



Check & Connect

A comprehensive student engagement intervention

Frequently Asked Questions

How was Check & Connect developed and when?

Research on Check & Connect began in 1990 with five years of funding support from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education. The principal investigators on this grant were Drs. Bruininks, Thurlow, and Christenson, but many professionals from Minneapolis Public Schools were instrumental in obtaining the initial funding. Most importantly, the development of Check & Connect (1990-1995) was a collaborative effort between researchers at the Institute on Community Integration (ICI), University of Minnesota, and school-based professionals in Minneapolis Public Schools. All subsequent research on Check & Connect has been based at ICI.

What is the evidence for Check & Connect?

Through rigorous research, Check & Connect has been found to lead to **increased** credit accrual, persistence rates, graduation rates, and perceived parental participation in school; and **reduced** absences, tardiness, dropout rates, and behavior referrals for students with and without disabilities (Lehr et al., 2004; Sinclair et al., 1998; Sinclair et al., 2005). Of the dropout prevention interventions reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, Check & Connect is the only program found to have strong evidence of positive effects for staying in school.

For more information, on our website at checkandconnect.umn.edu go to [Research > Selected Findings from Check & Connect Research Studies](#). There you'll also find the What Works Clearinghouse's intervention report on Check & Connect.

How does Check & Connect fit with existing initiatives (PBIS, RtI, etc.)?

Check & Connect is a targeted or intensive intervention designed to complement universal strategies in your school. A guiding principle of Check & Connect is to use existing services in schools and communities whenever possible to

enhance protective factors for the student/family and maximize scarce resources. Check & Connect, although designed as a stand-alone program, has also been used with Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RtI), Early Warning, Credit Recovery, and other support models.

For more information, go to [About Check & Connect > Using Check & Connect with Other Initiatives](#).

In what grades is Check & Connect typically implemented?

Check & Connect can be used with K-12 students — students in elementary, middle, and high school. Research has found that Check & Connect can have an impact on literacy at the elementary level, and many researchers and educators have argued that addressing truancy at an early age is critical to later school success.

Has Check & Connect been implemented with students from diverse backgrounds?

Yes. Check & Connect's components and core elements were developed with the idea that they are elements which transcend cultural, racial, language, economic, and ability variables. Check & Connect has been and is currently being implemented with students from diverse backgrounds including, but not limited to:

- African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic students;
- Recent immigrants;
- English Language Learners;
- students with disabilities;
- students from single-parent families; and
- students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

What training is available for sites implementing Check & Connect?

We offer a 2-day **Preparation and Implementation Training** and a 2-day **Mentor Training** for sites interested in implementing Check & Connect. Included with these trainings are the implementation



manual, printed resource materials, electronic forms, and follow-up technical assistance through the first year to assist sites in implementing Check & Connect with fidelity. For sites already implementing Check & Connect, we also offer a 1-day **Reflect, Refresh, Renew Workshop**.

We work with sites to customize and provide these trainings locally. We also host “open enrollment” trainings in Minneapolis, MN. For more information, visit our [Training & Consultation](#) page.

Is the manual alone sufficient for implementing Check & Connect?

Yes, the Check & Connect manual provides complete information for implementing the program; however, training is encouraged to assist sites in implementing with fidelity. The manual is \$50 per copy, or \$45 per copy if purchasing 20 or more in a single order.

Who can serve as Check & Connect mentors?

Sites may hire new staff dedicated to the task of mentoring Check & Connect students full- or part-time or tap existing staff to serve as mentors. The important factor, regardless of who you assign as mentors, is that they embody the personal characteristics of an effective Check & Connect mentor. Of the ten characteristics listed in the Check & Connect manual, three are listed below (see page 12 of the manual for the full list):

Mentors should –

- *Be willing to persist with students, despite their behavior and decision-making;*
- *Believe that all students, particularly those living in at-risk circumstances, have abilities and strengths, and can learn; and*
- *Believe that students can make progress and change their level of engagement at school and with learning.*

When hiring new staff, we recommend targeting individuals who have completed an undergraduate degree. This recommendation also applies to community professionals serving students outside of school and community volunteers supervised by school district staff. See below for information on using existing staff as mentors.

How can a site use existing staff to implement Check & Connect?

Existing staff can serve as Check & Connect mentors and as coordinators at the district or building level. **Coordinators** are typically central district

administrators, building administrators, or student support professionals such as counselors, school psychologists, or social workers. The amount of time a coordinator will need to devote to Check & Connect will depend on the number of mentors he/she is supervising and the number of students participating in Check & Connect. In smaller-scale implementations, the coordinator may also serve as a mentor.

Existing school staff such as counselors, school psychologists, social workers, teachers, paraprofessionals, office staff, and school district personnel can all serve as **mentors**. Existing staff should not be *required* to serve as mentors; staff must be *willing* to serve as mentors. When adding mentoring duties to staff members’ existing duties, it is suggested that other duties be removed and reassigned or that the staff be compensated monetarily for their time. Staff can be relieved from duties such as lunchroom duty, study hall, or bus duty and use the freed up time to mentor up to 5 students, depending on the needs of the students and the staff member’s availability. Teachers may also be released from one section of a course to take on a caseload of students. If duties are not removed, staff may be compensated with a stipend for taking on additional duties.

At some sites, matching existing staff mentors to students can be based on prior relationships. For example, a teacher could mentor a student he/she has previously had in class.

In addition, data collection will be easier if sites have a student portal or some other way of giving existing staff an opportunity to carry out the “check” activities.

What is the cost of implementing Check & Connect?

The cost of implementing Check & Connect is site-specific and depends on many factors such as who is serving as mentors (existing staff or newly hired dedicated mentors), number of mentors used, number of students served, and training conducted.

For a training cost estimate, please contact us at 1-866-434-0010 or checkandconnect@umn.edu.

How can sites fund Check & Connect?

Funding Check & Connect at your site will depend on whether you hire full-time mentors or use existing staff.

For funding tips, go to [Join the Community > Tips for Funding Check & Connect at Your Site](#).

Go to checkandconnect.umn.edu for these and other FAQs on our website.