



Tiered Interventions and Evidence-Based Strategies for Improving Student Outcomes in High School

Strand 6-Transition
Application of Transition Strategies in Tiered Interventions

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Check & Connect

A comprehensive student engagement intervention

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What is Check & Connect?

Check & Connect is a comprehensive intervention designed to enhance students' engagement at school and with learning.

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How Did Check & Connect Begin?

- 1990: Five-year development grant from the U.S. Department of Education, OSEP
- Purpose: Develop, implement, evaluate, and refine an intervention for reducing dropout rates among middle school youth with disabilities (LD and EBD specifically)
- Partnership for School Success
 - Planned with Minneapolis School District Personnel
 - Implemented with 2 cohorts of students over 2 years

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Research Designs and Evidence

Treatment-control differences for secondary students with disabilities in longitudinal designs:

- Improved attendance
- Improved social skills, ratings, and homework completion
- Enrolled in school and making progress towards degree (credits earned)
- Higher graduation rates for five years

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Components of Check & Connect

- *Check* refers to systematically assessing students' connection to school.
- *Connect* refers to the timely response or intervention based on students' education needs.

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Student Engagement

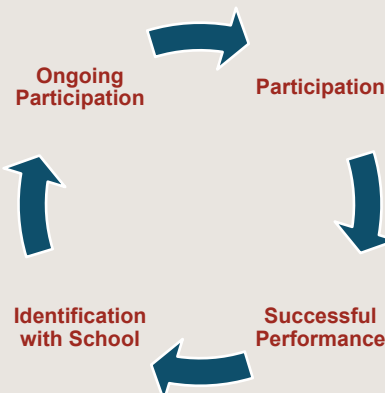
- Student engagement is the key to preventing dropout (*Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997*) and is the bottom line in school completion programs. (*Grannis, 1994*)
- Student engagement is defined as commitment to and investment in learning, and identification and belonging at school, and is associated with desired academic, social, and emotional learning outcomes.

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Process of Engagement



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Four Indicators of Student Engagement

Observable Indicators:

1. Academic engagement (e.g., time on task, credit accrual, homework completion)
2. Behavioral engagement (e.g., attendance, suspensions, classroom participation)

Internal Indicators:

3. Cognitive engagement (e.g., perceived relevance of schoolwork, goal setting)
4. Psychological engagement (e.g., identification with school, sense of belonging) *(Christenson et al., 2007)*

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Engagement is Influenced by Three Contextual Factors

1. School (e.g., school climate, quality of teacher-student relationship, effective instruction in academic, social, and emotional learning areas)
2. Family (e.g., academic and motivational support for learning)
3. Peers (e.g., expectations to graduate among peers, social networks)

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What do we mean by RTI?

Response-to-intervention (RTI) integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems.

With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.

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RTI Components

- Screening
- Tiers of instruction
- Progress monitoring
- Fidelity indicators

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Check & Connect

- Referral Criteria – Alterable predictors
 - Participation – attendance
 - e.g., absenteeism, skipping classes, tardiness to school
 - Social Behavioral Performance
 - e.g., suspensions from school, dismissals, other consequences for inappropriate behaviors
 - Academic Performance
 - e.g., credit accrual, course failures (literacy)

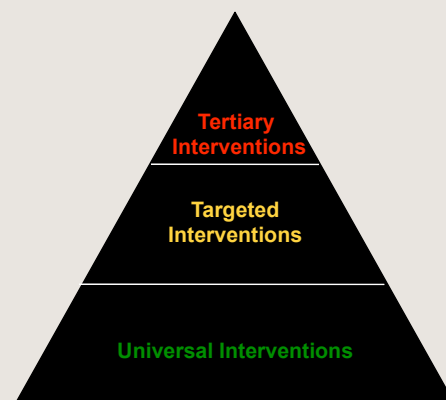
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The Pyramid of Interventions

- The Pyramid of Interventions
 - Universal
 - Targeted
 - Tertiary



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Universal (School-Level) Interventions: Recommendations from Research

- Personalize the learning environment and instructional process. *(IES, 2008)*
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school. *(IES, 2008)*
- Create cultural/relevance—include strategies that are appropriate to student background and culture.
(Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, & Hurley, 2000; Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Cotton & Conklin, 2001; Finn, 1993; Payne, 2005)

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Universal or School-Level of Intervention Examples

- Student advisory programs that monitor academic and social development of middle or high school students
- Deliberate outreach efforts to involve students in extracurricular activities
- Systematic school-wide positive discipline and behavioral support programs

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Targeted Level of Intervention

- *Targeted* level provides more intensive supports to **some** students who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school.
- Disengaging from school may have begun as evidenced by low or failing grades, poor attendance, or suspensions.
- Approaches may be implemented with small groups and may include skill building focused on conflict resolution, academic tutoring, or social skills – to address factors that are associated with increased risk of dropping out.

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Targeted Level of Interventions: Examples from Research

- Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out. *(IES, 2008)*
- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance. *(IES, 2008)*
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills. *(IES, 2008)*

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Tertiary Level of Intervention

- *Indicated or intense* – the intervention addresses the needs of a small percentage or a **few** students who are at high risk and are showing clear signs of leaving school early.
- Students have multiple risk factors. Interventions are designed to remediate established problems and are typically highly individualized.
- Approaches may include wrap-around services, individual functional behavior analysis, individualized behavior management plans, or intensive mentoring programs.

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Check & Connect Consists of Four Components

1. A **mentor** who keeps education salient for students

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Check & Connect Consists of Four Components

2. **Systematic monitoring** (*the “check” component*)

- Number of absences
- Number of tardies
- Number of suspensions
- Number of expulsions
- Number of behavioral referrals
- Number of failing classes
- Number of credits accrued

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Check & Connect Consists of Four Components:

3. **Timely and individualized intervention** (*the “connect” component*)

- Tutoring
- After school activities
- Homework help

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Check & Connect Consists of Four Components:

4. **Enhancing home-school communication and home support for learning**

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Seven Elements of Check & Connect

1. **Relationships:** Mutual trust and open communication, nurtured through a long-term commitment that is focused on student's educational success.
2. **Problem solving:** Cognitive-behavioral approach to promote the acquisition of skills to resolve conflict constructively, encourage the search for solutions rather than a source of blame, and foster productive coping skills
3. **Individualized, data-based intervention:** Support that is tailored to individual students needs, based on level of engagement with school, associated influences of home and school, and the leveraging of local resources.

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Seven Elements of Check & Connect

- 4. Affiliation with school and learning:** Student access to and active participation in school-related activities and event.
- 5. Persistence-Plus:** A persistent source of academic motivation, a continuity of familiarity with the youth and family, and a consistency in the message that “*education is important for your future*”.
- 6. A focus on alterable indicators of disengagement:** Systematic check of warning signs of withdrawal (attendance, academic performance, behavior) that are readily available to school personnel and that can be altered through intervention.
- 7. Following students and families:** Following highly mobile youth and families from school to school and program to program.

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Check & Connect Information

For more information about Check & Connect, including training options, contact the Institute on Community Integration, 866-434-0010 or e-mail checkandconnect@umn.edu

To order a Check & Connect Manual go to:
<http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/>

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