



# Check & Connect

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A comprehensive student engagement intervention

## Implementing with Fidelity

Institute on Community Integration

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

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## Section 1

# About Check & Connect

### What is Check & Connect?

Check & Connect is a comprehensive intervention designed to enhance student engagement at school and with learning for marginalized, disengaged students in grades K-12, through relationship building, problem solving and capacity building, and persistence. A goal of Check & Connect is to foster school completion with academic and social competence. It is comprised of four components—

1. A mentor who works with students and families for a minimum of two years;
2. Regular checks, utilizing data schools already collect on students' school adjustment, behavior, and educational progress;
3. Timely interventions, driven by data, to reestablish and maintain the student's connection to school and learning and to enhance the student's social and academic competencies; and
4. Engagement with families.

In this section, the following are covered—

- Descriptive characteristics of Check & Connect
- Theoretical underpinnings of Check & Connect
- The theory of student engagement in Check & Connect
- The logic model for Check & Connect

- » Recognizing the importance of multiple contextual influences—home, school, and community—on student disengagement and school dropout, Check & Connect mentors work to create positive relationships in and among all three environments in order to provide consistent standards for educational performance and supports for students to attain them (Christenson et al., 1997).

#### Check & Connect

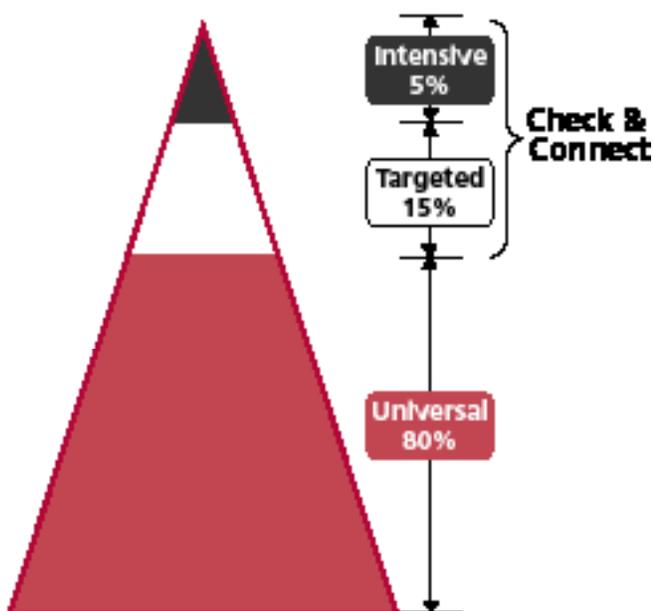
- *Check* refers to systematic monitoring of alterable student performance variables
- *Connect* refers to personalized, timely intervention focused on problem solving, skill building, and competence enhancement

## Descriptive characteristics

### *Characteristic one: A targeted or intensive intervention*

There are many ways to describe Check & Connect. For example, as portrayed in the commonly used pyramid of intervention (see Figure 1), it is a targeted or intensive intervention intended to complement universal intervention initiatives of schools and districts. This means that it is a supplemental intervention; not all students need a Check & Connect mentor. It also means that Check & Connect mentors are vigilant about school policies and practices that reduce the engagement of students at school and with learning, and they communicate their observations and information with the appropriate school personnel. Mentors do not assume that they can alter universal school practices; however, they are willing to engage in problem solving with appropriate school personnel and teams to modify the environment to enhance students' sense of belonging, connection at school, and engagement with learning. Hence, Check & Connect focuses on keeping students in school and engaged with learning, wherein effective instruction for students is a universal practice.

**Figure 1. Check & Connect is a targeted (tier 2) or intensive (tier 3) intervention that complements universal (tier 1) interventions.**



### *Characteristic two: A structured mentoring intervention*

Across the years of implementation, Check & Connect has come to be described as a structured mentoring intervention. This description underscores both the essential role of the mentor and the need for a structured set of procedures and elements focused on students' educational performance and success with learning—a focus that distinguishes Check & Connect from many other mentoring programs.

### *Characteristic three: An empirically supported intervention*

Check & Connect is empirically supported; rigorous, scientifically-based research has shown that it significantly increases the likelihood that students will stay in school. It is the only dropout prevention intervention reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse to show "positive effects" for staying in school—that is, strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence (WWC, 2006). In the two random assignment studies upon which that conclusion was based, the students receiving Check & Connect were "significantly less likely than similar control group students to have dropped out of school at the end of the first follow-up year (corresponding to the end of the freshman year)—9% compared with 30%" and were "significantly less likely to have dropped out of school at the end of the fourth follow-up year (corresponding to the senior year for students making normal progress—39% compared with 58%)" (Sinclair et al., 1998; Sinclair et al., 2005, as quoted in WWC, 2006, p. 3). Treatment-control differences in critical student engagement variables such as participation (attendance), behavior (social skills ratings), academics (credits earned), and ultimately a five-year graduation rate for students with disabilities were also demonstrated in these two studies.

Research findings of the impact of Check & Connect, which has been implemented with general and special education students in grades K-12 in urban and suburban school settings in six different implementation studies since 1995, have yielded similar positive outcomes: reduced rates of truancy, out-of-school suspension, and course failures; and increased rates of attendance for elementary and secondary students and credits earned toward graduation for secondary students. Selected findings from these longitudinal studies appear in Table 1.

**Table 1. Selected findings from Check & Connect research studies**

- **As a sustained intervention, Check & Connect improves enrollment, attendance, and odds of graduation for students who are disengaged and at risk of dropout.** Ninety-four students in special education who had received Check & Connect for two years in middle school were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups upon entrance to ninth grade. By the end of ninth grade, treatment group students were significantly more likely than control group students to be enrolled in school (91% vs. 70%), to have persisted in school with no periods of 15-day absences (85% vs. 64%), and to be on track to graduate within five years (68% vs. 29%) (Sinclair et al., 1998).
- **Check & Connect improves persistence, enrollment, access to relevant educational services, student involvement in IEP transition planning, and attendance for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities.** One hundred seventy-five ninth grade students with emotional/behavioral disabilities were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups (11 did not participate due to mobility or other factors) and received the intervention for four to five years. Check & Connect treatment students were less likely to drop out of school than students in the control group at the end of four years (39% vs. 58%) and at the end of five years for a subsample of students (42% vs. 94%). The effect size for treatment and control student differences for a five-year graduation rate was significant and moderate ( $ES = .53$ ). Students in the treatment group were more likely than those in the control group to be enrolled in an educational program (e.g., alternative, GED), to access relevant educational services (e.g., alternative programs), to be involved in their IEP transition planning, and to demonstrate persistent attendance (Sinclair et al., 2005).
- **The mentor-student relationship as provided in Check & Connect improves engagement for elementary students.** The effect of the mentor-student relationship on student engagement was examined for 80 elementary students who received Check & Connect for at least 20 months. The mentor perspective on the relationship predicted teacher-rated academic engagement, while the student perspective on the relationship approached significance as a predictor of teacher-rated academic engagement. Neither the mentor nor the student perspective on the relationship was a significant predictor of teacher-rated social engagement (Anderson, Christenson, & Lehr, 2004).
- **Check & Connect improves engagement—specifically, attendance—for elementary students.** In a pre-post intervention design and replication study, 147 elementary students who were absent or tardy to school 12% or more of the time received Check & Connect for two years. At the end of two years, about 40% of Check & Connect students were engaged and regularly attending school (the equivalent of zero to one days absent per month), an improvement of 135% over baseline behavior. Incidence of tardiness to school declined. About 86% of Check & Connect students were engaged and arriving to school on time (the equivalent of zero to one days tardy per month), an improvement of 104% over baseline behavior (Lehr et al., 2004).
- **Check & Connect works to actively engage students and families at school and with learning.** Eighty-seven percent of parents of Check & Connect students in kindergarten through eighth grade were rated by teachers as more supportive of their children's education (defined as parental follow-through, communication with school, and homework completion). Teachers' perceptions of students' behavior were positive—90% indicated students in kindergarten through eighth grade were showing improvement in homework completion, interest in school, and attendance. Teachers' observations of students who received two years of sustained intervention were very positive; teachers rated these students significantly more likely to be eager to learn, follow school rules, think ahead about consequences, get along with others, show respect for others' rights and feelings, and persist when challenged by difficult tasks, all critical competencies for school success (Lehr et al., 2004).
- **Check & Connect improves outcomes for students with a history of truancy.** In a pre-post intervention design, 363 chronically truant secondary students showed improved attendance and academic performance as well as a reduction in the number of skipped classes and out-of-school suspensions. About 65% of Check & Connect students who were referred before their absences exceeded 25% of the school year were successfully engaged (defined as less than zero to one days absent per month), with no incidences of course failures (Sinclair & Kaibel, 2002).
- **Check & Connect improves cohort-type AYP graduation rates.** A total of 1,061 students (unduplicated count) received intensive caseload support from the Minneapolis High School Completion Check & Connect Initiative for eight years. The overall trend in graduation rates demonstrated significant improvement. Specifically, the 2010 cohort-type AYP graduation rate improved for the seven comprehensive high schools in the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). For example, during the final two-year funding period, 57% of the high-risk Check & Connect 12th graders graduated in four to five years ( $n = 62$  of 108). Of the 68 continuing 12th graders, 50 had earned enough credits to graduate within the following school year; 30 of these students had passed all three required GRAD tests. Two-thirds of the Minneapolis Check & Connect participants for the final two-year reporting period either graduated or were on track to graduate within five years. The researchers attributed improved graduation rates over the eight years to the integration of the MPS universal high school transformation initiatives (e.g., attendance monitoring) with the targeted Check & Connect initiative (Sinclair & Kaibel, 2011).

**Table 2. Core elements of Check & Connect**

Elements	Description
<b>Relationships</b>	are based in mutual trust and open communication and nurtured through a long-term commitment focused on promoting a student's educational success.
Focus on alterable variables	refers to systematic monitoring (i.e., "check") of indicators of disengagement (attendance, grades, behavior) that are readily available to school personnel and can be altered through intervention.
Personalized, data-based intervention	refers to "connect" supportive interventions that are personalized, not prescriptive; mentors use data as the basis for intervention design. It is expected that different students on a mentor's caseload will receive different interventions.
Long-term commitment	means that interventions are implemented for a minimum of two years. Mentors make a two-year commitment, which may involve following highly mobile youth and families from school to school and program to program within the district.
Participation in and affiliation with school	means that mentors facilitate student access to and active participation in school-related activities and events.
<b>Problem solving and capacity building</b>	means that a cognitive-behavioral approach is used to promote the acquisition of skills to resolve conflict constructively, encourage the search for solutions rather than a source of blame, foster productive coping skills, and diminish dependency on the mentor.
<b>Persistence-Plus</b>	refers to persistence, continuity, and consistency. The mentor is a persistent source of academic motivation, is familiar with the youth and family (continuity), and provides the message that "education is important for your future" (consistency).

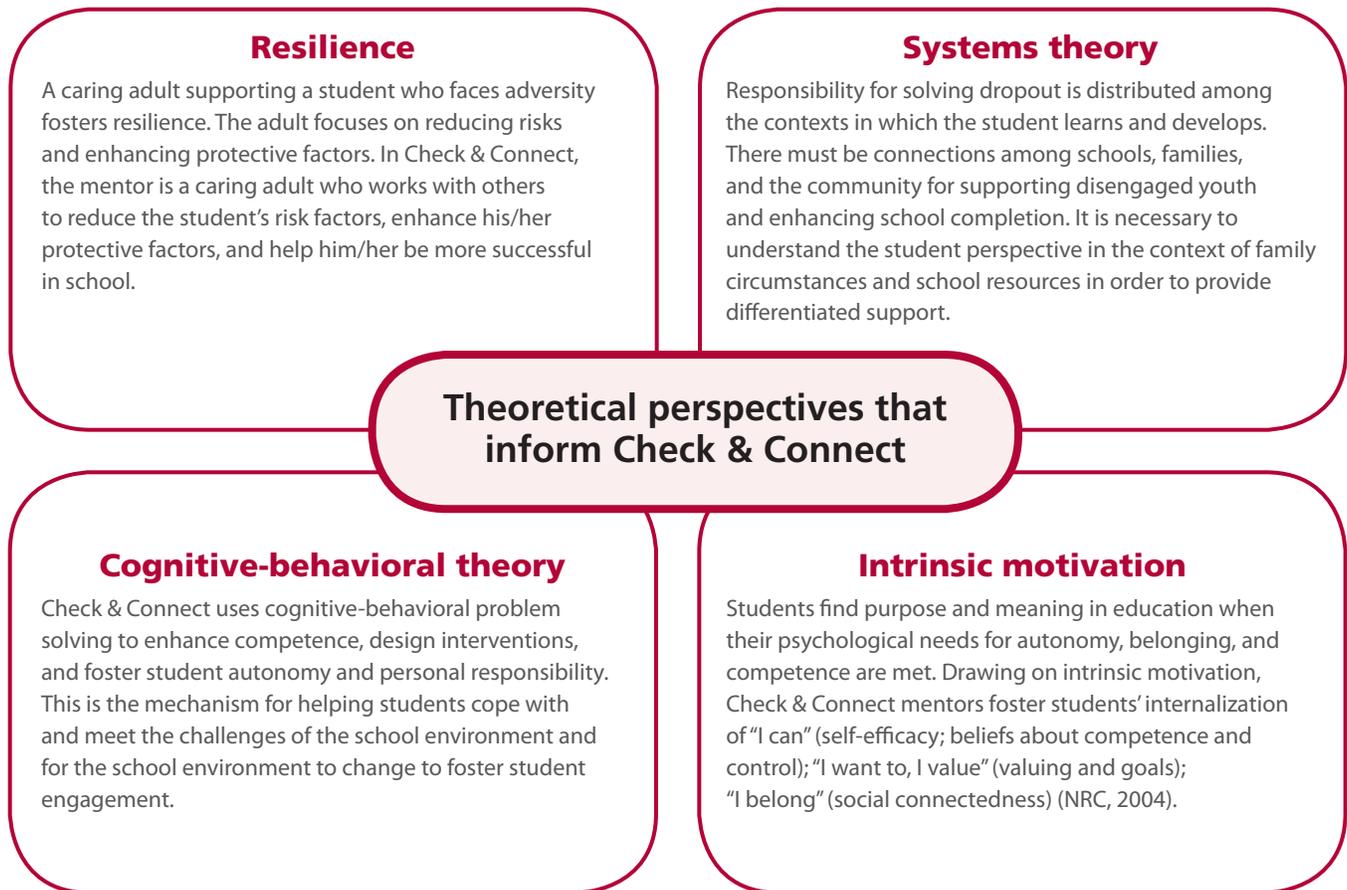
**Characteristic four: Clearly delineated elements**

As described in Table 2, Check & Connect has clearly delineated elements. It consists of three core elements: relationships, problem solving and capacity building, and persistence. The focus on alterable variables, personalized intervention, commitment, and participation are essential, readily-operationalized elements for building relationships with students. The theoretical and empirical bases for the three core elements of Check & Connect are summarized in Appendix 1.

An important premise of Check & Connect is the shift in focus from preventing negative outcomes (e.g., dropout) to promoting student competence, engagement, and school success (Christenson & Anderson, 2002; Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, & Godber, 2001). This positive focus has served as the overarching conceptual framework for the research on Check & Connect since its inception in 1990.

» In sum, in Check & Connect, a mentor builds relationships with students and families, "checks" on student progress by systematically monitoring alterable variables, and "connects" with the student through personalized, timely intervention, problem solving, and skill building. Mentors make a long-term commitment to the student and family, persisting with the student and promoting student effort and persistence in turn.

Figure 2. Four theories used in the design of Check &amp; Connect



## Theoretical underpinnings

During the initial development of Check & Connect in the early 1990s, researchers drew upon the four bodies of literature illustrated in Figure 2 to describe the theoretical underpinnings of Check & Connect: resilience (e.g., Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), systems theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979), cognitive-behavioral theory (e.g., August, Anderson, & Bloomquist, 1992), and intrinsic motivation (e.g., NRC, 2004).

Additional theoretical perspectives that informed Check & Connect include —

- Coleman's (1987) notion of social capital (i.e., adult-student interaction focused on students' academic and personal matters as well as the support networks available to the family) is crucial to the mentor's role. Mentors strive to support students' educational progress in the context of the family and the school and to increase

social capital where it does not naturally occur by fostering relationships and brokering existing resources.

- McPartland's (1994) four components to increase the holding power of schools for marginalized youth—ensuring opportunities for success in schoolwork, identifying the relevance of education to future endeavors, providing a caring and supportive environment, and helping students with personal problems—guided many of the suggested "connect" interventions.

## The theory of student engagement

Check & Connect promotes student engagement at school and with learning. Our theory of student engagement draws upon the theoretical (Finn, 1989; McPartland, 1994) and empirical (Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, & Chapman, 1999; Rumberger, 1987, 1995) literature related to high school dropout and completion. The ongoing development of the theory of student engagement of Check & Connect has been researched since 2003 (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Betts, Appleton, Reschly, Christenson, & Huebner, 2010; Christenson et al., 2008).

### *How is student engagement conceptualized in Check & Connect?*

» We believe that engaging students is more than promoting academic engaged time or attendance; paying attention to students' emotional and intellectual feelings about school is essential for improving their schooling experiences and school completion outcomes.

Our theory of student engagement is described as follows —

Engagement is a multidimensional construct that requires an understanding of affective or psychological connections within the academic environment (e.g., positive adult-student and peer relationships) and active student behavior (e.g., attendance, participation, effort, prosocial behavior) (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Artelt, Baumert, Julius-McElvany, & Peschar, 2003; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Reschly & Christenson, 2012).

In Check & Connect, student engagement is defined as the student's 1) active participation in academic and co-curricular or school-related activities and 2) commitment to educational goals and learning. Engaged students find learning meaningful and are invested in their learning and future. Engagement is a multidimensional construct that consists of academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective subtypes. Engagement drives learning, requires energy and effort, is affected by multiple contextual influences, and can be achieved for all learners.

The multidimensionality of engagement is conceptualized as four subtypes: academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective engagement (see Table 3).

- Academic and behavioral engagement involve observable, less-inferential indicators and data that are readily available in schools.
  - » **Academic engagement** is manifested in such indicators as the amount of time spent doing schoolwork or related projects in school or at home, time on task, number of credits accrued, amount of homework completed with accuracy, and course grades, especially the number of failing grades.
  - » **Behavioral engagement** is reflected in such indicators as attendance, effort and active participation in class, involvement in extracurricular activities, and behavioral incidents such as office referrals, detentions, and suspensions.

- Cognitive and affective engagement represent internal indicators that are less observable and require an understanding of the student perspective.
  - » **Cognitive engagement** is expressed in self-regulated learning strategies, goal setting, interest in learning, motivation-to-learn, and student perception of the relevance of school to personal aspirations, the value of learning, and control of and competence in schoolwork.
  - » **Affective engagement** refers to a sense of belonging and connection to school and availability of quality support from parents, teachers, and peers.

The subtypes of engagement are interrelated. For example, a student's feelings of belonging (affective engagement) may promote greater effort and participation on his or her part (behavioral engagement); teaching practices that promote strategy use or self-regulation (cognitive engagement) may also facilitate greater time on task or homework completion with high success rates (academic engagement).

Student engagement includes both socializing the learner and fostering an academic identity. It is represented by the student's perceptions of competence and control (I can), personal values and goals (I want to), and social connectedness to peers and teachers (I belong). These aspects of engagement are embedded in the cognitive and affective subtypes of engagement.

Because engagement is multidimensional, adopting an engagement orientation integrates and harnesses students' thoughts (cognitions), feelings, and behaviors toward achieving positive learning outcomes and/or improving one's academic competencies. It is not sufficient to focus only on completion of learning activities (e.g., behavior) to foster a student's identity as a learner. Student feelings, interests, and attitudes, as well as self-

perceived competence on the task or the use of a strategy for doing one's best, are part of this identity.

Engagement is not conceptualized as a fixed, immutable attribute of the student, but rather an alterable state of being that is highly influenced by three key contextual factors—home, school, and peers—each of which has the capacity to provide consistent support for learning (Wentzel, 1998). Context matters (see Table 3).

The distinction between indicators of engagement and facilitators of engagement serves as the conceptual base for creating an assessment-to-intervention link.

- **Indicators of engagement** (e.g., attendance patterns, credits accrued, behavior, perceived competence) convey the extent of a student's connection with school and learning. Indicators are used to guide identification of target students (Christenson, 2000; Christenson et al., 2001).
- **Facilitators of engagement** are contextual factors that influence the student's connection with school, such as school discipline practices, parental supervision of homework completion, and peer attitudes toward academic accomplishment. Facilitators of engagement are protective factors and have implications for intervention design (e.g., multiple intervention targets including student-, home-, or school-focused).

Establishing a person-environment fit is integral to enhancing engagement for students who are disengaged or at risk of dropout. Here, "person" refers to the responsibility of the student to alter his/her attitude, feelings, or behavior, whereas "environment" refers to critical contextual facilitators (see Table 3) to enhance student engagement. In Check & Connect, both the student and the environment are targets for change.

Table 3. Subtypes of engagement

Subtype	Observable indicators	Facilitated by
<b>Academic</b>	Time on task, academic engaged time, accrual of credits	Utilizing after-school programs (tutoring, homework help), increasing home support for learning, implementing self-monitoring interventions
<b>Behavioral</b>	Attendance, fewer suspensions, classroom participation	Devising a personalized approach to attendance and participation issues, implementing programs to address skills such as problem solving and anger management, developing behavior contracts to address individual needs
Subtype	Internal indicators	Facilitated by
<b>Cognitive</b>	Perceived relevance of schoolwork, self-regulation toward goals, meta-cognition	Using problem solving skills, setting realistic goals, creating an active interest in learning
<b>Affective</b>	Identification with school, belonging, perceived connection at school with teachers and peers	Increasing support from parents and teachers, building personal relationships with marginalized students, assisting students with personal problems

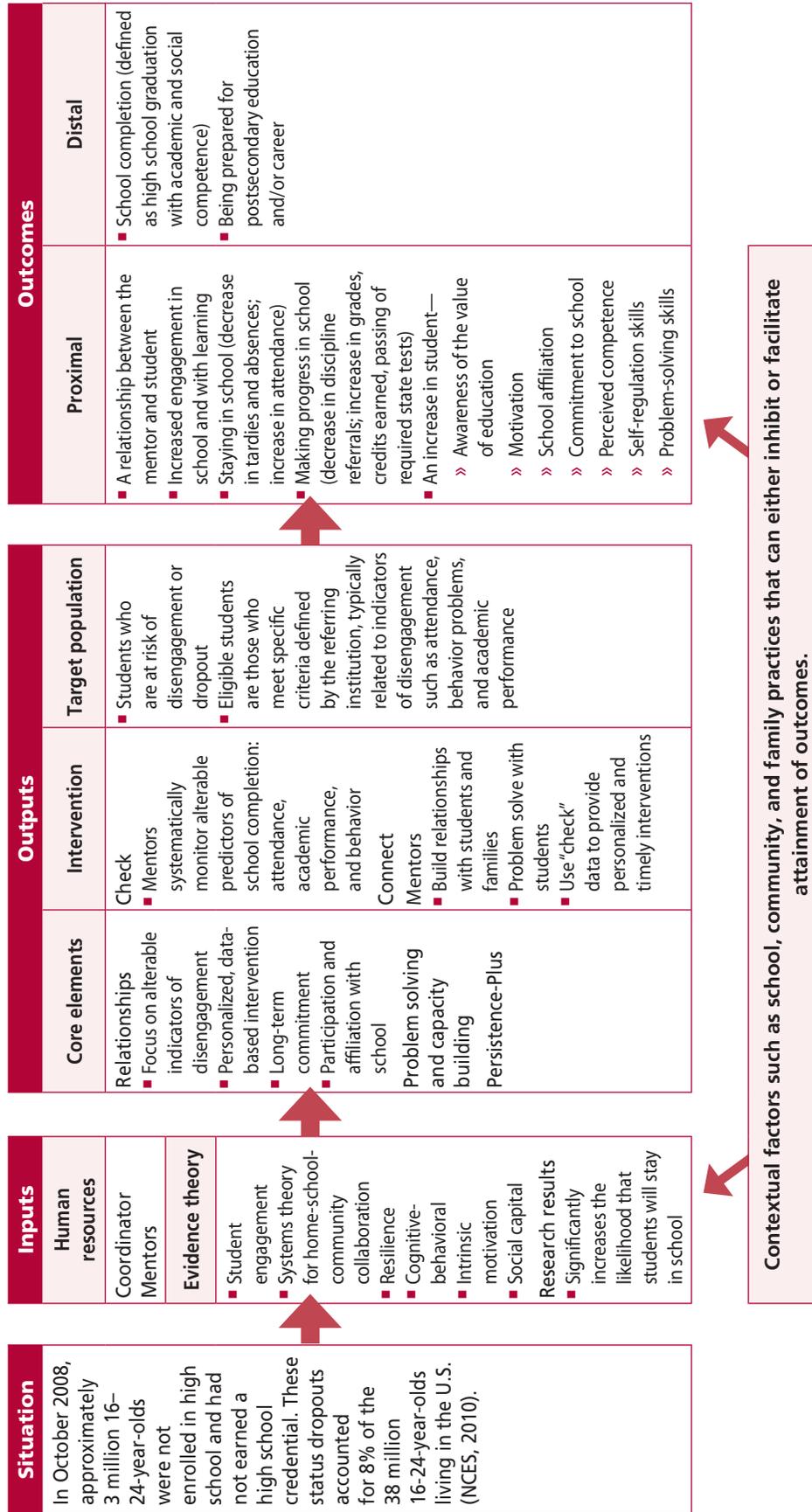
## The logic model

Check & Connect is a comprehensive intervention grounded in several theories. One way to pull it together holistically is with a logic model. Logic models depict linkages between a situation, how it will be addressed (inputs and outputs), and expected outcomes.

The logic model for Check & Connect is presented in Figure 3. Moving from left to right, the model represents the intervention by describing the situation: non-completion of high school; the human resources and evidence-base guiding implementation of Check & Connect; the core elements, intervention activities, and target population of Check & Connect; and the proximal and distal outcomes expected from implementing Check & Connect as intended. Contextual factors such as school, community, and family practices can influence attainment of the anticipated outcomes.

Figure 3. Check & Connect logic model

## Check & Connect logic model





will follow the student to a different school in the district. If the student moves outside the district, the coordinator communicates with school personnel at the new school, with parent permission.

- **Work with new mentor hires.** In the event the mentor must leave their position prematurely, the coordinator works with the newly hired mentor to begin the process of building the student's relationship with their new mentor.
- **Monitor program implementation with a focus on maintaining fidelity of implementation.** Ensuring the effectiveness of Check & Connect by keeping the intervention aligned with the key components and elements is a critical aspect of the coordinator's role. In other words, it is the coordinator's role to be sure that Check & Connect is implemented as intended—that is, that it is implemented with fidelity.

### *Implementation stage*

## **Step 11: Evaluate program implementation**

### *What is the impact of Check & Connect at your site?*

The 11th step for implementing Check & Connect is to evaluate the impact of the program at your site.

In this step, the following are covered—

- Determining the purpose of your evaluation
- Describing your school and students
- Assessing fidelity of implementation
- Determining program impact

» Probably the most important advice for conducting your evaluation of Check & Connect is to plan ahead—that is, thinking ahead to evaluation should be part of getting your program up and running. Evaluating the impact of Check & Connect will inform delivery of the program.

### *Determining the purpose of your evaluation*

Evaluation is broadly defined as determining the merit or worth of a program or policy. Most often, this judgment is made by comparing the outcomes of the program with pre-established criteria of success (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011).

Although determining value is the primary purpose of evaluation, more specific purposes related to your context will guide your evaluation of Check & Connect at your site. These commonly include program improvement, integrity of program implementation, and program impact. Additionally, the purposes of the evaluation are often influenced by the program funder, evaluation sponsor, and local concerns. Determining an evaluation's purpose(s) guides the planning, design, data gathering, analysis of results, and findings of your evaluation.

Probably the most important advice for conducting your evaluation is to plan ahead—that

is, thinking ahead to evaluation should be part of getting your program up and running. Once you've determined the purpose of your evaluation, evaluation typically proceeds through the following steps—

- describing your school and students;
- developing evaluation questions;
- designing strategies for answering these questions;
- collecting data according to the evaluation design;
- analyzing data;
- identifying important findings;
- establishing merit and worth; and
- making recommendations for program improvement, if needed.

Because Check & Connect is designed to use data that schools routinely collect, we recommend that these same data be used in establishing the criteria for a successful implementation of the program. The alterable risk variables on the “check” section of the monitoring form are used both for identification of target students and evaluation of the success of the intervention—that is, they represent dependent variables—those which are targeted for change (see Step 6, pp. 40–46).

### ***Describing your school and students***

A first step in any evaluation planning and reporting is describing the context and the participants. This helps evaluators and evaluation stakeholders better understand your students and their needs within the broader context of the school. Consider such questions as—

- Where is the school located?
- How large is it?
- What is the demographic composition of the student body?
- How are students doing overall?

Answering the question of how students are doing overall will differ by whether your site is an elementary, middle, or high school. For example, you might provide AYP test score information for elementary, middle, and high schools; results on state graduation exams for high schools; and graduation statistics for high schools.

Next, describe the students who participate in Check & Connect. Information about students can be found on both the Monitoring and Intake Forms. Consider including the following—

- Total number of students who participated in Check & Connect, using an unduplicated count.
- Demographics of student participants (number or percentage), including eligibility for free/reduced lunch (SES indicator), gender, ethnicity, English Language Learner (ELL) status, disability status.
- Programmatic characteristics of student participants (number or percentage), including grade level, school name, Check & Connect mentor, and special services received (e.g., special education, ELL).
- Student levels of engagement with school prior to referral to Check & Connect, which are the variables systematically monitored on the monitoring form.
  - » For elementary students, these may include: relevant academic indicators (reading or math objectives passed, class participation, missing assignments, course failures); relevant behavioral indicators (enrollment status, attendance, tardiness, office referrals, suspensions); and so forth.
  - » For secondary students, these may include: relevant academic indicators (course failures, credits earned or credit deficiencies, on track to graduate, pass rates on state standardized tests); relevant behavioral indicators (enrollment status, attendance, suspension, expulsion); expectation to graduate; and so forth.
- Schools that participated in Check & Connect: number of schools, grade levels served, total school enrollments, particular identifying programs (e.g., career academies, alternative schools, magnet schools), school-wide demographic characteristics (free/reduced lunch eligibility, ethnicity, gender, ELL, special education).

## Assessing fidelity of implementation

Fidelity of implementation refers to the degree to which an implementation adheres to the intentions of the program. If an intervention program is not implemented as intended, results are often disappointing. It is the coordinator's ongoing responsibility to make sure that the intervention is being implemented as intended.

Assessing implementation fidelity is part of formative evaluation, which is evaluation directed at program improvement. Useful information for determining implementation fidelity includes—

- Regular reporting of “check” information: Are mentors following up on academic and behavioral data?
- The “connect” interventions reported on the monitoring form: Has the student been provided a timely and related intervention?
- The amount of time a student participates in Check & Connect: Are mentors checking and connecting weekly with persistence?
- Parent engagement: To what extent are mentors engaging with parents?

The checklist in Appendix 11 is provided to help you assess how well you are doing in implementing the key components of Check & Connect with fidelity.

## Determining program impact

The big question with any program is whether it's working and for whom. To answer this question, you will need to determine whether there has been change in the dependent variables or behaviors of interest to you and the extent of improvement. For example—

- What improvements in attendance and tardiness for Check & Connect participants did you expect to achieve by implementing the program, and what improvements were actually made?
- How much did you expect suspensions to be reduced by implementing Check & Connect and how much were they actually reduced?
- Did student engagement for all students and for Check & Connect students change as a result of implementing Check & Connect?

Current best practice in research argues for random assignment of students to treatment or control groups in order to most validly determine program impact. However, the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators does not specify random assignment as the gold standard. Instead, evaluators are advised to “maximize the benefits and reduce any unnecessary harms that might occur” (AEA, 2004). Since assigning some at-risk students to a control group means withholding a potentially helpful intervention from them, other methods of comparison are preferred in evaluations, such as using historical data from students collected for a previous year as a comparison or using data on similar students at a school not using Check & Connect for comparison.

Table 24, p. 84, provides examples of typical evaluation questions and the information needed to answer them. Primary data analysis for program impact involves descriptive statistics (counts, percentages, averages) for student groups and comparison of groups using appropriate statistics such as chi-square or means-testing.

Also important for communicating the effects of Check & Connect is social validity data. Such data answer questions about the relevance and helpfulness of the program for students, school staff, and families. An effective way of communicating these effects is the use of stories. Interviews, focus groups, and surveys are ways to collect these data.

**Table 24. Evaluation questions and dependent variables**

Question	To answer this question—
To what extent were Check & Connect students more likely to stay in school?	Consider enrollment/retention rates, dropout rates, mobility, attendance, tardiness, and skipping class.
To what extent were Check & Connect students more likely to make progress in school?	Consider credit accrual (on track to graduate, credit deficiencies), course grades, reading objectives passed, assignment completion, accuracy of assignments, behavior referrals, suspensions, and pass rates on state standards tests for AYP.
To what extent were Check & Connect students more likely to complete high school?	Calculate the high school graduation rate. You may want to consider the following categories: students who graduated from a traditional high school within four years, students who graduated from an alternative high school, students who completed a GED, and students who graduated within five years.
To what extent have Check & Connect students re-engaged with school and learning?	Collect data on teacher and student perceptions of student engagement using a locally developed survey or use one of the engagement instruments described in Fredericks et al., 2011. Track Check & Connect students' participation in school-wide activities.

Finally, although timely and systematic evaluation aids in program improvement, it is also vital for securing support from the community and from possible funders. Reports make Check & Connect visible to others and contribute to building a culture of support for at-risk students. Publicizing the story of this work can be powerful both within and outside the school.

## Appendix 11. Check & Connect core components and elements self-assessment

Components	Elements	Description	Rating			
			1 Not happening here.	2 Plans are in place to implement this, but it has not begun.	3 This is beginning to be implemented.	4 This is in place and we have evidence that it occurs.
Mentor	<b>Relationship-building</b>	Relationships with students and families are based in mutual trust and open communication and focused on promoting students' educational success.				
	<b>Long-term commitment</b>	Mentors make a two-year commitment to students and families which may involve following highly mobile youth and families from school to school and program to program within the district.				
	<b>Persistence-Plus</b>	The mentor is a persistent source of academic motivation, familiar with the youth and family (continuity), and provides the message that "education is important for your future" (consistency).				
Check	<b>Systematic monitoring</b>	Students' school adjustment, behavior, and educational progress are monitored weekly.				
	<b>Focus on alterable variables</b>	Data on indicators of disengagement (attendance, grades, behavior) that can be readily altered are collected and available to mentors.				
Connect	<b>Problem solving</b>	A cognitive-behavioral approach is used to promote the acquisition of skills to resolve conflict constructively and encourage the search for solutions rather than a source of blame.				
	<b>Capacity building</b>	Mentors foster productive coping, self-regulation, self-advocacy skills, and social and academic competencies, and diminish dependency on the mentor.				
	<b>Personalized, data-based intervention</b>	Timely interventions, driven by data, are implemented to re-establish and maintain the student's connection to school and learning.				
	<b>Promoting participating and affiliation with school</b>	Mentors facilitate student access to and active participation in school-related activities and events, and promote students' identity as learners.				
Engagement with families	<b>Connect, partner, and engage with parents</b>	The mentor engages with parents and strives to foster the parents' active participation with their child's education. Mentors work to establish a relationship and a routine communication system with families.				