Secondary school dropout is a major concern for education authorities in France, Europe and beyond. Poor academic performance may be a predictor of school dropout, particularly at the beginning of secondary school, with some students struggling to master basic skills. The purpose of this study is not to examine the concept of school dropout as generally understood (i.e. in terms of disengagement, absenteeism, etc.), but to address the roots of the problem and to identify predictors of school dropout in order to prevent it. Research in this area has focused on a range of family, academic and personal factors. While strategies have been developed to support students with learning or behavior problems, what actually happens in class? What are the warning signs of school dropout that determine the subsequent educational trajectory of dropouts? Perceived incompetence, socio-cognitive conflicts and disengagement are characteristic features of the portrait of the dropout. This study provides an overview of examples of difficulties in literacy (French) and mathematics that foreshadow more serious difficulties in later years. Appropriate teaching methods are required to promote prevention rather than cure.


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