

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Effects of Check and Connect on Attendance, Behavior, and Academics

Key Details

KEY WORDS

Dropout, attendance, persistence, graduation, prevention

POPULATION GROUP

At-risk youth

STEPPING UP THEMES

Education, Training & Apprenticeships;
Coordinated & Youth Friendly
Communities

RESEARCH ORIGIN

USA

SOURCE

Academic

“As observed in prior school-based prevention studies, early intervention focused on both academic and nonacademic risk factors may interrupt a cascade of events associated with economic disadvantage that eventually result in costly social and health problems by adulthood.”

1. What is the research about?

Educational attainment and school completion are basic components to ensure the healthy development of children and youth. Research has found that high school dropouts are more likely to engage in criminal activity and become involved with the criminal justice system. High school dropouts are less likely to engage in civic activity to report positive wellbeing. Dropout rates in the United States continue to be higher for racialized and low-income students. Such trends have illustrated the need to further understand predictors of dropping out and develop interventions to reduce dropout.

One of the largest dropout prevention programs in the United States is Communities In Schools (CIS), which aims to give students a community of support to help them stay in school. The CIS model provides school-level services catered to the needs of at-risk students, including access to services such as academic assistance, mentoring and life skills promotion. This study looks at the effectiveness of one of the specific interventions under CIS, known as Check & Connect (C&C). The researchers wanted to know the effects of C&C on student attendance, academics, and behaviour for youth referred for absenteeism, in hopes of evaluating the promise of the intervention for preventing dropout.

The research question for this study is: Are there differences in effects on attendance, academics, and behaviour for students who receive C&C in addition to CIS from those who receive only CIS services?

2. Where did the research take place?

The study took place in Texas, United States, in schools served by a local CIS affiliate.

3. Who is this research about?

The research was conducted with at-risk middle and high school students who had demonstrated absenteeism (20 or more absences during the previous year or 2 or more absences in the previous month), poor school behaviour, and below-average academic performance. About half the participants identified as female, and majority of the students were Hispanic.

4. How was the research done?

The researchers conducted an independent randomized effectiveness trial of C&C, meaning that eligible students were randomly assigned to CIS or CIS and C&C groups, to compare their effectiveness. The C&C model is comprised of two major components. The “check” component involves regularly monitoring student performance and progress, such as their attendance, course grades, and incidence of suspensions. The “connect” component involves individual attention to students given by the program staff, in partnership with other school staff, family members, and community service organizations. The “monitor” of each student takes on a case management approach to work with students and their families for the duration of the intervention.

The final sample consisted of 89 students in the C&C group, and 100 students in the CIS only group. Outcomes were assessed after one semester of implementation.

5. What are the key findings?

The study found the following:

- Students who received C&C had **better grades** and **fewer disciplinary referrals** compared to those who did not
- No significant effects were observed regarding attendance
- Findings are mixed and effects were small, but significant

6. Why does this research matter for youth work?

Previous studies have shown that of all the known dropout risk factors, academic performance is the strongest predictor of dropout, while student misbehavior is a well-established risk indicator for youth. Improvement on these two major indicators may mean that C&C holds promise in improving school-completion rates, as well as an entire host of related benefits. While there were no significant effects observed in terms of attendance, researchers pointed out that previous research about the links between attendance and dropout were mixed and inconclusive.

Overall, the study is still important as it is one of the very few studies that provides evidence of the impacts of school-based community interventions. The results of the study indicate that closer collaboration between the social services sector and the school sector is critical in improving student outcomes.



Maynard, B. R., Kjellstrand, E. K., & Thompson, A. M. (2013). Effects of Check and Connect on Attendance, Behavior, and Academics: A Randomized Effectiveness Trial. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 24(3), p.296-309.