

Ed unions denounce cuts in the name of student perseverance

By Matthew McCully

A number of union representatives for educators, support staff and daycare workers in the Townships met at the Delta Hotel in Sherbrooke yesterday to speak out against cuts to education: the press conference coincided with the beginning of Hooked on School Days, a drop-out prevention initiative held across the province every year during the third week of February.

"The lack of funding is not helping to keep kids in school," said Julie Dubois, President of the Townships Regional Union of Support Staff (TRUSS).

"If they get help when they're young, it makes a big difference," Dubois added.

As far as TRUSS is concerned, Dubois said she wanted to share what support staff do each day to help students feel important at school.

"There's a human and social side to helping,"

Dubois said, that reaches beyond the classroom. She said it could be a bus driver who sees a child not looking well and trying to prompt a smile, a caretaker fixing a broken locker, or a supervisor noticing that a student looks lonely and asking them for help on the playground.

According to Dubois, it's the combination of the small gestures and interactions of students in the school environment that will make them want to stay in school.

Representatives in the field of daycare all the way up to Cegep expressed the importance of creating and sustaining a healthy learning environment for students throughout their educational careers. Insufficient funding to education leads to less resources, the reps said, which contradicts the government's message that educators and support staff play a direct role in student success and perseverance.