

**National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)**  
**“Engaging Students with School:  
The Essential Dimension of Dropout Prevention Programs”**  
**Dr. Sandra L. Christenson**  
**January 22, 2008**

(Sandra Christenson):Terrific. Thank you. I am thrilled to be able to speak on student engagement. This is a construct that I find to be very interesting and intriguing. It’s one that began with research in 1970 and 1980 with all of the time on past (connect) and academic engaged time research.

But we have expanded that to consider behavioral, cognitive and psychological or affective engagement. In my experience across the last 17 years with Check and Connect is that student engagement is absolutely essential to dropout prevention programs for preventing dropouts but is most importantly it is essentially for promoting essential school completion.

And I will differentiate those points in this talk. At this point I believe we’re going to have a polling question.

Moderator: Okay. I’m going to open up the poll. Please choose the option that best describes your views on school dropout. You may answer directly on your screen.

A, school dropout is the student’s prerogative and schools should not be accountable for student actions; B, school dropout is a process of disengagement that often begins in elementary school and includes multiple years of poor grades, a low self esteem, poor attendance and weak school connections;

C, school dropout is a process of disengagement that often begins in high school and persist until students actually leave school; D, school dropout is a

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process of disengagement that begins early and is influenced by factors in the school, home, community and within the individual students.

Please answer now. Okay, a few more seconds. Okay. I'm going to now close the poll. It looks like 31% answered B and 69% answered D. Okay, (Sandy) back to you.

(Sandra Christenson): Let me make just a few comments on school dropouts. I think we're all aware of the status, demographic risk factors when students are overage or have a disability or are non white or male or low income or attend an urban school or are from the southeast part of the United States, that these students are more likely, the dropout rates are higher for students having these demographic characteristics.

What we maybe less aware of is that for each F that a student has in a course, this increases the probability of dropouts by 15%. This comes from (Leven and Bellfield), their recent economic analysis.

But what it points to is the importance of (unintelligible) both variables. When we think of student engagement I think we really need to think of the broad question of what is the purpose of schooling? And if one adopts a student engagement framework they really have a belief in developing youth.

They're saying my job, the school is a context for developing youth academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally. They also would then say context matters. So what teachers do and what our curriculum looks like and what our schools offer in terms of programs matters.

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But also what families do and what the community does in other words, to be able to support students in their development process, matters. What we really want are students to make a personal investment in their learning and development.

And that'll be a keyword that you'll hear more than once in this talk. And what we're after is to obtain a good person environment fit. And that person environment fit really does imply that student responsibility is included but we're not eliminating the responsibility of the student.

But also because of the context there is clear, clear recognition that students have varying needs for different amounts of support. And that's what's really key. Some students are going to need higher amounts of support and some will need less.

In this presentation I have three broad goals. One is to provide you some background information on student engagement. Another is to provide the overview of intervention that has some evidence with respect to engaging students.

And these will be both a universal level looking at school wide interventions as well as individualized interventions either at a small group level or for individual students. And I will provide you with some comments about Check and Connect as an example of evidence based practice.

And tell you a bit about our future with respect to wanting to enhance student engagement. Let me begin with that background knowledge. (Fredericks and Blumenfeld) in Paris have really emphasized that, a very important point for us.

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And that is student engagement is a meta construct. What it does is it integrates and brings together separate lines of research, disparate lines of research. So it brings together motivation, participation, belonging, self efficacy, goal setting, etc.

So that is very helpful for us to be able to have one concept that we can then assess in students and think about being able to intervene around. Now I think of student engagement as being comprised of four subtypes – academic, behavioral, cognitive and psychological or affective.

Many people would say there are only three subtypes. They would drop off academic engagement. But I would not do that. So we’re going to talk about these four subtypes and our review was based on those four subtypes.

What’s really, we need to keep our mind on engagement, is that it’s really an antidote to conditions that had been noted by many, many educators but especially teachers.

When teachers will say students are bored. They’re unmotivated, they’re discouraged, they’re apathetic or they’re uninvolved. And so we really need to think about that group of students and how engagement can really alter that.

Definitions for engagement are important. I in particular like (Russell and Colleagues’) definition. They’re from Australia. So engagement has very much of an international flavor to it. We think of motivation as being the reason or the why of behavior. But engagement really brings in the notion of energy and action.

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It's the connection between the person and the activity. So that I would like you to keep in mind. Other points on student engagement, and (Dr. Bost) mentioned this, is it's malleable. It's alterable. So that's very exciting because for us in schools who want to make a difference for students we need to work with those variables that are alterable.

Student engagement has had a flurry of activity around it because it is at this point considered the bottom line in interventions to promote school completion.

It has also become the cornerstone of high school reform initiatives and in large part I think this is occurring because it emphasizes both academic and social aspects of school life that are really central and integral for student success particularly with respect to what they do after school and in their career aspirations.

Another point on student engagement is it's relevant for all students who cross our school doors. (Yassi Mantz) at the University of Indiana has a high school survey for student engagement and it provides information with respect to the school across for all students in a school building.

And he has noted that students are less engaged across school years if they are male, their ethnicity is other than white or Asian, if they come from a lower (FCS) background and if they happen to be in special education rather than general vocational or taking advanced placement classes.

Excuse me. But what he also noted is that only 72% of these thousands of students in the year 2006 reported being engaged in school. Okay. That's over a quarter of students. All schools we need to keep in mind, have students who

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are apathetic or discouraged learners, even those schools without the typical demographic risk factors.

We would be remiss in talking about student engagement if we did not mention (Jeremy Finn’s) work in his just seminal article from 1989 where he proposed the participation identification model. And basically what, his model was based on the notion that students need to participate in school activities.

That leads to successful performance outcomes and then students will begin to identify with school, meaning that they will have a sense of belonging, a sense of identification and being to value school.

And once that identification occurs then they want to participate much more in school. We based all of our Check and Connect work on this particular model because participation and identification were multiple variables.

Now if we took that model and we talked about a withdrawal cycle, we would have those students who are non participants, they are physically withdrawing from school.

They have unsuccessful school outcomes. They certainly also have emotional withdrawal. They’re not identifying at all with the school or the schooling environment. And then that emotional withdrawal leads to more physical withdrawal.

What this really illustrates is that dropping out is the process of disengaging. Now there’s been a lot of research on student engagement and I can’t, I’m not going to mention this a lot other than to say that there are significant,

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moderate and positive correlations among measures of student engagement, achievement and school behavior.

Teachers have known for a long time they're not going to be the least bit surprised with this next bullet. That they've known that engaged students tend to earn higher grades, perform better on tests, report a sense of belonging, can set or respond to personal goals and persist on tasks even when they become a little difficult.

Now fortunately we do have interventions that we can begin to employ to impact those variables for students who are not naturally doing that. Another point that's very important though, and this comes from (Ellen Skinner) and peers work is that engaged students perceive more support from their teachers than peers which leads to increased levels of engagement and participation.

And then leads to more adult support. So what we see there is that reinforcing cycle. And I think we have to keep that in mind. Now a common theme among effective practices that really engage students is that they have a positive effect on the motivation of the individual student primarily because they address underlying psychological needs for the student.

All students have a need to be competent, to have some control, to have a sense of belonging and relatedness. And they, we want them to have beliefs, positive beliefs about the value of education. There is a very interesting book that is built very much on this notion of the psychological needs as part of high school reform.

It's called Engaging Schools, Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn. It is from the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine.

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And in this book they have really identified what I think of the other ABCs. That is that we need to meet student psychological needs for autonomy, belonging and competence.

In other words, we want those apathetic and disengaged or discouraged learners to be able to say I can, I want to and I belong. Our student engagement model that has been developing since we first implemented Check and Connect in 1990 would place student engagement in the middle as a process, as something that we have to attend to.

It's a mediator between the context and desired outcomes. So you have heard about four subtypes of engagement and then the context, the facilitators for that engagement comes from the school, they come from the family and they can come from peers.

Those are the major context that we work with. And so student engagement as a mediator between context and what we want is we want outcomes. And notice the outcomes fall in the area of academic, social and emotional learning.

We really do not only want to graduate students from high school. We want to graduate students from high school with academic and social competence. We must have skills developed here.

I'm hoping that you can see this okay on the slide. You will see under the student engagement column that there are the four subtypes of engagement. This raises the issue – what are indicators of the different four subtypes of engagement?

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So when I speak of academic engagement I am thinking of things like time (unintelligible) past or credits earned toward graduation or homework completion with accuracy.

When I think of behavioral engaging that really, the indicators there are attendance, classroom participation especially voluntary classroom participation, extracurricular participation in the school as well as going after extra credit options if a student is having any difficulty.

Cognitive engagement – the indicators there are students perceived relevance of schools for their future aspirations, their ability to be able to set a goal, a learning goal and value setting that learning goal. And then being able to regulate their behavior toward reaching that goal.

In other words, being very strategic, thinking things through. And then finally, psychological or affective engagement is really a student’s sense of belonging. So school membership or identification with school. Now in terms of context you will see that there are several things that families, peers and schools can do.

So it’s a, these are facilitators of engagement and we definitely know that parents setting goals and expectations, monitoring, supervision and having academic and motivational home support for learning is critically important and helpful for students to be able to be more engaged and then to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Too often our students for whom we’re most concerned, hang around with like minded peers. If we can impact the peer environment in any way so that students can have positive academic beliefs and about the importance of the

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efforts and set an aspiration for learning and interact with other peers who have positive aspirations for learning and high educational expectations.

That again is very beneficial. And finally at the school level, the teacher/student relationship, the importance of mastery learning goals, the importance of school climate, they all come out as critically important, contextual facilitators for student engagement.

Under the outcomes column you'll see things listed with respect to academic, social and emotional learnings outcomes. The point I want to make here again is we want graduation with sufficient academic and social and emotional competence that students can go on to post secondary enrollment options.

(David Brooks), perhaps many of you know him as the New York journalist, New York Times journalist. And in July of 2006 he had an article in the Star Tribune, our local newspaper. And in this article he said the dropout rates are astronomical because humans are not machines into which you can input data.

They require emotion to process information. You take kids who didn't benefit from stable, nurturing parental care and who have not learned how to form human attachments and you stick them in a school that functions like a factory for information transmission and the results are going to be terrible.

We also know that Bill Gates and others at the high school reform level are talking about the critically important components of relationships, relevance and rigor. We simply need to get kids ready by paying attention to these three Rs.

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Now our Check and Connect response to what (David Brooks) or Bill Gates have been saying, is that engaging students only academically, worrying only about time on task or work completion or behaviorally. Just worrying about their attendance is simply not enough.

For our students who were at highest risk of dropping out, and we've worked with them and implemented Check and Connect with students with social and emotional disabilities. These students, we must definitely pay attention to students' level of personal investment in learning.

Students must begin to say I can do the work. I want to do the work. And we also have to pay attention to a degree of social connectedness. In other words, what we're trying to do is to really socialize the learner, foster an identity as the learner and that becomes really critical in the engagement process.

I'm going to shift us in now to looking at some of those implications for interventions or ideas or strategies or guidelines that we can implement. And this is all based on the four subtypes of student engagement.

As I talk about this though, I want to caution you. I'm really going to provide you only or what these four subtypes do is only provide you with a heuristic, it's a heuristic for understanding students' experiences and performance in school.

And then it's also a heuristic for creating a database connection to interventions. We conducted a very comprehensive literature review. One of the advantages of being at a university is I have exceedingly competent graduate students at the University of Minnesota.

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And I conducted this literature review with four other graduate students. We also have been listening to our Check and Connect students, those students who were in our middle school and secondary or high school projects - students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

And they were often telling their mentors I can't do this work. I won't do it anymore. My teachers don't care about me. I have no friends. So basically they were saying I can't, I won't and I don't belong. So we got very interested in looking at the literature relative to cognitive and psychological engagement in particular.

And what we did is we have generated guidelines for universal and individualized intervention service delivery. As I go through those guidelines next you will see that there's nothing totally new here because I think what it is, is student engagement is truly that meta construct.

It's that organizing framework that allows us to be able to think about intervening at a school level as well as at a small group and individual level. And it allows us to really understand the student perspective. We must gather the student perspective if we want to engage students.

This would be an example of the pyramid of intervention. We've often seen this. I believe the yellow portion of this is the universal. I will be giving guidelines for the universal. Those are school wide, meant for all students. It's the foundational base.

And hopefully we can have a school that allows us to engage at least 80% of the students. The green and the blue area would be represented much more by small group and individual interventions. We didn't break them out across

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those two tiers. We just talked about individualized interventions at this point or we just have been doing it that way.

The literature doesn't really support I don't think, breaking it out across those two chairs. But over time as we implement more interventions I'm certain we'll improve that literature base. So let's take a look at what some of the guidelines are.

If in fact we were going to say let's adopt an engagement framework at our school in order to be able to design interventions I'm going to begin with academic engagement. I believe this is the most visible engagement subtype within the classroom.

And the indicators again just to remind you are credits earned, homework completion with accuracy, time on task. And this is often frequently tracked by school personnel. And we do know that high rates of academic learning time or academic engaged time are a significant positive correlative academic achievement.

When you look at the kinds of interventions by just targeting trying to get increases in academic engagement they tend to fall in three broad categories. The first is paying attention to the instructional quality and delivery. The second would be programs that offer supplemental support to the classroom teacher. And the third would be to look at classroom structures to enhance students' substantive interaction.

So what are some of those guidelines at a universal level, that school wide level? One of the most important ones is insuring that the instructional match

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is appropriate for the students and that clear directions of what it expected are provided and understood by the students.

There’s no question that instructional match is a challenge but that clearly is in the literature as a very strong correlative, whether or not students have high rates of time on task and are academically engaged.

Also it’s important to use mastery learning principles to guide instructional planning and delivery. When we really allow students time to master skills that can engage students.

The use of principles with effective instruction and there are so many of them. And teachers especially know them well. But direct instructions, scaffolding, guided practice, informed feedback, pacing of lessons, these are all very important for engaging students.

And also insuring that there’s academic press which means high expectations, having the challenge for students and having students believe it’s challenging as well as a well structured learning environment. That academic press is important but it shouldn’t be there only alone.

It’s not only academic impressed. We must also have support for learning, a caring environment. Other universal interventions include maximizing instructional relevance through a clearly stated purpose, graphing progress toward goals could be done classroom wide.

Attending to the affect of the organizational structure of this school – many of our high schools have gone to smaller learning communities or academies,

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allowing students to have choices within course selection and assignments, has resulted in or have been correlative with higher rates of time on tasks.

As well as increasing, we increase time on task and substantive interaction when teachers use cooperative learning, whole class or group instructions as well as peer assisted learning strategies. There is some evidence that providing home support for learning strategy is a bit of particular content area or assignment is helpful.

As well as enhancing critical project work, critical thinking, excuse me, enhancing critical thinking through project work and the use of ungraded writing assignments where teachers really allow students to write, give them a lot of feedback and then grade them at the very end.

Using a supplemental program within the school is very important. One of our high schools at home, here has an academic coaching team where students who are showing signs of disengagement have coaches that really meet with them.

It's not unlike a Check and Connect philosophy but helps them to complete the classroom assignments and support the classroom teacher in that regard. Increasing opportunities for success in school were just all over the literature. So really looking at student success rate is very important and then assigning things from there, to have a better success rate is critical.

Encouraging parents to volunteer in the classroom is helpful because we increase substantive interaction as well as enhancing teacher/student relationships and/or teacher/student support. This study was really at the elementary level done in reading.

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In those students were having trouble when the teachers really reached out and spent a little bit of extra time the students did much better. Just finishing up the universal and academic engagement with respect to guidelines would be the importance of reinforcing students frequently and basing it on the amount of work completed.

In other words, effort and practice toward a goal, utilizing a variety of interesting text and resources because they're found to be helpful as has incorporating projects that take place in the community, more service learning projects.

Now examples of looking at more individualized interventions include utilizing after school programs, increasing home support for learning, implementing self monitoring the interventions. And if there is any home support for learning, making certain that there's insuring an adequacy of educational resources in the home.

That is really, really critical. Other individualized interventions which could be done small group or for an individual student would be working with parents to help them to understand and set expectations, ambitious, realistic expectations, again fostering positive teacher/student relationships for just selective marginalized, maybe each student takes a student and decides to reach out in a very special way.

Using the check in/check out procedure that's incurred in positive behavior support has been found to be helpful where students check in with a teacher at the beginning of the hour and at the end of the hour. And finally if, anytime

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we can utilize college outreach programs or volunteers to tutor students that clearly is very, very beneficial with respect to academic engagement.

Now let's move on now to behavioral engagement where the indicators really include attendance and participation both at the classroom and extracurricular level as well as discipline referrals. And I'll just comment that these behavioral engagement is associated with achievement and high school completion rates and really students' physical and emotional well being.

When you look at behavioral engagement we first can look at attendance and discipline. What's important to keep in mind here is that there is absolutely no evidence that targeting one domain like mental health for a discipline problem, will necessarily produce the kinds of engagement we are seeking.

What we find in the area of attendance and discipline problems is it has to be much more comprehensive and we need to target intervention agents at the school, home and with the student.

With respect to participation we want to pay attention to classroom participation, but also the benefits of extracurricular participation. I've listed many of those whether it's positive connections, developing individual interests and strengths or increasing opportunities for students to interact with confident adults as well as the whole notion that we reduce opportunities to participate in undesirable behaviors.

That's really very, very important on behavioral engagement. So taking those broad areas, what are some of the universal strategies? Well it's absolutely critical that our schools begin to examine suspension policies and strive to

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eliminate out of school suspension. Suspension is a strong predictor of dropping out of school.

We also should be examining our discipline policies and insuring that students perceive them as fair, non punitive and that they're understood on students. We should end the reliance on negative consequences as a means of managing student behavior.

We do want to encourage positive social interactions and planning for the future through smaller learning communities that target vocational interests. That has shown to be very beneficial for behavioral engagement. We can offer developmentally appropriate special skills training but it's best to do this at a universal level and school wide.

This is often done with positive behavioral supports. (George Skye) and his colleagues' program that really includes positive reinforcement, direct teaching of particular skills and the use of group contingencies. There is evidence that we should always coordinate and collaborate on home school interventions to address attendance.

And involving students in hands on learning that is directly related to future career pathways and student interests has been very beneficial in getting students participating in our class.

It is important to create an orderly routine environment that promotes consistency. There's also evidence that offering professional development to teachers on classroom management strategies works if the teachers then adopt it and do it school wide.

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We do want to gather student input about classroom, school climate and evaluation of coursework and assignments. But it is absolutely essential to not only gather that input but to actually use that feedback to make appropriate changes.

And we really should be encouraging participation then and provide extracurricular activities, very systematically going after those uninvolved students and helping them find their niche.

Now that relates to this next bullet point that says consider ways of having multilevel sports teams. That is vitally important. I do recognize the budgetary constraints on that. However, having our students involved and having multiple level sports really is very beneficial for engaging our students.

We do want to insure that the school culture is respectful to all students. And finally, we should be systematically monitoring and really looking at our total student population on key variables – attendance, academics, behavior, some indicator there to identify those students who are showing signs of disengaging from school.

And then we should follow up with those students very early on whether in a small group format or an individual format. Now, different individualized strategies really include things like providing additional supplemental supports for students not responding to that positive behavioral intervention or that school wide positive behavioral support system that has been put into place.

It can involve devising a very individualized approach to addressing attendance or participation issues at school. And what this really means is

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sitting down, talking with students, finding about their perspective and finding about the unique family circumstances. We certainly want to implement programs that build specific skills in students such as problem solving, anger management or interpersonal communication.

We want to do this for targeted and select students who need that. We can provide an adult mentor. This would be very typical of Check and Connect in terms of working with a small group of students and families. We can develop behavior plans or behavioral contracts to address individual needs, providing intensive wraparound services and then providing alternative programs for students who have not completed school.

These are all examples of interventions that, or guidelines for interventions that are supported in the literature. Just to tie up behavioral interventions here it's also important to encourage parents to monitor and supervise student behavior and parents need a lot of assistance here.

But (ergo) we need to support parents in that process so it would take resources to do that. There's also evidence that implementing student advisory programs, I'm really an advocate of this and believe that if all our middle and high schools could have an advisory program, even if we extend the school day, that would be just fine.

But that would allow us to be able to monitor academic and social development or different forms of engagement for students and provide students with feedback. And then finally, implementing school to work programs that foster success in school and relevant educational opportunities, almost like a work internship.

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It's found to be very successful in engaging students. In looking at cognitive and psychological engagement you'll see some overlap with some of the other guidelines. And you'll see fewer suggestions in these areas. I think they're just much newer areas for people to be thinking about.

Just to remind you, indicators of cognitive engagement include that perceived relevance of schoolwork, strategy use and setting personal goals and self regulation towards goals. Again all of the areas that have been researched are related to measures of academic achievement.

And the intervention targets in cognitive engagement tend to be looking at goal structure, type of task completed and linking school past to future endeavors or students' personal goals.

So at a universal level, guiding students and setting personal goals in courses and monitoring their progress would be logical, providing students with choices when completing assignments so that maybe there are three or four or even two choices of student (unintelligible) for completing an assignment. That's beneficial.

Enhancing or explicitly identifying the relevance of schoolwork at the high school levels to future goals has been very, very helpful. The St. Paul public schools has a six year plan. The Minneapolis schools have My Life Plan. Basically students in ninth grade indicate where they want to be two years post high school.

So it gets students to think about how their high school work is very relevant to their future goals. It's really, another guideline would be for us to focus on

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the necessary steps to reach or pursue those personal goals. Students are much better at setting goals than knowing the steps to reach them.

So we can expect that we're going to have to actually help students understand the steps. We should be setting mastery and learning goals over performance goals. That continues to be a very strong recommendation in the literature.

We do want to provide students with challenging and motivating assignments that always relate to life outside of school and making that relationship explicit. Another suggestion would be to model learning strategies when teaching specific skills and concepts to students and having students really actively use those and remind each other to use it.

And providing feedback that emphasizes self control and the link between effort and practice and improvement toward goals, that kind of feedback. Not just feedback on things being academically correct, but the effort and how important that is and how the student is improving toward a goal is critical.

Again, professional development comes up. It's very important. Many times teachers have not been trained in goal setting and self regulation or in intrinsic motivation strategies so that can be very, very helpful. Some schools have been using a graduation achievement rate for those students around the cusp.

Maybe they're very close to losing a credit in a course and so they calculate a graduation achievement rate and provide a lot of support for a student to actually get that particular credit which I think is fine as long as the students complete the course with enough accuracy to have academic skill development.

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And we should be encouraging parents to deliver messages related to motivational support for learning. There are some that really stand out, telling parents how to set expectations and to give them a message. To have students talk with students about school and school work, even though kids will come back and say I did nothing in school today.

That is an area that when we impact it it does produce positive gains for students. More individualized strategies would really focus a lot on working with students' belief in themselves through repeated context goal setting, problem solving, relationship building, the employ, implementing self monitoring interventions where students graph their progress toward goals.

And then there's problem solving with an adult for the child for that goal. There's also a lot of evidence for explicitly teaching cognitive and meta cognitive strategies. And teaching note taking organization and study skills is important.

And also having, giving students tasks that have the characteristics of open tasks, have been showing some very nice results in cognitively engaging students. And these kinds of tasks are really built on student interests, autonomy, giving students choices and lots of collaboration with peers.

Now in terms of looking at psychological engagement there are so many terms here – school connectedness, affective engagement, perceived school warmth. Regardless of the term, psychological or affective engagement is really used to convey the connection to an affinity for school, the valuing of school and school related activity and a guiding bond with the school.

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Again, psychological engagement is associated with a whole range of variables all in expected directions. And if we look at universal strategies there are some, and I was impressed with the one that is indicated by this first bullet.

And this is where a principle very systematically and strategically built relationships and connections for all students in his school building. He put all the names of the students in the teachers' lounge and he had the educators in the building put a red dot by the names of the students that they felt they had a relationship with.

And then they identified the students that had no red dot. And then they matched staff with those alienated students and started to have more future regular mentor like contact. And they did a very nice job in beginning to turn around some discouraged learners.

Then we can address size through implementation of smaller learning communities, enhance peer connections to a peer assisted learning strategy. And we could implement a mentoring program using college students for example.

Other universal strategies that really are directed toward increasing participation and extracurricular activities. Paying attention to the need for social support, not just having high academic press but truly having that caring environment paired with high teacher expectations appears all the time with respect to enhancing kids' sense of belonging.

With respect to more individualized or I guess I'm just beginning individualized strategies, we want to build personal relationships with

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marginalized students. Enhancing the relationship with one caring adult is probably one of the most important things that we could do. It's where I would begin.

With those students we want to personalize education, altering the assignments to match their personal interests and goals. Another variable that we need is to really assist with personal problems. And this really puts us into the notion that we have to work with the community to improved generalized ability.

We really want to intervene across peer families, community, context when possible. And helping students with personal problems will require some resources from the community. We really should be providing extra support for students in a timely fashion.

Many times I think it was called the integrated services a while ago. At this point let me just provide just a few highlights with respect to the student engagement interventions that I've just reviewed for you, very, very quickly, at both the universal and at an individual level.

I would tell you that you need to keep in mind that these four types of engagement are best understood as interrelated. Somebody could take one of those ideas and think they're impacting academic engagement but they may also be impacting behavioral engagement or cognitive engagement.

We must remember that students' feelings of belonging may promote greater effort and participation. That would be basically, participation would be behavioral engagement. Or a teaching practice that promotes self regulation or

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goal setting may fulfill and take greater task for homework completion which would be an indicator of academic engagement.

So it's really just a (heuristic) for us to be able to begin to think broader than just academic and attendance. Engagement really serves as an organizing framework for our interventions. The book that I mentioned to you, *Engaging Schools*, they have components in there.

And what they said in that book and I think we need to remember this, is that we do not explicitly program for motivation and engagement. And we really do need to explicitly program for these areas.

And in their book they talked about the importance of school, close student/adult relationships, the importance of structured educational experiences with clear, meaningful purposes about the importance of a challenging, supportive curriculum that academic press.

Another component is multiple pathways to competence. We really need economy supportive environments. And the more we can give student choices about completing the assignments the better off we're going to be. We should be having many opportunities to interact with peers, develop career pathways, have our links to communities and families and pay attention to organizational structures that assist with students' personal problems.

It is a tall order when you take on student engagement. So this is a book, they have identified components and they were saying this is how we should reform our high schools considering those components. No school is going to be able to begin with that right away. If I was like (James McPartland's) four areas, and I think they're, they were indicated by the review that I gave you.

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In 1894 they had done a large review and he said we can motivate and engage students if we provide opportunities for success in school or communicate the relevance of education to future endeavors, create a caring and supportive environment, paying attention to the students’ role like using anger management strategies as well as the teachers’ role, reaching out to the student to build a relationship and understanding the student perspective.

As well as helping students with personal problems. In, I’m realizing I’ve lost a little bit of track of time but I’m only going to try to take about five more minutes so that we have enough time to be able to discuss and dialogue with each other.

But I want to mention here that dropping out of school is not an instantaneous decision and I think that’s clear. We’ve all been saying how it’s a process that begins early and it’s preceded by those less severe warning signs. We built Check and Connect around that notion.

And also around the notion of we wanted students to participate, have successful learning experiences and then they can begin to value school and have a sense of belonging. So I’ve mentioned Check and Connect.

And let me just tell you very quickly what that is. It’s very much of a model. It’s not just an intervention but it’s a model designed to promote student engagement which we consider to be multidimensional with the four subtypes. It is within this model, in an 11 month intervention that is evidence based.

So our mentors do connect with students over the summer. I would think of it as a risk prevention intervention and it is comprised of four components. A

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very important component is the systematic monitoring of students' signs of disengagement in attendance, behavior and academics.

That's our check component. Then we want to respond in a timely fashion according to the data that we have off the check data or off the monitoring form. So we need to respond according to the type and level of risk that the student is at for disengagement.

So that's our connect. And we always connect in two ways. All students that we work with receive some type of intervention. So they can receive basic intervention which is a deliberate conversation, a very deliberate conversation about the importance of staying in school, problem solving with students, giving them kind of yea, rah, rah, cheerleader encouragement about how well they're doing in school.

But those students who are not doing as well then they need more intensive intervention and that's in addition to just the basic intervention. Now the Check and Connect is basically operators are run by the mentor. That's our third component.

This person is very, very important and this is the person in the student's life who keeps education salient and does what is needed to keep the student from slipping through the cracks. And the mentor is someone who is using that check data and is connecting with the student on a weekly basis and then is designing interventions with others to keep the student from slipping through the cracks.

That relationship is built over time and it's based on trust and familiarity. We ask for a two year commitment from our mentors and the trust is built through

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the monitoring form by the checking of grades and checking of attendance, etc. But also informal connections like dropping into the lunchroom and saying hey, your math teacher told me you did just great yesterday in class.

And just walking away, something that mentors would do. We do check or excuse me, our fourth component is connecting with our families. In the interest of time I'm going to just say that we really try to improve home school communication.

We'll use home visits, we'll call on a regular basis. We'll call for positive messages. We ask our families what kind of resources or suggestions or support they need from us in order to be more actively involved. We really work to build a relationship with families, inviting them into the partnership.

So in a nutshell, Check and Connect is an intervention that is comprised of systematic monitoring of student performance. Timely intervention coordinated with teachers and parents. And relationship building with the mentor who provides the persistent support and avenue for problem solving with the student.

These aspects allow the mentors to design in collaboration with others, parents and teachers, a very individualized approach to service delivery for students showing those early signs of withdrawal. The role of the mentor is critical in monitoring.

And systematic monitoring is absolutely essential because it's a systematic and efficient way to connect students with immediate interventions and it keeps the focus on students' educational progress and performance. In Check

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and Connect we absolutely want students to be self determined and empowered to take control of their behavior.

We use the five step cognitive problem solving strategy that you see. And you'll see that our mentors are often problem solving with students around topics like coming to class on time and attending class regularly, working hard in class, completing assignments, getting passing grades.

Our mentors operate with the concept of persistence plus. Basically the mentor is someone who's not going to give up on the student or allow the student to be distracted from the importance of school. Continuity is important. The mentor is someone who knows the student's needs and (unintelligible), and is available across school years.

And finally, consistency. The message of the importance of school, solving problems, working hard in school, staying in school, doing well, attending class. It's the same from all adults. And the mentor facilitates that. In the interest of time I'm going to just tell you that we are designing more interventions with respect to those areas of affective or psychological engagement and cognitive engagement.

A good example with respect to personal goal setting and in using this literature is our mentors can now identify with students the demands of the school environment, the expectations of teachers for each of the students' classes.

The student can go and request input of the teacher. Basically it's answering the question what does the student have to do to be successful in this course? And we consider things like task completion, quality of work and classroom

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behaviors. Then the mentors use that teacher input to create scenarios relevant from problem solving practice using the five step plan.

And the mentor meets regularly with their student to set personal goals for that particular class, especially in those classes where academic or behavioral improvement is desired. We’re also going to do much more in terms of future planning, asking our students where they want to be two years post high school graduation.

And just to let you know, if you are interested in terms of more work with parents, we are refining Parent Connect interventions in terms of developing motivational home support for learning, primarily in two areas. Any of you can contact me if you want more information in this area and I would be happy to share that information with you.

So in closing, we’ve hypothesized that the unique feature of Check and Connect is not the specific intervention per se. There are a lot of them. There could be individualized and they can be school wide.

But what the unique feature for Check and Connect is the fact that the intervention or any interventions that are put into place are facilitated by a person, the mentor, who is trusted and known by the student and who has demonstrated his/her concern for the school performance of the youth persistently and consistently over time.

I must stress with you the unique fact of Check and Connect is the persistent support to meet standards of the school environment. So is it dropout prevention or school completion?

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Increasing the successful completion of school is much more than simply staying in school or (unintelligible). So it's much more than the dropout problem. It involves meeting the defined academic standards of the school as well as the underlying social and behavioral standards.

So that is the relevance of student engagement. It allows us to be able to do that. And the value of cognitive and psychological engagement, for kids to be able to say I can, I want to and I belong, assist their attendance and assist their academic achievement.

I do want you to know that I have to acknowledge many people on Check and Connect and also our theory and measurement of engagement. There's my contact information. And feel free to contact me. I've given you different resources and I think we are ready for a polling question. And at the end of the polling question I'll be happy to answer any questions based on anything I've said today.

Moderator: Okay. For a second poll please tell us about your dropout prevention efforts for students with disabilities. You may answer on your screen. A, just emerging, currently in planning stage; B, program in place for one year or more; C, program in place for four years or more; D, no program in place.

We'll take a moment to compile the answers. Okay. A few more seconds here to get those last minute polls in. Okay. I'm going to close the poll now. And (Sandy) it looks like 60% of the participants answered with A.

(Sandra Christenson): Right. It does not surprise me but I'm pleased to see that 60% are in a planning stage. That's terrific.

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Moderator:       Should we go to our question and answer now?

(Sandra Christenson): Yes.

END