

Check and Connect

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Overview

- Background of Check and Connect
- Mentor responsibilities
- Introduction to key skills and critical pieces

Check & Connect

- Developed for high-risk urban students at the secondary level (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, 2004; Evelo, Sinclair, Hurley, Christenson, Thurlow, 1996)
- Utilizes a monitoring system with two components
 - Check
 - Systematically assess the extent to which students are engaged in school.
 - Connect
 - Respond on a regular basis to students' educational needs according to their type and level of risk for disengagement from school.
- Establish an adult mentor at school to enhance school engagement

Background

- Work began in 1990 through a 5 year grant funded through OSEP
- Develop and implement intervention for reducing dropout among students with disabilities
- University-based & School-based Partnership
 - Minneapolis Public School District Personnel
 - 2 cohorts of students over 2 years

Background

- Leaving school prior to graduation is not an instantaneous event
- Solving dropout requires a multifaceted effort of home, school, community and youth
- Students must be empowered to take control of their own behavior
- Schools must be designed to reach out to families in partnership with the community

Background

- Work conducted in urban and suburban districts
- Among general education and special education students
- Elementary, middle and high school settings
- With more than 3,200 students and over 100 schools

Background

- Met the evidence-based standards of the Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse
- Reduced
 - Absences
 - Tardiness to school/class
 - Behavior referrals
 - Dropout

Background

- Increased
 - Credit Accrual
 - Retention rates
 - Graduation rates
- Perceived increase in parent participation

What is Check & Connect?

Four components =

1. A mentor who works with students and families for a minimum of 2 years,
2. Regular “checks” using school data
3. Timely and individualized intervention - “connect”
4. Engagement with families

What is Check & Connect?

- Descriptive Characteristics
 - Targeted (tier 2) or intensive (tier 3) intervention
 - A structured mentoring intervention
 - Empirically supported
 - Clearly delineated elements

What is Check & Connect?

- Core Elements (fundamental principles)
 - Relationships
 - Focus on alterable variables
 - Personalized, data-based intervention
 - Long-term commitment
 - Participation in and affiliation with school
 - Problem solving & capacity building
 - Persistence-Plus

Student Engagement

- Engagement is not a fixed attribute, but rather an alterable state of being
- Engagement is highly influenced by
 - home, school, and peers
 - influences can serve as inhibitors or facilitators.

*Role of mentor is designed to work as broker of services for promoting & facilitating student engagement

What is The role of
the Mentor?

Check & Connect Video Example



CARS Project

Check & Connect Mentor

- Attitude, Philosophy, Traits
 - Willingness to be a mentor
 - Non-judgmental toward others
 - Believes all students
 - have strengths and can learn
 - can make progress in school and change their level of engagement
 - can develop academic and behavioral competencies
 - can be taught to use problem solving skills

Check & Connect Mentor

- “Check” aspect
- Systematic monitoring of warning signs for withdrawal
- Focus on data that is readily available
- Emphasis on alterable indicators – those that can be addressed through intervention

Check & Connect Mentor

- “Connect” aspect
- Creating a person-environment fit
- Support that is tailored to individual student needs, based on
 - Level of engagement with school
 - Associated influences of home and school
 - Leveraging of local resources

Check & Connect Mentor

- Teaches self-management skills
 - Problem solving & capacity building
 - Promotes the acquisition of skills to resolve conflicts constructively
 - Encourages search for solutions vs. blame
 - Fosters productive coping skills

Check & Connect Mentor

- Problem Solving Strategy
 - Step 1: Stop! Think about the problem.
 - Step 2: What are some choices?
 - Step 3: Choose one.
 - Step 4: Do it.
 - Step 5: How did it work out?

(August, Anderson, & Bloomquist, 1992)

Check & Connect Mentor

Basic Intervention:

- All students in the program receive
 - Regular meeting with mentor
 - Focused conversation on importance of staying in school
 - Support for problem solving
 - Serves as basis for identifying which students need more intensive support

Check & Connect Mentor

Intensive Intervention

- Students with increased signs of disengagement
 - Determined by systematic monitoring of data and the relationship between student and mentor

Check & Connect Mentor

- Not part of the Mentor's role...
 - Therapist
 - Counselor
 - Disciplinarian
 - Teaching assistant
 - Social worker
- Not necessarily a licensed professional, but may help connect families with professionals or resources they are unable to provide

About Me (Mary Grupe)

- 9 years teaching
- Certification K-12 Cross Categorical
- Born, raised, and returned

Rock Bridge High School

- Suburban
- Mean household income: \$66,942
- Mean family income: \$89,209
- Below Poverty: 20%
- Unemployment: 6.1%
- Major industries Education, Healthcare and Insurance

Columbia Public Schools

- Enrollment: K- 12 Total 17,267
- Ethnicity: Asian 5.1%, Black 20.2%, Hispanic 6.1%, White 62.1%
- Free or Reduced Lunch: 41.2% 6,932 total
- Graduation Rate: Total 90.19, Asian 90%, Black 79.7%, Hispanic 92.59%, Indian 66.67%, White 93.21%
- DESE District Report Card

Rock Bridge High School

- Enrollment: 9-12 Total 1,847
- Ethnicity: Asian 6.1%, African American 11.9%, Hispanic 5.1%, Caucasian 71.4%
- Free or reduced Lunch: 19.7% 341 total
- Teacher- to- student Ratio: 1 to 22
- Graduation Rate: 96.1%

The Students

- My people
 - 504's or IEP's
 - Emotional Disturbance or Oppositional Defiance Disorder
 - Attendance issues
 - Discipline issues
 - History of aggression
 - Perceived slights
 - History of negative experiences in school

Set-up of System for Check & Connect

- Formatting and environmental strategizing for checking in with student
 - Homeroom
 - All students identified and at-risk
 - One school period
 - Work on social skills, group work, class assignments
 - High teacher to student ratio
 - Case management
 - Connection Point

Set up of system for Check and Connect

- Structure of Checking In
 - e-school as a tracking tool
- Show Check-in forms
 - Modifications (electronic)
 - Risk plan process
 - Importance of advocacy for student
 - Plan to solve problem and step by step intervention

Set-up of System for Check & Connect

- Issues related to consistent check in
 - Teachers updating information
 - Reluctant students
 - Non-qualifying students
 - Adult peer conflicts

Set-up of System for Check & Connect

- Benefits of this system
 - Helped outline problem solving with students
 - Helped students be independent and know how to solve problems
 - Gave students a non-punitive check in time
 - Allowed students a “connection point with an adult”
 - Adults are afforded the opportunity to build a relationship

What we as a School Learned...

- The power of data
- The power of relationships
- The power of a neutral party
- The power of problem solving
- The power of active listening

The evolution of Ac Lab to Homeroom

- Melding of the Resource Room model and Ac Lab
- Aspiring Administration cohort
- The incident in the library
- The change
- 10 Weeks in
- The Healing

Troubleshooting

- Do you have ready access to student attendance/school functioning information?
- Will you track information daily or weekly?
- Do you have a time period and place to meet?
- Are you able to communicate with other teachers (e.g., grades/missing assignments)?
- Will you have flexibility to meet with the student in case of absence or change in schedule?
- Do you have knowledge of other resources in the school for intensive interventions or know of someone who does? (e.g., who can provide tutoring, if discipline strategies can be modified)