

# Duluth Public Schools Check and Connect Program Update 2022-2023

# The Evolution of Check & Connect in the Duluth Public Schools

# What is it?

Check & Connect is an intervention used with students who show **warning signs of disengagement** with school and who are **at risk of dropping out**.

- Check - Mentors **systematically monitor student performance** (e.g., absences, tardies, behavioral, grades)
- Connect - Mentors provide **personalized, timely interventions** to help students solve problems, build skills, and enhance competence. Mentors work students and families for **at least two years**, functioning as liaisons between home and school and **strive to build constructive family-school relationships**. See the [Components and Elements of Check & Connect](#).

# How It Started

US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) charged states to develop a multi-year plan that would improve high school graduation rates for Black and/or American Indian children and youth with disabilities.

- In 2015, the Minnesota Department of Education identified Duluth Public Schools as one of four districts that accounted for approximately 30% of the population group
- MDE partnered with districts to implement an evidence-based practice to impact graduation rates
- According to the U.S. Department of Education's [What Works Clearinghouse](#), Check & Connect **is the only program** found to have strong evidence of positive effects on staying in school.

# Where We've Been

- Started slow and small, focused on building internal capacity. See: [District Capacity Assessment Results Over Time](#)
- Improved graduation rates Black and American Indian students with disabilities. See [Graduation Rates Over Time](#)
- Wrapped up initial grant in Spring 2021, sought external funding, and began planning for expansion
  - Were [awarded \\$1.6 million](#) to add mentors to each secondary school; later obtained additional funding to add a position at ALC and to expand data use
  - Modified mentor job description to better align with heightened post-pandemic student needs

# Where We Are

Students Enrolled

 **316**

Total Schools

 **5**

Total Mentors

 **15**

Average Caseload

 **21.1**

Average Weekly  
Minutes 

 **59**

## Program Impact

Decrease in Absences 

**55%** or 133 of 243 

Decrease in Suspensions 

**44%** or 14 of 32 

# Where We Are

## Four-Year Graduation Rates Over Time

All Students	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>District</b>	76.15	78.59	74.71	78.39	75.13	76.04	78.09	76.01	75.41	71.47	76.66
<b>Denfeld</b>	84.16	82.37	76.05	73.42	73.86	80.36	73.73	77.87	79.67	69.79	73.03
<b>East</b>	90.86	90.85	89.77	93.16	93.61	92.94	93.72	92.64	92.33	92.05	92.07
<b>ALC</b>	28.79	24.00	18.27	35.58	34.15	26.28	43.17	33.10	25.95	14.96	28.85

# Where We Are

## Four-Year Graduation Rates Over Time

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All Students	76.15	78.59	74.71	78.39	75.13	76.04	78.09	76.01	75.41	71.47	76.66
Am Indian	44.12	29.73	48.57	28.57	37.84	54.84	45.71	55.00	45.16	42.11	43.59
Asian	84.62	86.67	64.71	93.33	68.75	83.33	84.21	*	80.00	83.33	*
Hispanic or Latino	57.14	85.71	61.11	69.23	73.33	73.68	71.43	66.67	77.78	53.57	65.52
Black	57.14	42.22	44.74	44.44	36.59	36.84	63.64	57.45	53.19	39.47	41.38
White	79.11	83.4	78.86	82.92	80.49	80.41	82.14	81.11	81.85	76.72	82.57
Two or More Races	77.27	68.18	68.42	63.16	62.86	62.86	60.00	50.00	48.39	59.15	59.57
SpEd	48.53	50.00	44.35	54.96	48.62	57.63	61.48	54.55	64.17	52.48	57.25
FRL	59.37	60.99	54.76	62.24	55.52	60.98	61.80	55.21	54.71	51.57	54.75



# Where We Are Going

- Continue the things that are working, such as:
  - Partnering closely with MDE staff
  - Providing ongoing professional development and support to mentors
  - Delivering the evidence-based practice with fidelity
- Transition away from district-driven leadership by continuing to building capacity at school-level
- Provide additional training and support on using data to identify students, monitor progress, exit students

# Where We Are Going

- Continue to increase the percentage of historically underserved students receiving a Check & Connect mentor

Student Group	Receiving Check & Connect	Enrollment in District
Students of color	39.2%	22.5%
Students receiving special education services	21.3%	20.7%
Students receiving free or reduced price meals	64.1%	43%

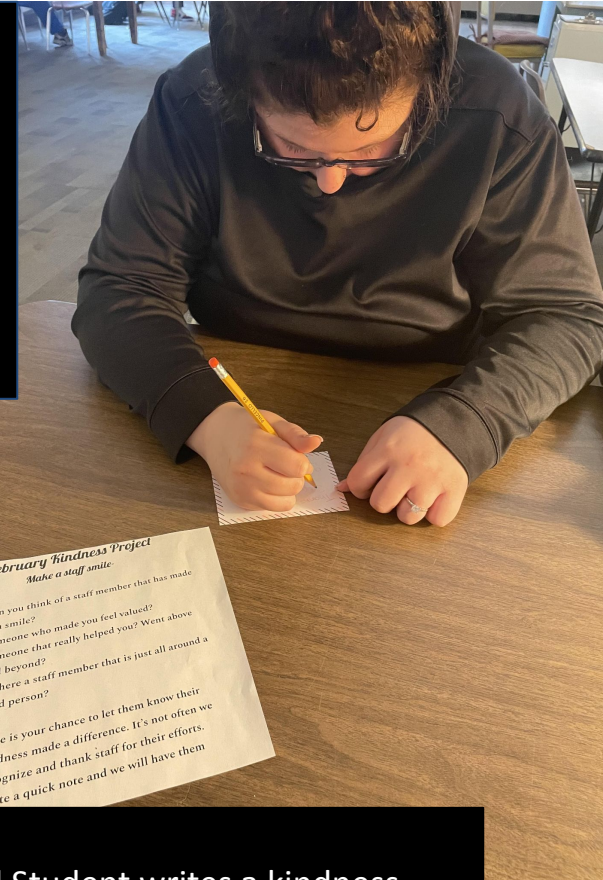
- Provide Check & Connect training to other support professionals across the district
- Continue to advocate for funding to sustain the program beyond 2023-2024 school year

# Introductions

- Staff, Students, Families -

# Appendices

# C&C Highlights



*February Kindness Project*  
*Make a staff smile*

Can you think of a staff member that has made you smile?  
Someone who made you feel valued?  
Someone that really helped you? Went above and beyond?  
Is there a staff member that is just all around a kind person?

Here is your chance to let them know their kindness made a difference. It's not often we recognize and thank staff for their efforts. Write a quick note and we will have them

Denfeld Student writes a kindness card to a teacher as a thank you for their support!



Ordean mentor Justin Bachinski lets a student cut his hair based on academic performance 3rd quarter.

Proctor C&C Mentor Skylar Gunderson spent the afternoon with East C&C Mentor Lily Schubitzke sharing ideas and strategies for working with high school students



Two Duluth East C&C mentors and their students give out kindness cards with a treat.



## Duluth C&C -

Featured in an article  
in the University of  
Minnesota Magazine  
for the College of  
Education and Human  
Development.



See Article:  
[Scaling Student Engagement](#)

# District Capacity Assessment Results Over Time

