

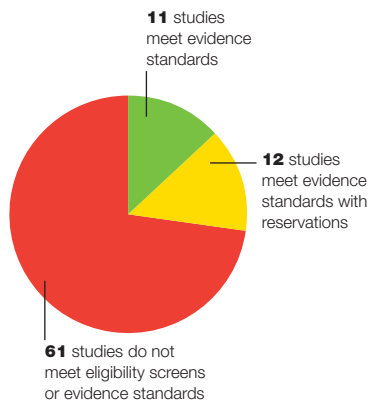
What Works Clearinghouse



Dropout Prevention

September 2008

WWC identified 84 studies of 22 dropout prevention interventions



Dropout prevention interventions are school- and community-based initiatives that aim to keep students in school and encourage them to complete their high school education. To be included in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) review, interventions have to operate within the United States and include dropout prevention or dropout recovery as one of their primary objectives. The interventions reviewed provide a mix of services, such as counseling, monitoring, school restructuring, curriculum redesign, financial incentives, and community services to mitigate factors impeding academic success.

The review focuses on three outcome domains: staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school. As of September 2008, the WWC looked at 84 studies of 22 dropout prevention interventions that qualified for review. Of these, 23 studies of 16 interventions meet WWC evidence standards—11 without reservations and 12 with reservations. The six other interventions have no studies that meet WWC eligibility or evidence screens.

In looking at the three outcome domains for the 16 interventions, four interventions had positive or potentially positive effects in two domains:

- *Accelerated Middle Schools* had potentially positive effects (+) on staying in school and positive effects on progressing in school (++)
- *ALAS (Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success)* had potentially positive effects on staying in school (+) and on progressing in school (+)
- *Career Academies* had potentially positive effects on staying in school (+) and on progressing in school (+)
- *Check & Connect* had positive effects on staying in school (++) and potentially positive effects on progressing in school (+)

Eight other interventions had potentially positive effects in one domain. Four had no discernible effects in any of the three domains.

Absence of conflict of interest

Several studies in the WWC review of dropout prevention interventions were conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Because the principal investigator for the WWC review is an MPR staff member, these MPR studies were rated by staff from Caliber, an ICF International Company, which also prepared the corresponding intervention reports. These reports were then reviewed by MPR staff as well as external peer reviewers.

Intervention Ratings for Dropout Prevention

Each dropout prevention intervention that had at least one study meeting WWC standards (with or without reservations) received a rating of effectiveness in one or more of the three outcome domains: staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school. The ratings characterize evidence in a domain, taking into account the quality of the research design, the statistical significance of the findings, the size of the difference between participants in the intervention and comparison conditions, and the consistency in findings across studies.

The research evidence can be rated as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative (see the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#)). Table 1 shows the effectiveness ratings for the 16 dropout prevention interventions (empty cells indicate that studies meeting standards did not report findings in that domain).

The findings in this topic report summarize the WWC dropout prevention intervention reports prepared through September 2008. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Table 1 Effectiveness ratings for 16 dropout prevention interventions in three domains

Intervention name	Staying in school		Progressing in school		Completing school	
	Rating of effectiveness	Extent of evidence ¹	Rating of effectiveness	Extent of evidence ¹	Rating of effectiveness	Extent of evidence ¹
Accelerated Middle Schools (no website available)		Medium to large		Medium to large		
ALAS (Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success) (http://www.ndpc-sd.org/documents/Evidence_Based_Practices/ALAS_Model_Description.pdf)		Small		Small		
Career Academies (http://ncacinc.com)		Small		Small		Small
Check & Connect (http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect)		Small		Small		Small
Financial Incentives for Teen Parents to Stay in School (no website available)		Medium to large		Small		Medium to large
First Things First (http://www.irre.org)		Small				
High School Redirection (no website available)		Medium to large		Medium to large		Medium to large
Job Corps (http://www.jobcorps.dol.gov/about.htm)				Small		Small
JOBSTART (no website available)						Small
Middle College High School (http://www.mcnc.us)		Small				Small
New Chance (no website available)						Small
Project GRAD (http://www.projectgrad.org)				Small		Small
Quantum Opportunity Program (http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/qop.php)				Small		Small
Talent Development High Schools (http://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs)				Small		
Talent Search (http://www.ed.gov/programs/triotalent/index.html)						Medium to large
Twelve Together (no website available)		Small		Small		

Note: WWC intervention reports describe each intervention and provide information on the students, cost, and scope of use. To view the intervention reports, please click on the intervention name or go to <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>. When available, websites offering additional information about the intervention are included after the intervention name.

Key

	Positive effects: strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence		Potentially positive effects: evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence		Mixed effects: evidence of inconsistent effects		No discernible effects: no affirmative evidence of effects		Potentially negative effects: evidence of a negative effect with no overriding contrary evidence		Negative effects: strong evidence of a negative effect with no overriding contrary evidence
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¹A rating of “medium to large” requires at least two studies and two schools across studies in one domain and a total sample size across studies of at least 350 students or 14 classrooms. Otherwise, the rating is “small.”

Average improvement indices

The WWC computes an average improvement index for each domain and each study and a domain average improvement index across studies of the same intervention (see the Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations).

The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition and the percentile rank of the average student in the comparison condition. It can take on values between -50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting results favorable to the intervention group. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, which is based on four factors, the improvement index is based only on the size of the difference between the intervention and the comparison conditions.¹

Staying in school

The staying in school domain includes measures of whether the student remained enrolled in school or dropped out of school without earning a high school diploma or

GED certificate, as well as the number of school days enrolled. The WWC reviewed outcomes in this domain for 9 dropout prevention interventions, and the average improvement index ranged from -3 to +42 percentile points (figure 1).

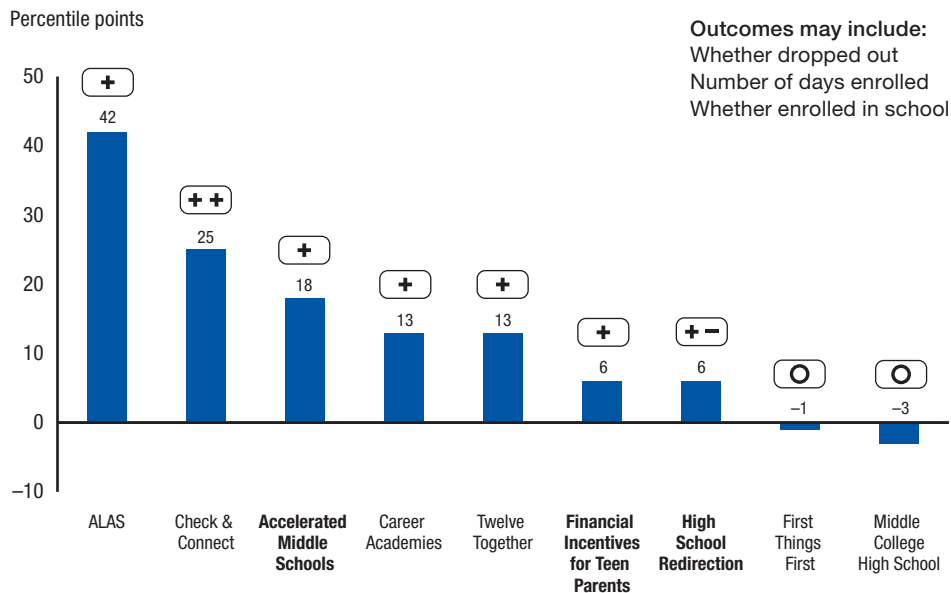
Progressing in school

The progressing in school domain includes measures of credits earned, grade promotion, whether the student is making normal progress toward graduation, and highest grade completed. The WWC reviewed outcomes in this domain for 11 interventions, and the average improvement index ranged from -6 to +35 percentile points (figure 2).

Completing school

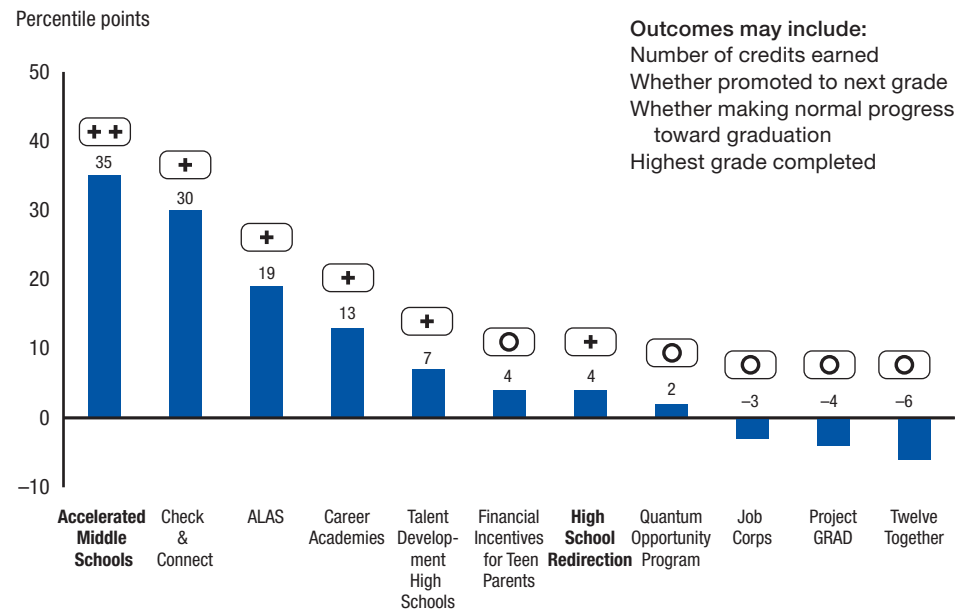
The completing school domain includes measures of whether the student earned a high school diploma or received a GED certificate. The WWC reviewed outcomes in this domain for 11 interventions, and the average improvement index ranged from -3 to +17 percentile points (figure 3).

Figure 1 Staying in school: average improvement



Note: Bold text indicates interventions with a medium to large extent of evidence.

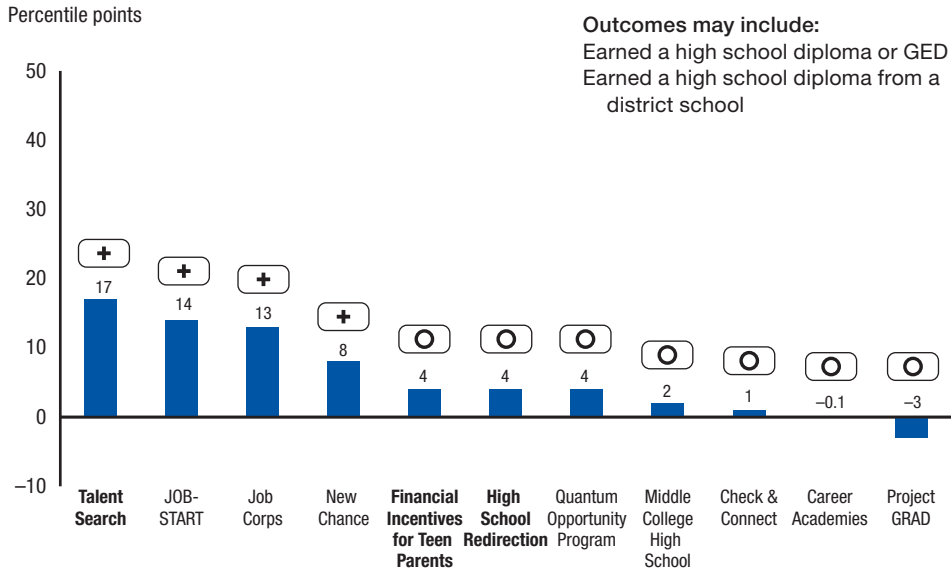
Figure 2 Progressing in school: average improvement



Note: Bold text indicates interventions with a medium to large extent of evidence.

1. To enable comparisons across interventions, improvement indices are calculated from student-level findings. For further details please see [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#).

Figure 3 Completing school: average improvement



Note: Bold text indicates interventions with a medium to large extent of evidence.

For more information about studies reviewed and WWC methodology, please see the [Dropout Prevention Technical Appendices](#).

Table 2 Interventions reviewed with no studies meeting WWC eligibility or evidence screens¹

Belief Academy (<i>no website available</i>)
Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (http://www.idra.org/Coca-Cola_Valued_Youth_Program.html)
National Guard Youth Challenge Corps (http://www.ngycp.org)
New Century High Schools Initiative (http://www.newvisions.org/schools/nchs/index.asp)
Project COFFEE (http://www.oxps.org)
Talent Development Middle Grades Program (http://web.jhu.edu/CSOS/tdmg/index.html)

1. The table includes all eligible interventions considered for the WWC dropout prevention review with no studies meeting eligibility screens or evidence standards.