


**Check & Connect
On a Shoestring**

+ Your Presenters

Erin Swoboda,
Dean of Students

Stephen Pettinelli
Dean of Students

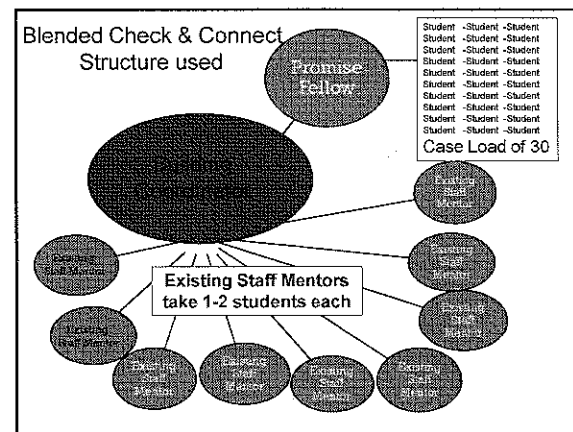
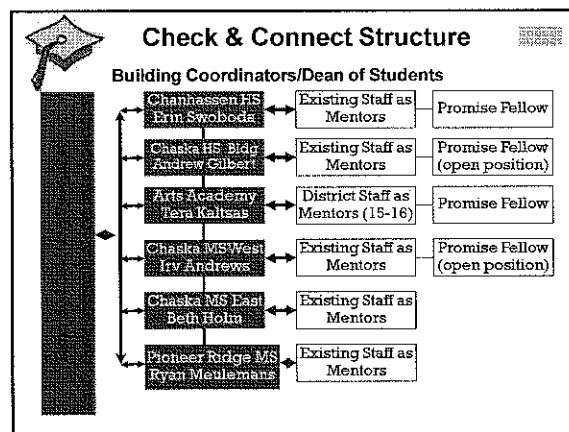
Kay Augustine, Project Director
School Climate Transformation IDOE
Former ECCS District Coordinator
Former UMN Coordinator of C&C



Eastern Carver County Schools Readiness

- Impetus: Weren't meeting AYP
- Started Check & Connect pilot at Chanhassen HS 2011-12
- Fall of 2012, District commitment to implement in six secondary schools-hired Kay as District Coordinator, identified Bldg Coord
- District Support for focus on barriers to graduation
- Principal Support
- Multi-tiered System Support process in place--Intervention teams in each building

+ Check & Connect Video filmed at Eastern Carver County Schools



+ Eastern Carver County


Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Students served	205	246	210	175
Free/Reduced			64%	
Staff Mentors	60	71	93	83+
Promise Fellows	5	6	4	2

2013-14 Mentors spent an average of 89.85 minutes/month direct 1:1 support of their mentees

+ ECCS Funding for Check & Connect

Year	Divided Over Funds	Check Connect Funds	Number of Mentors	Funding Streams for Promise Fellows
2012-13	.33 CE	.2	5	Community Education/Extended Learning funded 4 Integrated Arts Academy 1
2013-14	.25 CE	.1	6	Community Education funded 5 Integrated Arts Academy 1 (alternative budget)
2014-15	.20 CE	.5 Bldg	5	Community Education funded 3 Integrated Arts Academy 1 (alternative budget) High Schools funded 1/4 each (split 1/4 with CE) 1 Promise Fellow served 2 middle schools
2015-16	.20 CE	Bldg (filled 2)	4	No CE funding for AmeriCorps Integrated Arts Academy 1 High Schools funded 1 each 1 Middle School funded 1 2 Middle Schools existing staff only But one HS & one MS haven't found PF's

+ AmeriCorps Promise Fellows



- Over 200 AmeriCorps Promise Fellow positions in MN
- Serve minimum of 30 students in 6th-10th grades
- Work within a Multi-tiered System of Supports
- Serve 1720 hours for host site
- Monthly living stipend, insurance & loan deferment
- End of service education award of \$5730
- Local site pays \$7200 per Promise Fellow
- Local site provides supervisor, office space, training

+ Using AmeriCorps Members as Mentors

Benefits of AmeriCorps


- Passionate about youth
- Full-time dedication to programming
- cost effective
- participate in both district and Alliance training
- Alliance handles many human resource details (payroll, paperwork, background checks)
- Have time to come up with initiatives/ideas for student success
- Adult, positive role model different from parents/teachers
- Connected to Alliance network, who work in all different areas (community connections)
- Spend time helping whole classrooms
- higher availability for mentoring after school

+ Using AmeriCorps Members as Mentors

Challenges using AmeriCorps


- Not licensed school staff (Teacher, Counselor)
- Accessibility
- Takes time to learn the school, staff, students, etc.
- May not have direct experience in school systems
- Smaller number of useable resources in school
- Lack of influence
- Turn over each year

+ Leadership in the Buildings




And Modeling-we all have mentees

- Recruiting & Matching
- Training & Communication
- Securing & Monitoring data
- Problem-solving
- Cheerleading




+ Existing Staff as Mentors

- HUGE increase in staff wanting to mentor
- Staff are seeing the benefits and want to help
- Allows staff a way to connect with students in a truly meaningful, selfless manner that is outside of their content area
- Brings staff back to the reason they wanted to be in education in the first place.



+ Matching Mentors with Students



+ Affirmation & Celebration

Reception for District 112 Check & Connect Mentors
January-National Mentoring Month
Each received a C&C lapel pin




Prepared and served by ProStart Culinary Competition Team of the Integrated Arts Academy

+ Outcomes

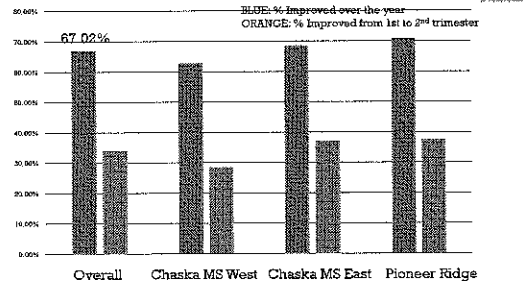
ECCS 2014-15
Total of 93 students in Check & Connect across 3 MS buildings

MS Increased GPA	60% of students served by Check & Connect
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Mentor & Promise Fellow
Maggie's story

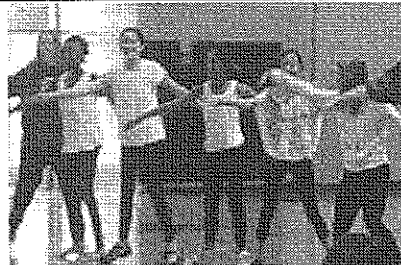


+ Middle School % of students who increased in Attendance 14-15

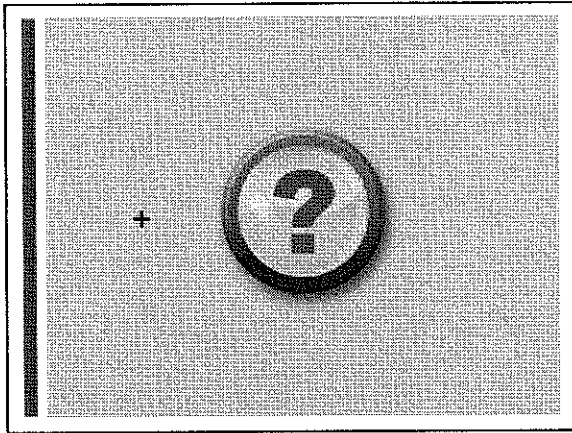


Category	Improved over the year (Blue)	Improved from 1st to 2nd trimester (Orange)
Overall	67.02%	~35%
Chaska MS West	~65%	~30%
Chaska MS East	~70%	~40%
Pioneer Ridge	~70%	~40%

+ Outcomes beyond the "data"



Providing opportunities for youth to be empowered and experience being seen in a positive light with their peers.



⁺ Thank you!

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Advice to Potential Teacher Mentors from Experienced Teacher Mentors

Focus area	Advice from Teacher Mentors in this study
1. Time	“First thing is how much time do you have. It’s a big time commitment if you’re going to do it right.”
2. Limit the number of mentees you take	“I would say maybe just do one to start just to really give it the time...just one to start and then if it’s going well, add more.”
3. Be an experienced teacher first	“As a new teacher you are going to be overwhelmed. “ “Be in the classroom for a few years and kind of understand the background of the kids and have a good handle on the curriculum, because this is time-consuming.”
4. Be realistic	“Are you prepared to accept that you might not feel like you’re making a difference? You won’t automatically get the feeling that you’re saving the world.”
5. You have to want to do it	“Definitely do it if being a mentor to kids is something you care about.”
6. Don’t be afraid	“Don’t be afraid to put in the time. Don’t be afraid to give a piece of yourself to the kids and just be there for them, not just academics, but as a support system.”
7. Believe in them	“Hold high Expectations. Don’t back down on them just because they are your mentee student. Make sure that you realize that these students can be successful.”
8. Empower them	“Help kids build the skills that they need to succeed later in life. Don’t just be a crutch to them. Help them figure out the answers, but teach them ways that will carry on longer than you are their mentor.”
9. Be positive and be there	“No matter what, even though it’s frustrating or they’re not responding...Be available and be patient.”
10. Celebrate the small successes	“Even if one day you see a change, consider the little triumphs, those little things that just make the world go round. It can be chaotic for 10 minutes and then, all of a sudden, you look and they are working and you’re like, sweet!”

Engagement. Voice. Success.



AMERICORPS PROMISE FELLOWS

Bridging the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps

Evidence-based Strategies

AmeriCorps Promise Fellows use a strategic two-pronged approach based on research from Johns Hopkins and the Institute of Educational Sciences.

Multi-tiered Interventions

Fellows engage students in school and learning by using an Early Warning System to identify youth who need support and then provide individual interventions to build academic and social skills. By using data related to Attendance, Behavior, and Core Academics, Promise Fellows and their partners identify struggling youth before they drop out, intervening as early as possible. This multi-tiered, data-driven, evidence-based approach provides the right support to the right youth at the right time with the right intensity and duration.

Community Engagement

Connecting struggling youth with community resources is critical to the success of this approach. Promise Fellows utilize a multi-sector collaborative approach to connect youth to external community resources, bridging the school day with afterschool/expanded learning opportunities, including opportunities to serve and lead and connections to caring adult mentors. These strategies also help communities identify and support the local resources that can address the achievement gap and ensure school success for all youth.

continued ...



"I serve as an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow because youth inspire me. While there are a lot of great reasons to serve, being a part of kids' daily lives is one of my greatest sources of motivation. They see the world in a different way; while it's our goal to shape them as people, they often reshape my perspective on the world."

– William Bauer, Promise Fellow
Duluth Public Schools

What do Promise Fellows give?

1,725 hours – a commitment of a year's full-time service – and new opportunities for success to young people.

What do Promise Fellows get?

Professional, real-world experience, a living allowance, health insurance, qualified student loan forbearance, professional development opportunities, and an education award of \$5,730 to support post-secondary education.

Early Intervention: The ABCs

By using data related to Attendance, Behavior, and Core Academics, Promise Fellows and their Youth Success Teams identify youth to serve and develop innovative ways to deliver the fundamental resources that young people need to be successful. Serving an average of 30 youth in grades 6–10, Fellows strive to ensure every youth is on track to graduate on time, changing their trajectory of failure into a trajectory of success.

Attendance: Promise Fellows provide attendance coaching, call home if students miss class, and organize field trips or other special events to make learning and being at school more engaging and relevant.

Behavior: Fellows address behavior issues through strategies such as lunchtime or afterschool mentoring programs, student-led peer mediation programs, connections to community and civic opportunities, and avenues for increased youth engagement in school and the broader community.

Core Academic Support: In order to assist students struggling with schoolwork, Fellows may provide academic support for individuals and small groups before, during, and after school, connect afterschool service-learning projects with classroom instruction, connect students with a mentor or tutor, or incorporate math/reading games into afterschool programming.

“My son has fairly severe ADHD and we were really struggling with him at the start of the school year. For the last few months, the Promise Fellow at Duluth East has been doing an amazing job with him! We cannot even begin to express what a blessing she has been to our family. She is so incredibly thorough and understanding of his unique needs. She goes above and beyond for my son on a daily basis. She was a lifeline to our family and especially to my son when we were beyond stressed and were unsure if he would be able to pass the 10th grade.”

– Father of a “Focus List” student
at Duluth East High School



Making a Difference for Youth

Over the past decade, AmeriCorps Promise Fellows have helped more than 170,000 Minnesota youth significantly improve their academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Fellows serve across the state, supporting youth directly in schools and in community-based organizations, bridging in-school and out-of-school time.

To find out more about how the Promise Fellow initiative is changing lives in urban, suburban, and rural communities in Minnesota, visit our website at www.mnyouth.net. Interested in serving a year with AmeriCorps, or hosting a Promise Fellow at your school or organization? Applications to host or serve are available online or by calling 651.528.8589.





Promise Fellow Program Impact

9/1/14-6/30/15



Member Retention
90%

Youth Served
5,854

Improved Academic Engagement

69%
of youth served increased engagement

- 2,789 decreased/maintained zero office visits
- 2,365 decreased/maintained zero detentions
- 2,262 decreased/maintained zero out of school suspensions
- 1,854 increased attendance rate
- 1,384 increased on-time rate
- 1,723 increased academic performance (grades, GPA, or test scores)

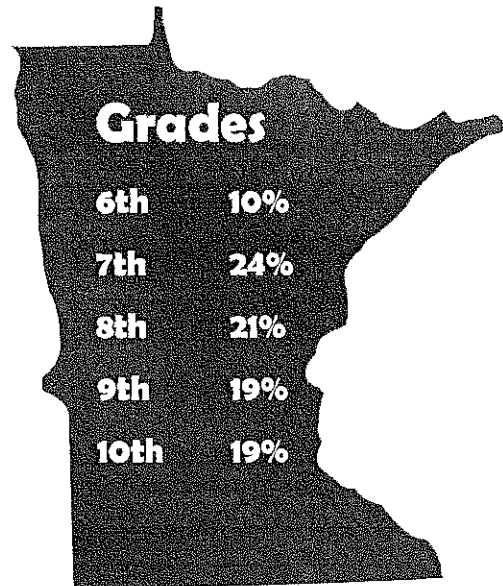
Interventions **488**
Volunteers engaged (plus 27 teams!)

137,408
Total Intervention Hours

12,966
Youth service learning, civic engagement and leadership hours served

Demographics of Youth Served

AA/Black	34%
Amer. Indian	6%
Asian	5%
Latino	15%
White	34%
Multiple	3%
Other	2%



*Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

Featured Great Promise Fellow Story

I was talking to my co-worker this morning about one of my students and she asked why a particular student was even on my focus list. And that was when I realized this student would make a great "great story". When I first met Megan*, she would get mad at the slightest thing, so mad in fact that she would start shaking. She would just stand in the hall shaking with frustration and not come back to class for the rest of the time. She would refuse to do work and just goof off or sleep in class, and when she decided to do work she would usually get mad and just refuse to do it. Megan's behavior and grades were what made me decide to put her on my caseload.

In the beginning, working with Megan was difficult. I had a hard time getting her to stay focused in class and do her work or even getting her to class was a constant challenge, but eventually she learned that she could count on me. She started to be in class more and do her work but then she started to count on me too much. She would only do work when I was in class with her or show up at our office when she wasn't supposed to be there. So I had to back off and hope that she would realize that she could do the work herself and I was there to support her all the way. Thankfully, it worked! Megan made the B Honor roll this last quarter, is involved in an afterschool program and the service project we are doing, and has not walked out of class in a long time. Megan has really turned herself around and actually enjoys being in school. I am so proud of Megan! - J. Brackett, Minneapolis Public Schools- Lucey Laney

* actual student's name changed

AmeriCorps Promise Fellows help ensure youth success by connecting young people to caring adults, service-learning, civic engagement, leadership opportunities, and high quality in and out of school supports.

Engagement. Voice. Success.

Implementation Options

Check & Connect (C&C) can be implemented in an educational or community setting in a variety of ways. While our evidence for C&C was obtained through research studies using **dedicated mentors**, sites around the United States are piloting several different implementation options, as outlined below:

	Dedicated Mentors	School Staff as Mentors	Community Volunteers as Mentors
DETAILS	<p>Individuals hired part-time or full-time can serve as C&C mentors (including AmeriCorps volunteers).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads of 20-25 students for 50% FTE and 40-50 for 100% FTE • May be hired by districts, agencies, community-based organizations, or county or state governments • May be assigned at the building, district, or region level • May or may not follow mobile students from school to school 	<p>Teachers, school social workers, school psychologists, counselors, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel can serve as C&C mentors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads of 1-5 students each • Staff may be released from other assigned duties (e.g., lunch duty, bus duty, one class period) and/or paid a small stipend (<i>see backside for tips</i>) 	<p>Volunteers from the community, undergraduate or graduate education programs, civic organizations, or businesses can serve as C&C mentors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads vary by mentor availability • Volunteers are typically assigned to students in one school
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sole focus is their C&C mentor role • More likely to make the recommended two-year commitment (except AmeriCorps volunteers) • Have more time for professional development • Have more time for family engagement • Low-cost if using AmeriCorps volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs less than using dedicated mentors • Staff may already have positive relationships with students • Staff know the school policies, environment, personnel, and available resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free or low-cost • Are probably willing and eager to be a mentor • May come from the same community as the students and may have backgrounds similar to the students
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be paid a salary; the nature of the funding used to pay their salary (e.g., grant funds) could limit the duration of their employment • May be new to the school • May encounter difficulty with obtaining access to school data unless the mentor is considered a district employee • May be the only C&C mentor at a particular school and thus may lack colleagues with whom to collaborate and problem-solve • If using AmeriCorps volunteers: limited availability, one-year commitment, and application process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on an additional duty may be difficult • May experience role confusion between their "real" job and their C&C mentor role; e.g., they may be responsible for grading or disciplining students (not part of the C&C mentor role) • May vary in their willingness, commitment, and follow-through as mentors • Scheduling C&C-related professional development may be difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and follow-through regarding their C&C mentor role may vary • Confidentiality issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ May not have access to school data or other information ◦ May be issues related to family privacy and the information that can or cannot be shared with them • May lack experience with youth, families, or the school system • Scheduling C&C-related professional development may be difficult

~ See backside for funding tips ~

Tips for Funding Dedicated Mentors or Using Existing School Staff as Mentors

The primary expense for implementing Check & Connect (C&C) is staffing for mentors, whether hiring dedicated mentors or using existing staff (e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, teacher, etc.) to serve in this role.

Writing a Grant to Hire Dedicated C&C Mentors

Finding a Grant

- Look for funding in your community through local educational or philanthropic foundations that award grants.
- Keep apprised of your state department of education's (SEA's) statewide dropout prevention initiatives (sometimes SEAs make funding available to districts to implement programs like C&C).
- Consider federal education funding sources (some C&C sites have received funding from the U.S. Department of Education).
- Read the grant requirements carefully. What is the geographic area and content the funder is focused on? Look for content keywords like dropout prevention, school completion, student engagement, mentoring, character education, and/or youth development and determine if the grant requirements apply to your need.

Funding Websites

- Foundation Center Grants Database - searchable (foundationcenter.org)
- View current U.S. Department of Education Grant Competitions (ed.gov/grantapps) or specific initiatives:
 - High School Graduation Initiative (HSGI) grants (ed.gov/programs/dropout/awards.html)
 - Investing in Innovation (I3) grants (ed.gov/programs/innovation)
 - Safe and Supportive Schools grants (safesupportiveschools.ed.gov)
- Learn about AmeriCorps and how organizations can apply for an AmeriCorps grant at nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/

Using Existing School Staff as C&C Mentors

Schools or districts can:

- Redefine the positions of current staff, provide training, and adjust typical caseloads. Many different people can serve as Check & Connect mentors, including teachers, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and educational assistants.
- Provide a small stipend to school personnel who take on a larger caseload (e.g., 5 or more students).
- Relieve school personnel serving as mentors of other service duties (e.g., bus or lunch duty). Many secondary schools employ 100-150 staff. Clearly, many students could be served if each staff member was a Check & Connect mentor for one student!

(Excerpted from *Check & Connect: A Comprehensive Student Engagement Intervention: Implementing with Fidelity*, 2012, p. 33.)