

**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**

(Dr. Bost): Good afternoon and welcome to our webinar today. In today’s webinar, Engaging Students With School: The Essential Dimension of Dropout Prevention Program, our presenter is Dr. (Sandra L. Christenson) from the University of Minnesota.

Prior to having Dr. (Christenson) begin we want to look at putting dropout within the context. Next slide please. (Unintelligible) over time in the literature and in the research have identified that dropout follows a predictable pathway to school dropouts. As such, the encouraging thing about the predictability of that pathway is that behaviors that are predictable can be altered in a satisfactory manner.

Next slide please. Let’s look at that pathway now. Dropout is not an isolated event. It begins early, often as early as elementary school. As a matter of fact, researchers have identified signs of leaving and being able to predict school dropout as early as first grade through those students who are rated as highly aggressive by their first grade teachers.

Moving into third grade, dropouts could be distinguished from graduates with 66% accuracy using attendance to date alone. And in recent, and then looking at identification of dropouts could be accomplished with reasonable accuracy based on review of performance in behavior, attendance in academic areas during the early elementary grades.

Next slide. In recent research by (Belfont and Herzog), 2005 and 2006 middle school predictors became apparent and evident that would hold forth through a number of trial studies. The four strongest predictors of dropout could be

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determined by the end of sixth grade by looking at poor attendance, poor behavior marks, failing math and failing English.

And sixth graders who do not attend school regularly receive poor behavior marks or fail math or English only had about 10% chance of graduating on time or 20% chance of graduating one year later. We began to continue with middle school, that children who repeated middle school grades are 11 times more likely to dropout than students who had not repeated.

A student who is retained two grades increases their risk of dropping out of high school by 90%. And that transitions between schools are critical times for at risk students. Looking further into high school – high school predictors of dropouts – looking at students who enter ninth grade two or more year grade levels behind their peers have only a one in two chance of being promoted to the 10th grade.

And ninth grade (unintelligible) has been identified as the biggest predictor of dropout out of high school. And the biggest fall off of students happens between the ninth and the 10th grade in a time that has become known as Freshmores, those students who have repeated the ninth grade more than once and should be in the sophomore class.

Also emerging as a trend of increased dropout rates in grades 11 and 12, primarily looking at insufficient course accrual as well as the inability to pass graduation tests. So we begin to think, next slide please, we begin to consider if dropping out is the process of disengagement, so how then do we begin to influence student engagement in school?

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In our webinar today Dr. (Christenson) will describe universal and individualized interventions for students with and without disabilities. Viewing engagement as comprised of four subtypes, Dr. (Christenson) will explain the ideal characteristics to achieve an assessment to intervention link as well as database interventions that maximize the goodness of persons fit to the environment.

Additionally, Dr. (Christenson) will discuss effective interventions for students at risk of educational failure with the focus on more than attendance and academic skills but also on indicators of students’ commitment to learning, perceptions of academic and social competence and a sense of belonging by educators and parents.

We’re pleased to have Dr. (Sandra Christenson) in our audience today. Dr. (Christenson) is a professor of educational psychology, child psychology and psychology at the University of Minnesota. She’s a faculty member in the school psychology program.

Her research is focused (on interventions) that enhance student engagement with school and learning and identification of family and school contextual factors that facilitate student engagement and increase the probability for student success in school.

She is particularly interested in those students who are most alienated from traditional schooling practices and/or highest risk for dropping out of school and the ways to promote the role of family in educating students. She has been the principle investigator of several federally funded projects in the area of dropout prevention and family partnership.

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Research on Check and Connect, one of these evidence based models for engaging students and families in school and learning is in its 17th year.

Dr. (Christenson) is the recipient of several awards including the (Lionel Whitmore) Award from the American Psychological Association for scholarship and early career contributions to the field of school psychology; the (Blanche F. Edelson) Award for pioneering work with school/family partnerships from the American Author Psychiatry Association.

And the Senior Scientist Award from APA Division 16 in recognition of a career long significant program of scholarship representing outstanding contributions to the scientific knowledge base of school psychology.

She holds an endowed professorship at the University of Minnesota, regularly contributes to the school psychology literature and conducts applied research mainly in urban settings. We're pleased to have Dr. (Christenson) with us today.

(Sandy) at this time I'd like to turn the program over to you.

(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

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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 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

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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.

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

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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 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.

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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, 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.

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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. 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.

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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?

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.

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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 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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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, 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.

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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.

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.

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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.

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.

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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 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

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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.

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

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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 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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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

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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 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

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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 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.

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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.

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.

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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?

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

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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.

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

(Sandra Christenson): Yes.

Moderator: Okay. (Janice) can you please tell the participants how they can queue up for verbal questions?

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Operator: Yes, I can. At this time I would like to remind everyone in order to ask a question press star then the number 1 on your telephone keypad. We'll pause for just a moment to compile the Q&A roster.

Moderator: Okay, (Sandy) it looks like we do have some web questions. And we will get to those while people are calling in. Our first one is from (Jean Ramirez) and the question is will you explain some time in the presentation the difference between PBIS Check in/Check Out and the Check and Connect program?

(Sandra Christenson): Okay. I'd be happy to. Positive behavioral intervention support is school wide effort to be able to have positive reinforcement, group contingencies and a foundation for directly teaching students about the kinds of behaviors that we want from students.

And then the students who are having more difficulty adopting those can have more small group or individualized work to handle their behavior. Within that behavior education program people have created what they call that check in and check out program where a student may come with a chart and say to their teacher I have my pens and my pencils and all my material.

I'm checking in with you and now I'm going to go back to my desk and I'm going to actually work on that. And then at the end of the school hour and again at the end of school day they'll check out with somebody and they'll be reminded about the kinds of behaviors they hope to see tomorrow in the school.

Check and Connect is an intervention not unlike positive intervention supports. But I think it is broader in that we are very concerned about looking at the engagement of students from a multidimensional point of view. So we

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may be working with students who would say I have no perceived competence or I have no perceived connection with anyone in my building.

So we're broader than behavior. Now we also look at behavior but we're broader. And then the mentor works with that student building a relationship, problem solving with that student in order to be able to have that student become connected to the school environment.

So we take a very individualized look at each student's situation with their teachers, with their family and then figure out exactly what intervention should be put in place. Ideally across school/home is very important. Now we don't always achieve that but we would like to be able to have that.

I hope I answered that question.

Moderator: Okay (Sandy), we have another web question. Slide 7 identifies students of ethnicities other than white or Asian as having a higher propensity for dropping out. Could you please speak more directly to the role of race in engagement?

Can you please make explicit connections between cultural responsiveness and relevance?

(Sandra Christenson): When I look at dropout rates I just see where we are looking at very much a static characteristic and we are describing those students that are likely to dropout and we're just categorizing that. So we see who has dropped out and we can then say well students who have self identified as African American or Native American or Hispanic, their dropout rates look like this.

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Caucasian dropout rates look like this. For me the issue becomes that we want to very much intervene and it's so easy to say, but intervene in a culturally responsible and sensitive way. In that I really want to understand the perspective of the individual.

And race and ethnicity is a very important aspect and a very important variable that I need to understand because I want to understand that individual's perspective, how they feel they're treated in the school, how they feel where they fit in the school, where they don't feel like they fit in the school.

And so our mentors work very hard. But we operate very much with respect to understanding the students' perspective and then also understanding the parents' perspective. So it's very, very important for us to learn from the student as well as the family.

And that would be how I operate with intervention. But I don't think there's any question right now that we know the targeted groups in terms of ethnicity that are still dropping out of our schools at a higher rate than Caucasians.

Moderator: Okay. (Janice) do we have any callers in the queue?

Operator: Yes we do. Your first question is from (Kim Moody).

(Kim Moody): Hi. We're in the (Francis) High School District which is in Metropolitan St. Louis. And we are wondering if your Check and Connect mentors are paid a stipend? Do they, are they required to become mentors in their school? How does that work?

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(Sandra Christenson): That’s a very important question given that this talk, I was asked to speak on student engagement. I couldn’t focus all the time on Check and Connect. The, our mentors, we have always been a research project at the University of Minnesota so we developed Check and Connect and then we assessed the efficacy of this model and intervention.

And we really have had six applications at this point. And the one in Minneapolis is continuing and has since 1990, but we’re in year seven with Bush funding in all the high schools in Minneapolis. In all cases we hire mentors.

Now it doesn’t mean that in any of those applications we have not had school personnel. But they’ve taken a very small caseload. The majority of our students are mentored by individuals that we hire and we, so they are working for us.

And they are mentoring students, working to build collaborative relationships with the students and the parent. And so the costs on the Check and Connect intervention model have typically been, and this was an elementary estimate, with our elementary students have been somewhere in the, oh right around \$1,375 per student per year.

And so there are costs but our primary cost is that individual who is going to build that relationship and that cost can be offset a bit for schools because the students are not attending, then the school is not getting state, you know state dollars for our students being present at school.

(Kim Moody): Thank you.

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Operator: Your next question is from (Angie Copely).

(Angie Copely): Hi. This is the Northern (unintelligible) Co-op and I have several districts represented here. And one of the questions is you mentioned a survey that you used with the students. Is that something that's publicized or does it come with the Connect, Check and Connect material? Or...

(Sandra Christenson): We have recently, I'm getting a tremendous amount of interference on my phone. Oh, I think it's cleared up. We have recently developed a student engagement instrument. We refer to it as the SEI. It was published here in the year 2006.

Anyone who's interested in that instrument they could e-mail me. I put my e-mail address on one of the slides and I would be happy to send you information with respect to that. We have very good psychometric properties. But that instrument is primarily zeroing in on cognitive engagements and on psychological engagement.

We actually use other indicators for academic and attendance because those, you know we don't have to survey kids about their attendance. We can actually get the data on attendance. But it's very important we, I don't know whether a student feels like they have perceived competence or their perceived relevance to schoolwork or whether they're setting a goal or whether they feel like they belong unless I actually ask the student.

So we have developed this instrument to fill in on our four subtypes of engagement. And I'd be happy to share the instrument with you. It was actually the doctoral dissertation for a graduate student here at the university who's now in Georgia working at (Aquanec) County Public Schools.

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(Angie Copely): Great. Do you know is the material just for like high school or is it middle and high?

(Sandra Christenson): We have measured students at the middle and at the high school level. And we soon will be measuring students at the fourth and fifth grade level with the instrument. It has readability where fourth and fifth graders should be able to understand the items and read the items.

But we have always administered it orally just in order to be able to control for any reading difficulty.

(Angie Copely): Great. Thank you very much. Oh, I'm sorry. SEI stands for, could you repeat what SEI stands for?

(Sandra Christenson): SEI? Student engagement instrument.

(Angie Copely): Okay, thank you.

Operator: Your next question is from (Beth James). Ms. (James), your line is open. If your line is muted please unmute your line and proceed with your question.

(Beth James): Yes. We have a grant that is available for us that we are to use for professional development. And I was just interested in where we should start with our staff.

(Sandra Christenson): In terms of adopting a student engagement framework?

(Beth James): Yes.

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(Sandra Christenson): You know I think whenever you take something new on like getting people to think along the lines of student engagement, first I would begin by letting them know what it is, what are the different types, what are indicators of that as well as information about the different kinds of interventions that can line up with the different types.

I have an article I'd be happy to send that to you. I think I gave it actually earlier on when we were planning for this webcast. So I'd be happy to send that to you. But it isn't just content information. I think you're really talking about a systems change and that's part of that school reform issue.

And that book on engaging schools maybe very helpful to you but it's, what is the process, how are we going to support our staff answer their questions and support our staff in order to be able to agree on the kinds of interventions that we want to put in place for this particular school context?

So there are many, many interventions there. And there is a fair amount of overlap. I think you could hear that as I was talking about the different individualized or universal interventions. So people have to select which ones fit their particular staff.

So if you were going to begin some place what I would strongly suggest you do is to systematically monitor population wide, school wide what do your average attendance rates look like, your average skip rates, your average tardies?

What do your suspensions look like if kids are being suspended? What do behavioral referrals look like? What do grades look like? What do objectives

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past, if you have certain tests or reading objectives? But decide to collect some data that's readily available at your school level and to understand which kids are at the average, which are above the average but perhaps which kids are a standard deviation below the average.

These are kids you're going to be very concerned about because they're showing you poor grades, poor attendance. And recall (Dr. Bost) showed that slide at the middle school level with poor attendance and poor English and poor math. These are critically important. We've got those data at all of our schools. So if we did this on a population base you would be able to identify the students you know who are engaged, the students who are only you know right around the average of engagement and then those that are below an engagement.

You'd identify students that you could then think about, okay, how are we going to increase the engagement for these students? And then if you knew something about interventions perhaps you could have a process where the whole school's staff would decide we want to begin with these two things.

And then next year you add a couple more things. You really need to think about this as a three to five year effort.

(Beth James): Thank you.

Operator: Your next question is from (Anne Gowan).

Anne: Yes. Can you tell me or give me some kind of idea, the schools that we have, would the district have a set attendance policy and has that attendance policy helped or had any effect with dropouts?

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(Sandra Christenson): My reading of the literature is that if we have a very rigid attendance policy that it actually may work against us. I'm not going to say that it increases dropout rates because I don't know if I totally believe that. There would be multiple reasons why students drop out of school.

But by just having an attendance policy we're doing nothing about trying to connect students to school. We're doing nothing that gives them a reason for wanting to be at school. And I think what you have to do is you really have to say why wouldn't kids want to school?

You have to take the attitude, what can we do at this school building that's going to make kids want to come? How can we build a relationship with disengaged kids? How can we have a group of peers excited about something?

Maybe they weren't excited about it before. So we've got to have programs that kids want to attend. So I strongly encourage you not to think that an attendance policy is going to help you because it's not addressing the important engagement variables.

Attendance is part of it but kids have to have a reason. They have to see the relevance of schoolwork and they have to believe they can be competent in schoolwork.

You know it's really very interesting, when kids look at their own self perceived competence they look at their skills and then they look around and say okay, what social resources are out there?

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How can my teacher help? How can other peers help me? Because they don't only look at their own skill level. They may know that they're in trouble but they, if they feel that somebody's going to help them then they become more engaged. So I think it's broader than just a rigid attendance policy.

Anne: Thank you.

Operator: Your next question is from (Ken Johnston).

(Ken Johnston): Yes, hi. I'm with the (Franklin Hampshire) Career Center in Northampton, Massachusetts. Can you talk briefly about helping students who have fallen behind academically, older students, to catch up, if there are any type of academic programs out there that they can catch up with school so they graduate with their class?

Because a lot of students I'm seeing are dropping out because they'll be 20 at the time that they graduate.

(Sandra Christenson): You're absolutely right. One of the drawbacks of retention, a big drawback is we retain students in the early grades and then we forget how old they're going to be when they're in high school. And as soon as a student gets overage, overage is clearly a strong predictor of dropping out.

And, but we have those students and we need to provide academic support for those students. I am aware of some programs that are being done at community colleges where students are actually going to community colleges and completing high school work but in a setting that feels more like their age and where they want to be psychologically and emotionally.

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I think having off campus kinds of programs, to expect students to be at traditional high schools as a 20 year old with students who are 18, that's a very large age gap.

So we're going to have to look at these other kinds of programs that allow students to obtain the credits and hopefully more than just the credits but actually academic skills as well.

And, so I've been quite intrigued by some of those programs that are looking at their community college setting. Now I recognize not all high schools have community colleges in their setting and so that right, is a challenge. But how could we set up programs outside of the actual traditional high school for those students I think would be very key.

(Ken Johnston): Thank you.

Operator: And there are no further audio questions.

Moderator: Well (Sandy) do you want to take one more web question?

(Sandra Christenson): I'd be happy to.

Moderator: Okay. This one is from (David Riley) and he asks who are the mentors, teachers? Are they paid? Has the research been with urban school districts, minority students?

(Sandra Christenson): Okay. Hi (David). Great question. Our mentors are paid. We have had on some of our projects in Minneapolis' schools, both of them the first project

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that we, when we began in 1990 to 1995 and then the project that spans from 1990 to excuse me, year 2000 to 2005.

And both those articles are published if anybody is interested in reading about those studies. We did have some staff in the Minneapolis schools who took on a small caseload. But it's very, very small. That typically we have hired mentors.

In some cases we may have hired a teacher from the schools. I'd have to go back and check that so it's not that we would exclude any school personnel at our schools for being hired as a mentor either.

But for the most part yes, they are paid. The other part is that I'm at the University of Minnesota and we've developed Check and Connect. And our first mentors on the first project were to my knowledge, all graduate students for the most part.

Again, just a very small percentage may have come with community professional people or any of the educational staff taking a small caseload on. So graduate students – when I have a grant then I can pay them to go to graduate school.

They serve as a mentor and then we have hired mentors. Now the, our randomized control trial, so if you look at the What Works Clearinghouse, those studies have all been with students with disabilities and they've all been with students in urban education settings and they've all been with a very diverse, ethnically diverse population of students.

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But the majority of that diversity would have been African American students. The other applications where we've had pre/post intervention designs have been in suburban settings. So at this point we have worked with students as early as kindergarten through 12th grade in suburban and in urban settings.

So I hope I remembered all the parts of your question (David).

Moderator: Would you like to take another question (Sandy)?

(Sandra Christenson): Sure.

Moderator: Okay. Can you speak more on the statistics regarding success or lack of regarding Check and Connect?

(Sandra Christenson): Oh, I would be happy to do that. I would encourage people to look at the What Works Clearinghouse in terms of they're saying the evidence base that we have and the criteria that they have used, they would say that we definitely are an evidence based intervention in terms of having students progress in school that we look like we're promising for students to stay in school but that we do not have evidence for actually graduating students.

Now my reading on this is that part of their criteria is they want students to graduate from a traditional high school at the end of four years. And we are working with special education students and they are actually given extra time.

And we do have statistically significant differences between Check and Connect students and a control group of students. But it was a five year graduation rate. So What Works Clearinghouse would not say because if their

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criteria of a four year graduation rate, they wouldn't say that we are at evidence based intervention for actually graduating students.

The other thing I would tell you is that our data with having students randomly assigned to treatment and control is all with I think the highest risk students. If there are students in urban education they are students that are from a poor background.

80 some percent of our students were on free and reduced lunch. They are, and they were students with disabilities. So our students had a fair number of risk factors. And we were able to demonstrate a statistically significant difference between treatment and control for those students.

That's part of that persistent support with Check and Connect. And I often think about and we are hoping that we will be funded to be able to do this, that we have to have a different intervention service delivery system in that it can be costly to have too many students having an individual mentor all the time. So what about small group mentoring or what about an advisor program where students could get some connection in mentoring?

And then we would actually mentor individually less students. If you think of that (unintelligible) of intervention maybe we'd only have to individually mentor those students who are up on the top of that, tip of the triangle, the blue part.

So I think it is, we should be commended for the fact that we have statistically significant differences for kids who are randomly assigned to treatment and controls who have such high risk. But we do not necessarily have those, that random assignment for students without disabilities.

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There we know that we improved attendance rates but that was a pre/post intervention design. So I can't say the Check and Connect was the reason for that improvement in (a tent). So we really need to implement Check and Connect with different populations of students.

And I do say to myself gee, if a student is just showing signs of disengagement but not a student with disabilities, would we have to implement Check and Connect so intensively? I don't know the answer to that question.

Moderator: Okay (Sandy) I think that concludes all of the web questions at this time. Do you have any closing comments?

(Sandra Christenson): I would like to encourage all of you to be very informed in terms of student engagement. I think it's a very, very important construct. There are at least five or six measures currently that individuals can use. I like the notion that there's a meta construct in terms of integrating many disparate lines of research that are so vitally important.

And we do need to pay attention to students' perceived relevance of their schoolwork and their perceived connection. And when we can intervene on those two variables I think for many of our students who are at highest risk, they're going to have better attendance, better participation.

And then better academic achievement which is what we really want. I would tell you that in the State of Minnesota we're starting the school report card and engagement is going to be on that school report card. So we're going to have

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our schools hopefully, our legislation has to be written yet but we're going through the legislative process.

And I've seen this in other states as well. So the construct of student engagement is not going to go away. And we need to continue to research it and understand it, develop interventions.

I encourage all of you to roll up your sleeves and decide how you're going to just make a little bit of difference in building a relationship and connecting with students to be able to have them feel like school is a warm, friendly place and I can find my niche.

END