24 that do not complete upper secondary education will be less than 7 percent.

## **160,000 NEETS (not in education, employment or training)**

Young people aged 20-24 who neither work nor study ≈ 8-9% in Sweden. There are great regional differences, and the proportion can vary between 6 and 15 percent, depending on municipality.

*Eurostat (2016), The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2019)*

## A Dropout

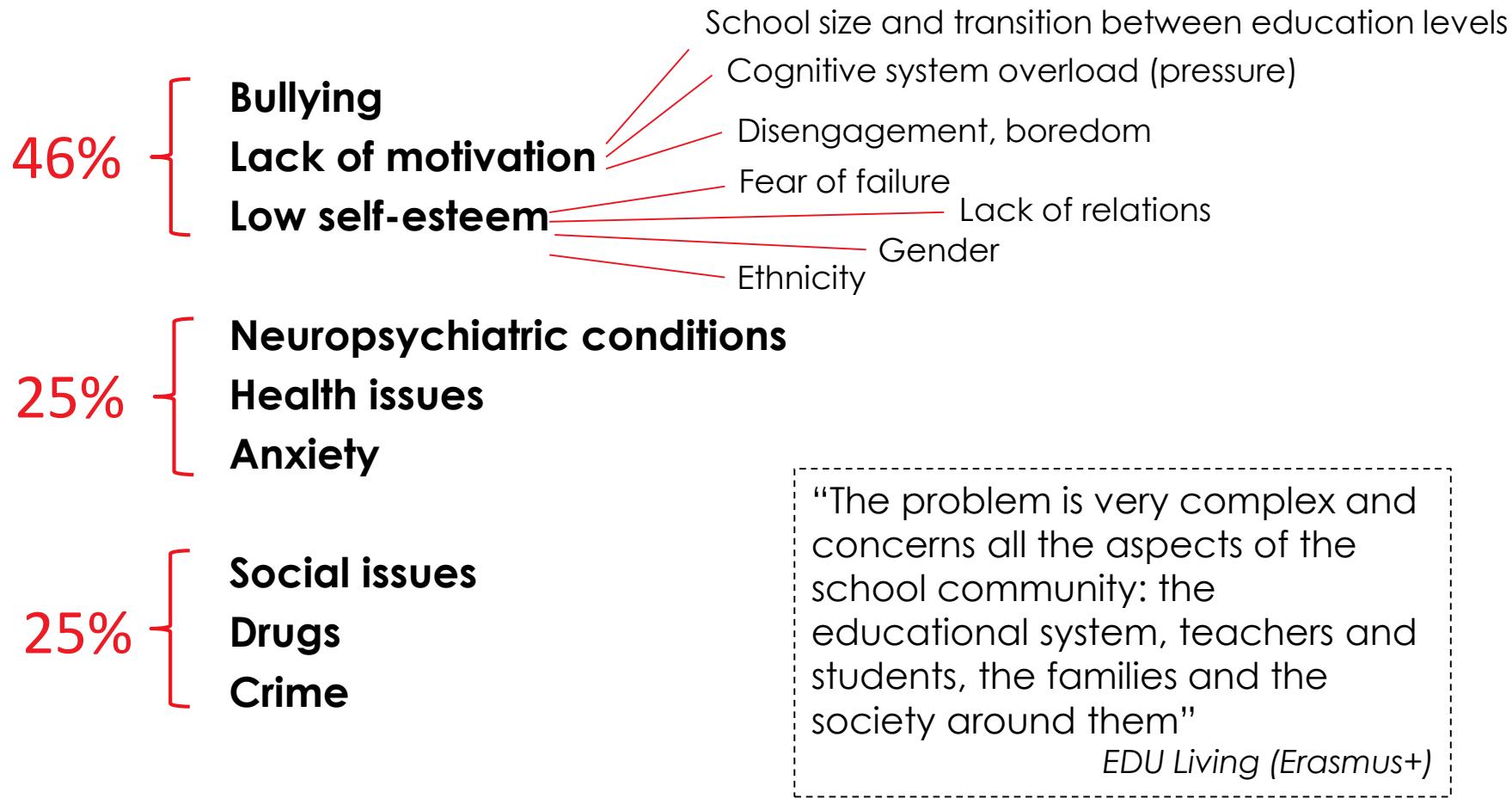
- School is scary, or difficult
- Absence known to parents
- Rarely crime, drugs etc
- Often isolated at home during school hours  
(but may be more active in the evening or on holidays)
- Feels better during holidays when the pressure is off
- Wants to go to school

## A Truant

- School is boring
- Hides absence from parents
- Antisocial behaviour  
Often hangs with other students with the same problems
- Is not at home during school hours
- Hardly notices school holidays
- Does not want to go to school



# Reasons for dropping out



# **Swedish law:**

*"An equal education does not mean that teaching should take the same form for all pupils"*

The National Agency for Education

=

## **A change of perspective**

Adopt a position of neurodiversity instead of viewing students' needs as deficits, disorders and impairments

~~"Problems"~~

# A change of perspective

★ Giving a gold star to the student who goes to school

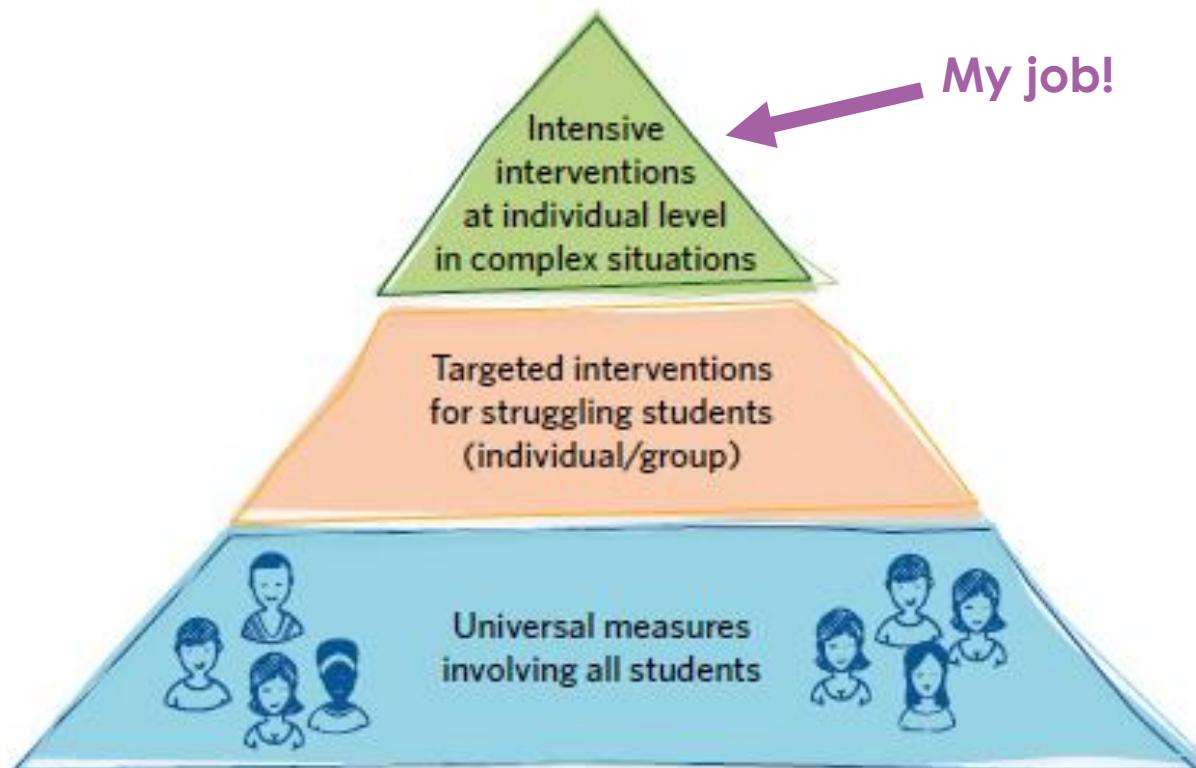
vs.

★ Giving the school a gold star for a working school environment

OECD:  
A student's failure **at** school  
A student's failure **by** school

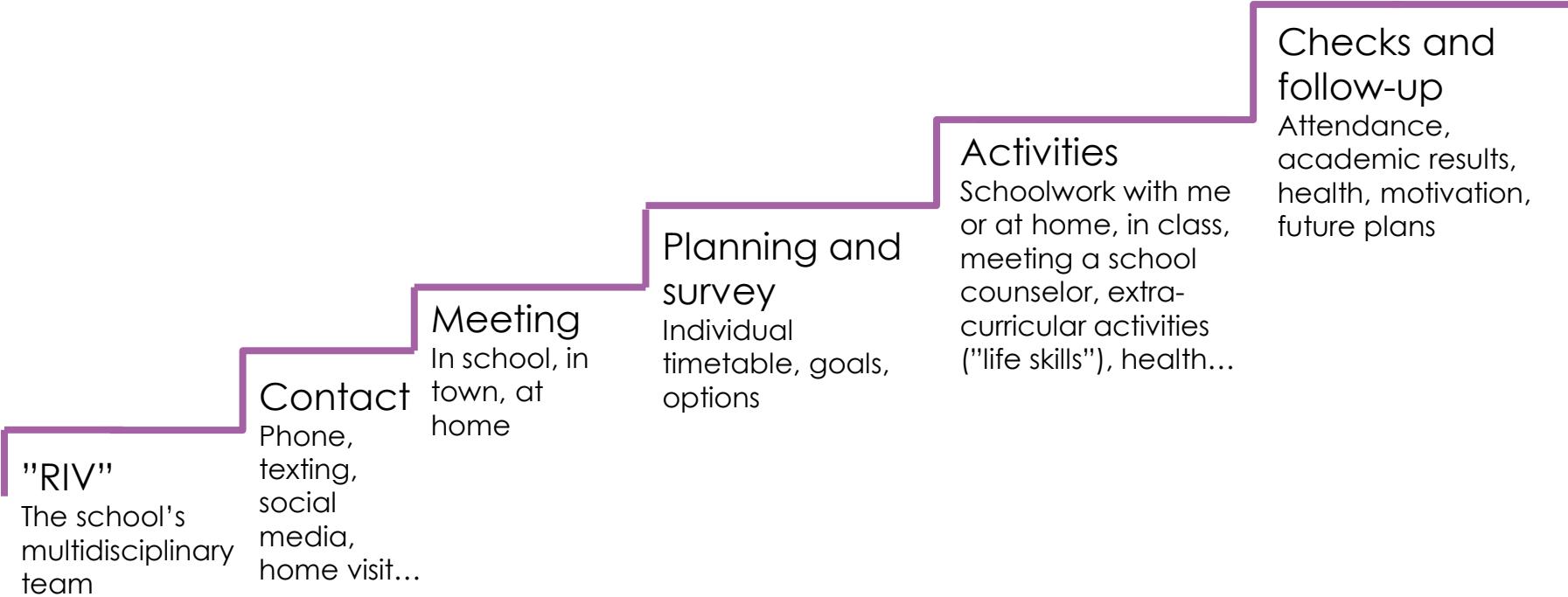
Taking all individuals into account and adjusting teaching methods, classrooms etc accordingly

# Effective dropout prevention requires initiatives at several levels

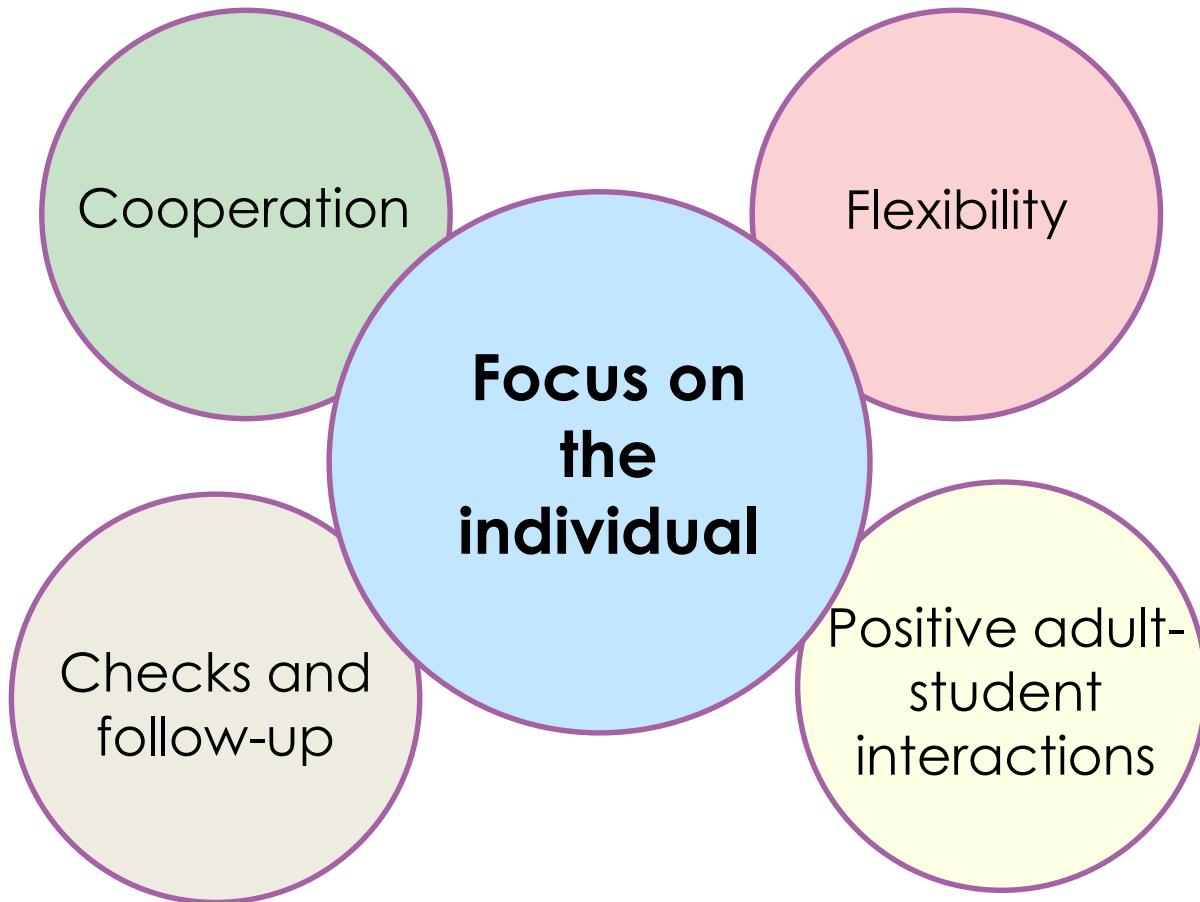


Source: McIver & McIver, 2009.

# Dropout Intervention at Bromangymnasiet



# Success factors

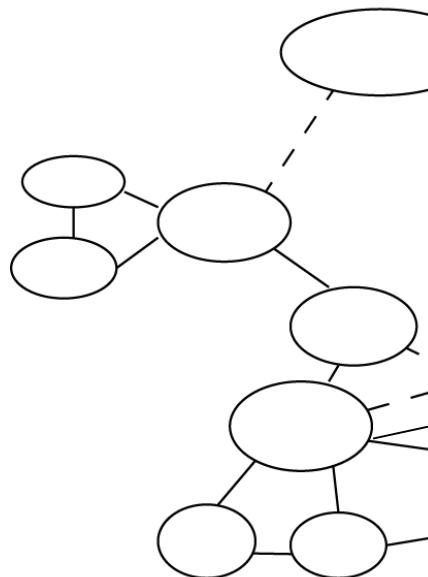


# The first meeting (examples)

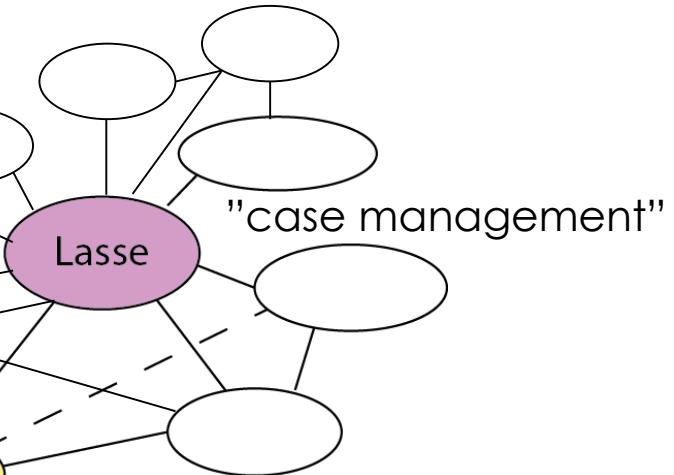
- Do you want to go to school? What are the obstacles?
  - Positive and negative learning experiences
  - What do you do when you're not in school?
  - Relations, interests and hobbies
  - Goals – short term and long term. Maybe just an hour a week in school is OK to begin with.
- 
- In what way is this education relevant to me?
  - What are my options?
- 
- The future is in sight. Goals feel realistic and I know how to get there.
  - There are adults in school I trust and who believe in me

# Social Network Map

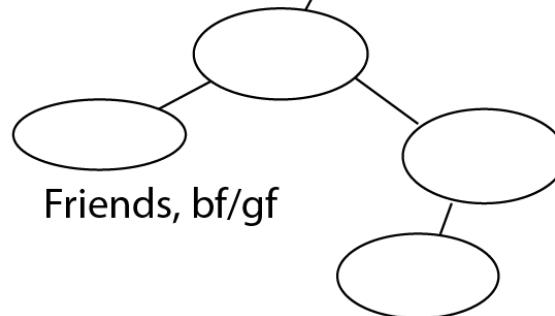
Family (including pets)



Professionals  
school, health care, spare time etc



Student



Friends, bf/gf

Plan

My  
observations

Social  
skills

Social  
setting

DigComp

Formal

competence

Non-formal  
competence

Interests, hobbies

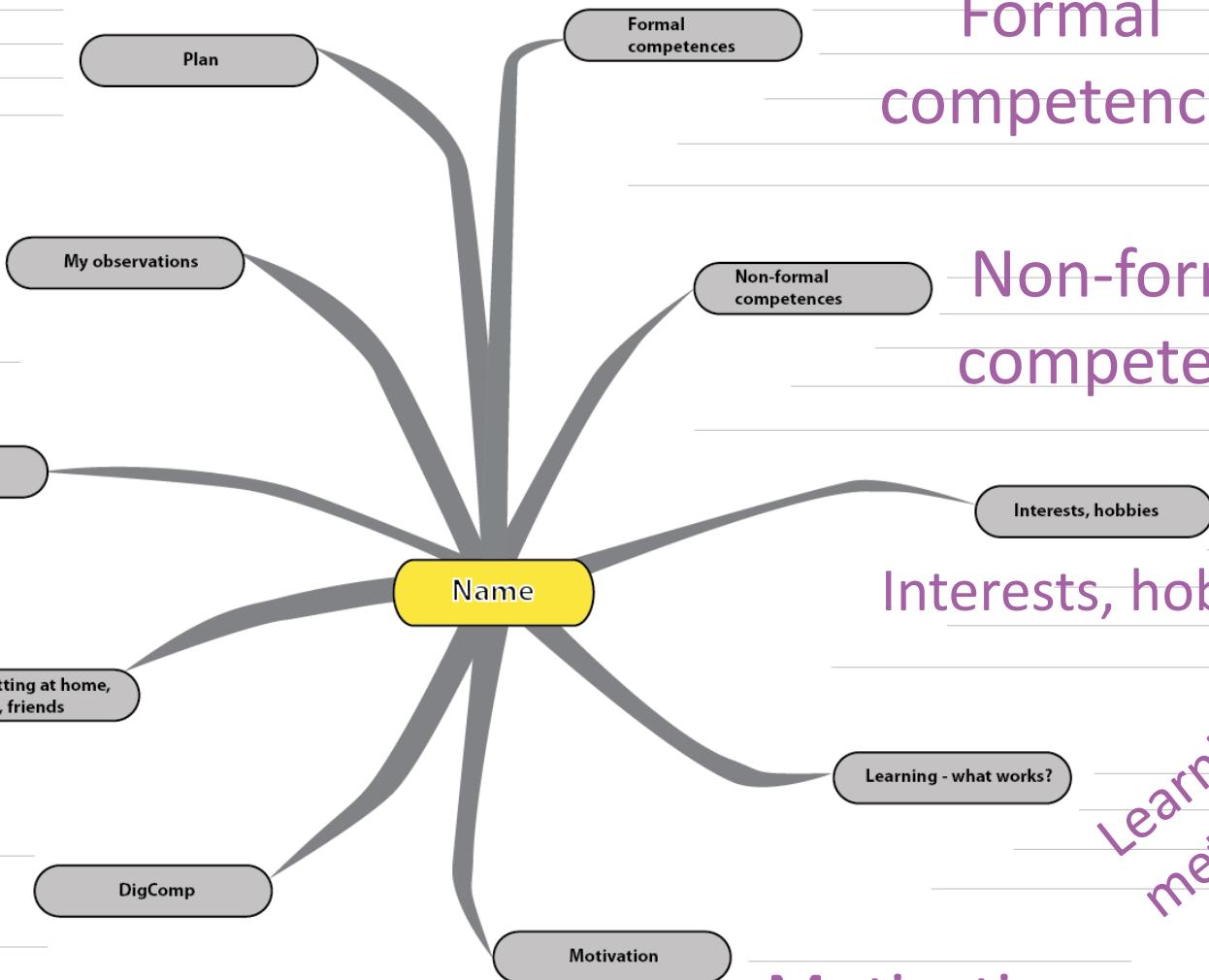
Interests, hobbies

Learning - what works?

Learning  
methods

Motivation

12(15)



- Don't praise the result, but **how** the student did it
- Focus on the **positives**. Failure equals low self-esteem. Success, however small, leads to success. The results will follow.
- If you set targets, always have a strategy for "failure". How can you see **progress** even if the student fails to reach that target goal?
- It takes **time!** Staying at home = life is paused. They need time to develop an identity and find a role they are comfortable with.
- They often lack many **life skills** that formal learning doesn't teach: making a bed, how important mail appears in their home, how to get on the right bus, how to boil an egg...
- Reduce the number of contacts (**case management**)
- Let students who have already dropped out meet students at risk to tell them about their **experiences**

- Early intervention (Documented in an action programme)
- Make sure the student agrees (copies of email etc)
- Mentoring/tutoring
- Daily contact (phone, texting, social media)
- Parental engagement/Home visits
- Plan for a fourth year, or even a fifth  
or complete their grades in an adult education programme
- Don't just measure progress in numbers  
(grades, attendance) but also use a system with  
more nuances (mood, motivation...)





## Extracurricular: Board games

"I didn't know PE teachers enjoyed slaughtering aliens in space.  
He's pretty cool – for a teacher."

*Student who had been at home for two years*

"It's nice to be alone together."

*Student who had been at home for four years*





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Questions?

Søren Kierkegaard:

*If one is truly to succeed in leading a person to a specific place, one must first and foremost take care to find him where he is and begin there.*

Kierkegaard also said that *to help is not to dominate, but to serve.*

If a child can't read, what do we do?

We teach the child to read.

If a child can't focus and sit still, what do we do?

Often, we make the child aware of the problem and let them find a solution on their own.

