

School-Connect Summary Report:

School-Connect Intervention and Impact on High School Students' Discipline Referrals and Academic Outcomes

Purpose

This report summarizes findings presented in *School-Connect Intervention on High School Students' Discipline Referrals and Academic Outcomes* (Hutson, Beland, & Douglass, 2016). To frame their evaluation of the effectiveness of School-Connect in Austin Independent School District (AISD), Hutson et al. (2016) addressed three key research questions:

1. Did students participating in School-Connect receive fewer disciplinary referrals over time than did matched non-participating students?
2. Did students participating in School-Connect receive higher grades and higher passing rates over time than did matched non-participating students?
3. Did students participating in School-Connect have better attendance over time than did matched non-participating students?

What is School-Connect?

School-Connect is a behavioral prevention program that addresses students' emotional, social, and academic needs as they transition from middle to high school. As part of a class dedicated to School-Connect, students learn skills to foster social competence and school-connectedness, build self-regulation skills to promote supportive relationships, and develop study skills necessary for succeeding in high school and beyond. The goal of School-Connect is that by participating in the program, students will develop strong social and emotional skills, improve academically, experience fewer disciplinary infractions, and become college and career ready.

How is School-Connect implemented in AISD?

As part of AISD's implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), School-Connect is taught to 9th-grade students during a Methods for Personal and Academic Success (MAPS) class. Students typically participate in a year-long class, but some schools offer a semester-long class. Teachers receive training in School-Connect prior to teaching MAPS. Many students enrolled in MAPS have been identified as at risk. Students are considered at-risk for many reasons, including not passing a course, not passing the State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness (STAAR) in one or more subjects, receiving a significant disciplinary action (e.g., expulsion), or being identified as living outside their home.



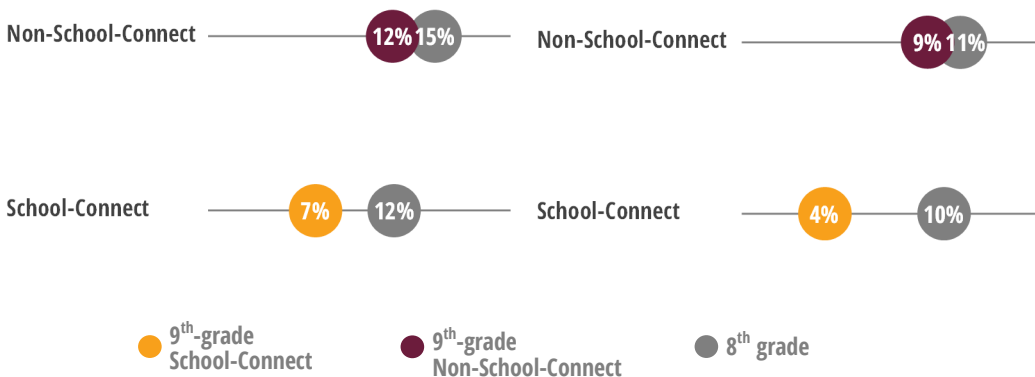
What data were analyzed?

Hutson et al. (2016) compared a sample of 9th-grade AISD students participating in School-Connect with a group of matched nonparticipating students on the following outcome measures of interest: number of days absent, discipline offenses (e.g., insubordination, disruptions, and rudeness to an adult, as well as offenses related to drugs or alcohol), and academic performance in core subject areas (i.e., English/language arts, mathematics [math], science, and social studies). Hutson et al. compared students' 8th-grade baseline data (i.e., 2013–2014) with their 9th-grade data to determine if students' outcomes improved as a result of participating in School-Connect. A six-month follow-up was also conducted comparing students' data from their 8th-grade year with data from their 10th-grade year (i.e., 2015–2016) to evaluate potential long-term effects of School-Connect.

What were the results?

Results from analyses found support for research question 1: students participating in School-Connect experienced fewer disciplinary incidents than did their non-School-Connect peers. Specifically, the percentage of students who received a disciplinary referral for being rude to an adult was significantly lower for School-Connect students than for non-School-Connect students (Figure 1). Similarly, the percentage of students receiving a disciplinary referral for disruptive behavior in 9th grade was significantly lower for students who participated in School-Connect than for their non-School-Connect peers (Figure 1).

Figure 1. From Spring 2014 (8th grade) to Spring 2015 (9th grade), students participating in School-Connect experienced a greater reduction in disciplinary offenses related to rudeness to an adult and disruption than did matched non-School-Connect students.



% of students receiving a disciplinary offense code "Rude to an adult"

% of students receiving a disciplinary offense code "Disruption"

Source. AISD discipline data, 2013–2014 through 2014–2015

Study Participants

947 AISD students enrolled in **9th grade in 2014–2015** with data available in 8th grade in 2013–2014 (the year prior to participating in School-Connect) and 10th grade in 2015–2016 (Fall semester only).

467 students **participated in School-Connect** in the 9th grade (treatment), and 480 students did not (control).

896 students had data analyzed at three different time points: **8th grade** (i.e., pre-test), **9th grade** (i.e., post-test), and **fall of 10th grade** (i.e., 6-month follow-up).

School-Connect and non-School-Connect students were **matched** on:
gender
race
economic disadvantage
at-risk status

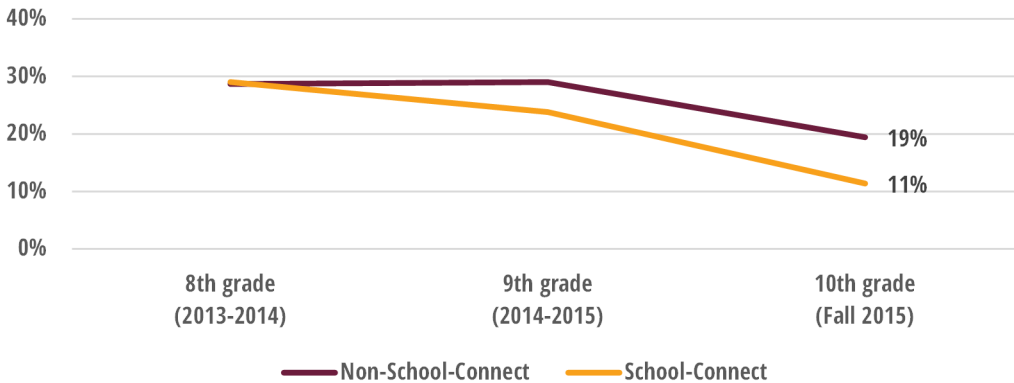


Reference:

Hutson, A, Beland, K., & Douglass, J. (2016). *School-connect intervention impact on high school students' discipline referrals and academic outcomes*. Austin, TX: Agile Analytics.

The trend did not continue when these offense codes were examined at the 6-month follow-up (i.e., fall of 10th grade). However, examining the total number of disciplinary offenses yielded positive results. Specifically, students who participated in School-Connect received fewer disciplinary referrals overall at 10th grade than did their non-School-Connect peers (Figure 2).

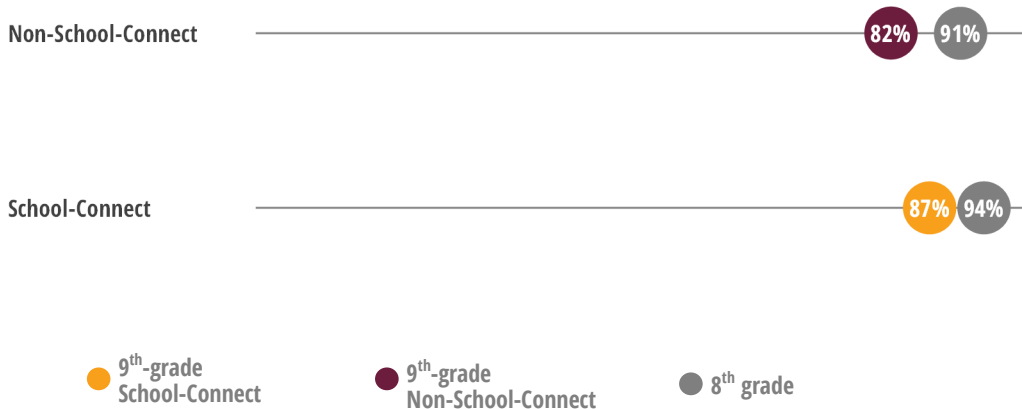
Figure 2. From Spring 2013–2014 (8th grade) to Fall 2015 (10th grade), students enrolled in **School-Connect** received fewer disciplinary referrals than did matched **non-School-Connect** students.



Source. AISD discipline data, 2013–2014 through 2014–2015

Results showed minimal support for research question 2: students participating in School-Connect outperformed Non-School-Connect peers academically. Examinations of students’ average passing rate across core subjects (i.e., English/language arts, math, science, and social studies) over time indicated students participating in School-Connect had higher average passing rates in 9th grade than did Non-School-Connect students overall (Figure 3) and in science. All students experienced a significant drop in passing rates in 9th grade, regardless of participation in School-Connect. However, at the 6-month follow-up (i.e., fall of 10th grade), School-Connect participants showed significantly lower passing rates and grades than did their comparison peers in both English/language arts and math.

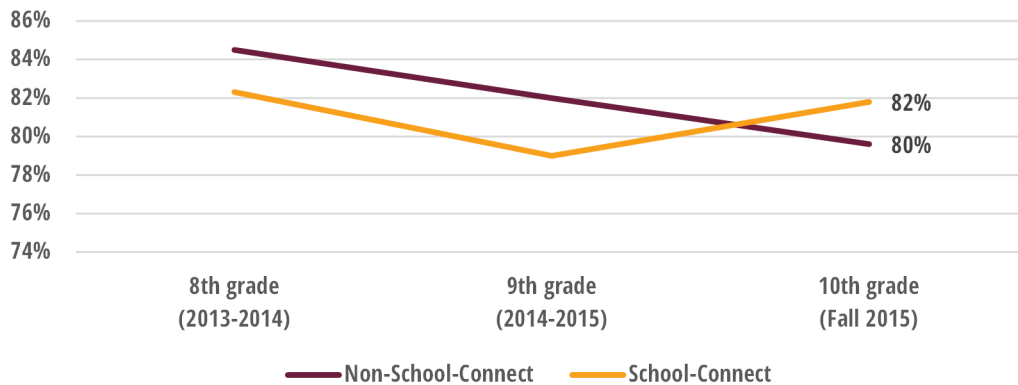
Figure 3. From Spring 2014 (8th grade) to Spring 2015 (9th grade), all students experienced a drop in average passing rates across core academic subject areas; however, 9th-grade students enrolled in **School-Connect** experienced less of a drop and had higher average passing rates across core academic subject areas than did matched **non-School-Connect** students.



Source. AISD student grades, 2013–2014 through 2014–2015

A trend emerged at the 6-month follow-up for average social studies grades. Although students participating in School-Connect had lower social studies grades during the 8th and 9th grades than did their non-School-Connect peers, participants had higher social studies grades than did their non-School-Connect peers by the 10th grade (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Although students who participated in School-Connect had lower average social studies grades prior to participation in School-Connect than did their matched non-School-Connect peers, by the fall of their 10th-grade year, students who participated in School-Connect had higher average social studies grades than did their matched non-School-Connect peers.



Source. AISD student grades, 2013–2014 through 2014–2015

Finally, there was no support for research question 3: students who participated in School-Connect had fewer absences over time than did their non-School-Connect peers. All students had high attendance rates.

Conclusion

The results presented by Hutson et al. (2016) suggest that School-Connect has a positive effect on students' academic and disciplinary outcomes in the short term (i.e., 9th grade, 2014–2015) with long term effects (i.e., 10th grade, Fall 2015) more mixed. In particular, students participating in School-Connect experienced significantly fewer disciplinary referrals in rudeness to an adult and disruptive behavior in the short-term (i.e., 9th grade) and had fewer total disciplinary offenses in the long term (i.e., fall 10th grade) than did their matched non-School-Connect peers. Students participating in School-Connect had higher passing rates averaged across core area subjects in 9th grade and higher passing rates in social studies at the 6-month follow-up than did their matched non-School-Connect peers. However, long-term trends showed lower grades and passing rates in English/language arts and math. There were no long-term or short-term effects related to attendance. Taken together, the Hutson et al. report suggests support for the claim that School-Connect helps 9th-grade students (particularly those identified as being at risk) succeed in school. However, to further support these students, interventions that continue through the rest of their high school career would be greatly beneficial.

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