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City Connects: Redesigning Student Support for Academic Success

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Introduction

Public school systems employ a range of professionals to provide support to children and youth in schools. For students living in poverty and experiencing trauma, the work of these professionals is particularly necessary and urgent. Ranging from the treatment of acute mental health issues and accommodations for students with special needs, to guidance counseling and advising, these support services are intended to facilitate conditions in which all children — but particularly those in poverty — can achieve.

And yet, while these services are considered important in discussions of student behavior and school climate, they are often dismissed as isolated from the core school functions of teaching and learning. But that situation can and must change. New research shows that effective student support not only improves the climate of a school, but it can also actually accelerate learning and improve students' academic outcomes.

City Connects (CCNX) is a school-based model of integrated student supports that has demonstrated improved academic outcomes for elementary and middle school students even after the intervention ends.¹ Unlike the multi-generational, community-based strategy of Community Schools now operating in Baltimore and in other cities, City Connects is an explicitly student-centered approach that begins in the classroom and works out from there.²

At the core of City Connects is an onsite coordinator (a licensed school counselor or social worker) who works with each teacher in the school to develop a plan of support for each child in the teacher's class based on a community audit of resources and services. Once the plans are complete and approved by families, the plans are entered into a proprietary database where they can be reviewed for follow-up and evaluation. City Connects is currently operating in 84 schools in Boston, Springfield, Brockton, and Holyoke, Massachusetts; Dayton and Springfield, Ohio; New York City, New York; Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Hartford, Connecticut.

Research shows that students who attend a CCNX school between kindergarten and fifth grade see their academic trajectories change. For example:

- Despite starting with lower report card scores in first grade, students in City Connects schools demonstrated significantly higher scores than those in comparison schools in reading, writing, and math by the end of fifth grade. The magnitude of these positive effects was as large as the negative effects of poverty.³
- After leaving the intervention and moving on to middle school, students from City Connects schools scored higher on statewide math and English language arts tests than comparison peers who were never enrolled in a City Connects school.⁴

New research shows that effective student support not only improves the climate of a school, but it can also actually accelerate learning and improve students' academic outcomes.

- Students enrolled in City Connects elementary schools demonstrated lower rates of chronic absenteeism in middle and high school (defined as being absent from school 10 percent of days or more) than students in comparison schools.⁵
- Once they reached high school, students previously enrolled in a City Connects school from kindergarten through fifth grade dropped out of school at about half the rate of students enrolled in non-City Connects schools at the same time.⁶
- Immigrant students and English Language Learners who experienced City Connects significantly outperformed those who never experienced the intervention on both reading and math achievement test scores. City Connects also narrowed achievement gaps between immigrant students and their English-proficient peers.⁷

In a 2015 landscape review of different models of integrated student support, Child Trends, a leading research organization, tapped City Connects as one of only a very small handful that had been able to demonstrate academic outcomes.⁸ These outcomes are not the result of changing curricula or introducing new models of classroom instruction; rather, they result from changing the practice of student support, often school counseling, within schools.

The purpose of this report is to explain how City Connects functions within a school in the hopes of furthering a conversation about how school counseling — and student support more broadly — can function more

effectively to facilitate academic achievement and the conditions for student success. As Baltimore City Public Schools considers options for student support strategies that lead to academic achievement, City Connects offers a model that should be considered.

The Challenge of Student Support in Schools

City Connects developed in response to two interrelated factors: the importance of outside-of-school factors in influencing student performance and the structural challenges schools face in successfully addressing those factors.

Studies have long demonstrated that factors outside of school — hunger, family instability, and physical and mental health challenges — have a significant effect on academic achievement. For students who grow up in poverty, those outside-of-school factors can be particularly acute and even traumatic. As decades of research have demonstrated, poverty contributes to the stress, instability, and hunger that can inhibit an individual's learning and development. Indeed, researchers have now documented that sustained experience with poverty yields trauma, which affects a child's physical and emotional well-being and can shape neurological development.⁹

The second factor is directly related to the first: How do schools help students receive the supports and interventions they need in order to thrive academically?

According to Mary Walsh, Ph.D., the founder of City Connects and a professor of Urban

Positive Partner Feedback

Mary Driscoll, Principal Leader at Boston Public Schools and former principal:

"Prior to City Connects, we had a guidance counselor who was more of a records person and the convener of the Student Support Team. Teachers came to the meeting with one outside partner who provided some counseling, but we didn't have many resources with which to connect students. There were lots of kids who we should have been talking about but weren't.... With City Connects, we went from 20 mph to 80 mph in terms of what we could offer. And because it looked at all kids, it felt more equitable than what we did before. It also worked. Our school of 700 students climbed from the 2nd percentile in Boston Public Schools to the 25th percentile, and I attribute much of that to City Connects."¹⁸

Education at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, schools struggle to address the needs of each child in a holistic, comprehensive way because they haven't been designed efficiently to do so. Traditional school counselors, she found, focused on the 10 percent of the students with the most pronounced challenges, leaving the rest of the students — many of whom faced mild to moderate challenges — with little to no support. "It's the squeaky wheel strategy," she explained. "And unfortunately lots of kids slide under the radar, kids who we should be talking about but aren't."

Such a critique is not new in the world of school counseling and school social work. In 1997, The Education Trust published a report charging that too many students were falling through the cracks and that school counseling had, in many cases, become more about record-keeping than support.¹⁰ In 2002, in response to The Education Trust report and significant internal discussion, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) published a new national model for school counseling. It called for programs that "are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design, and developmental in nature."¹¹ Even with this new model, the profession has struggled to develop a clear practice that facilitates academic outcomes, and as a result, it has been unable to document its effects on academic performance.

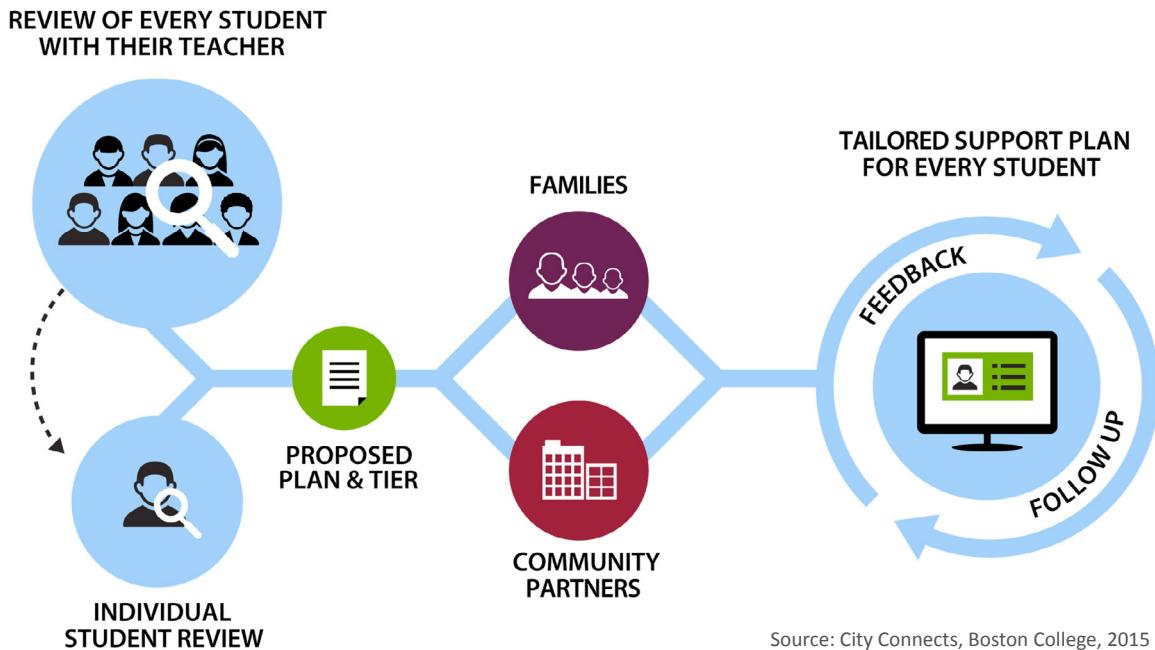
In the current age of high stakes accountability, resource-strapped districts like Baltimore City have not emphasized guidance counselors in early grades. Indeed, Baltimore City does not require a guidance or school counselor in elementary schools, leaving it to principal discretion. Today, only a handful of elementary schools in Baltimore City have school counselors.

And even if trained counselors or social workers are working directly with students in schools, the effectiveness of their work can vary depending on whether support is delivered in an asset-based approach or a deficit-based model. Best practices in the field of youth development suggest asset-based interventions that build on students' strengths and interests are often more effective than deficit-based approaches that assume something is wrong with the student and needs "fixing."¹²

Finally, a school's ability to provide optimal support to each student depends on the existence of adequate supports at the school or in the community so that every student can be matched to the appropriate programs and interventions.

In many schools, the work of establishing and maintaining support services falls on the

Figure 1: City Connects Core Practice



Source: City Connects, Boston College, 2015

principal or assistant principal who does his or her best to secure the right help. Former principal and City Connects co-founder Patricia DiNatale explained that many of her colleagues “were grabbing at pieces” in order to have what his or her students needed. “One might have gotten an enrichment program for the school. Another might have found a bullying prevention program. But it’s often a little of this or a little of that.”

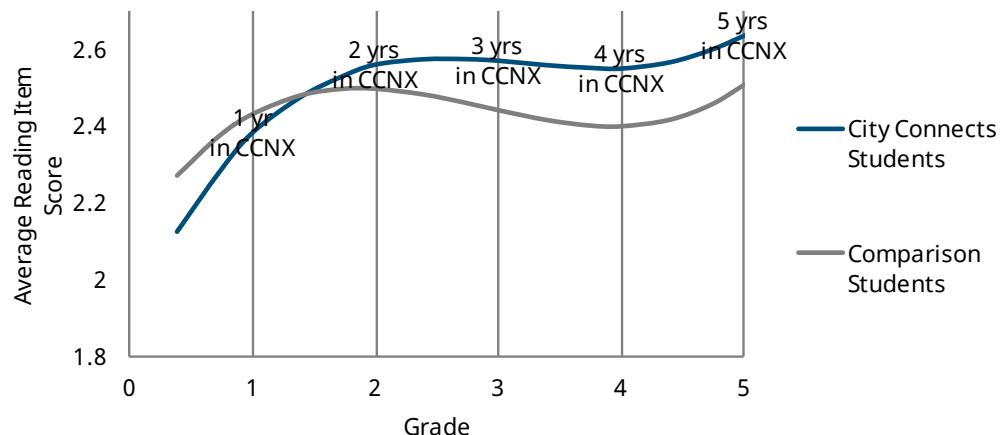
In some cases, necessary services are unavailable at the school. In other cases, schools receive abundant offers of services from the district and governments, in addition to community partner-led academic and enrichment activities and programs, and must work hard to manage those external relationships. Community Schools in Baltimore City and across the country have done invaluable work in connecting community partners and resources to schools while engaging and supporting families. Yet with so much effort directed outward, there has not been enough focus on a school’s more inward needs: working directly with every teacher,

assessing each student’s unique strengths and needs, and providing tailored supports that best serve them.

The Core Practice of City Connects

The practice of City Connects is led by a full-time School Site Coordinator (SSC) in each school, trained as a school counselor or social worker, who links students to a customized set of services through collaboration with families, teachers, school staff, and community agencies. During the fall months of the academic year, the SSC meets with each teacher in the school for a Whole Class Review (WCR) in which they assess the strengths and needs of each student across four developmental domains (academic, social/emotional/behavioral, health, and family). The SSC then tiers each student in the school on the basis of his or her strengths and needs, and develops an individually tailored plan to support each student. Students identified as facing the highest risks are reviewed in a meeting with teachers, family members, and the student.

Figure 2: Improved Academic Performance, Elementary Reading, Grades K-5



Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

In developing the individual plans for each student in the school, the SSC draws on a database of community and government services that have been prepopulated and coded by City Connects in its proprietary data management system, the Student Support Intervention System (SSIS). Services may be preventive and enrichment-oriented in nature, including before- and after-school programs, sports, summer programs, and health and wellness classes; early intervention services such as mentoring, academic support, social skills interventions, and tutoring; or more intensive services or crisis interventions such as mental health counseling, health services, screening or diagnostic testing, violence intervention, or family counseling. Some of those programs may occur on-site at the school and others might be close by in the community, and some might be off-site and require transportation. The SSC weighs each student's strengths and needs, and considers each program's fit when developing a proposed plan. The plans are adjusted as necessary over the course of the year through follow-ups with the teachers, students, and families, and the data regarding attendance and outcomes are entered into the SSIS system.

The School Site Coordinator uses the SSIS dashboards to ensure that the program is being implemented with fidelity and that all students

are being served. Alerts, reports, and flags built into SSIS assist the SSC in following up with the appropriate students, teachers, and parents. The plans are updated each spring and the process begins again each fall, allowing the plans to evolve as students develop and their needs change.

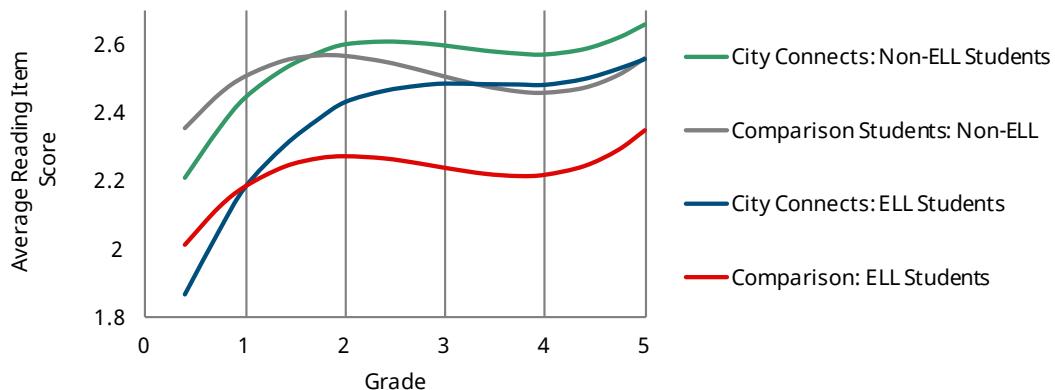
Academic and Other Outcomes That "Stick"

City Connects was first implemented in academic year 2001-2002 in six Boston schools and, from the beginning, was complemented by a rigorous research and evaluation plan that included comparison data from matched Boston Public Schools (BPS), rigorous data collection at the school site, and a team of evaluators at Boston College. This work reveals that City Connects students outperformed their BPS comparison students during the intervention and, even more significantly, after the intervention was over in fifth grade.

Improved Academic Performance During the Intervention

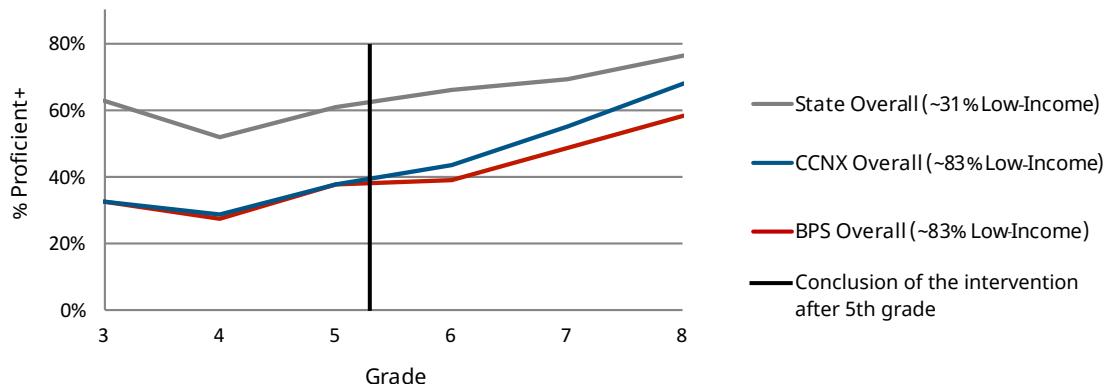
Looking first at changes in academic performance during the intervention, Figure 2 shows that City Connects students entered first grade performing below the comparison set of matched students in Boston Public Schools in

Figure 3: Improved Academic Performance, Elementary Reading, for English Language Learners (ELL)



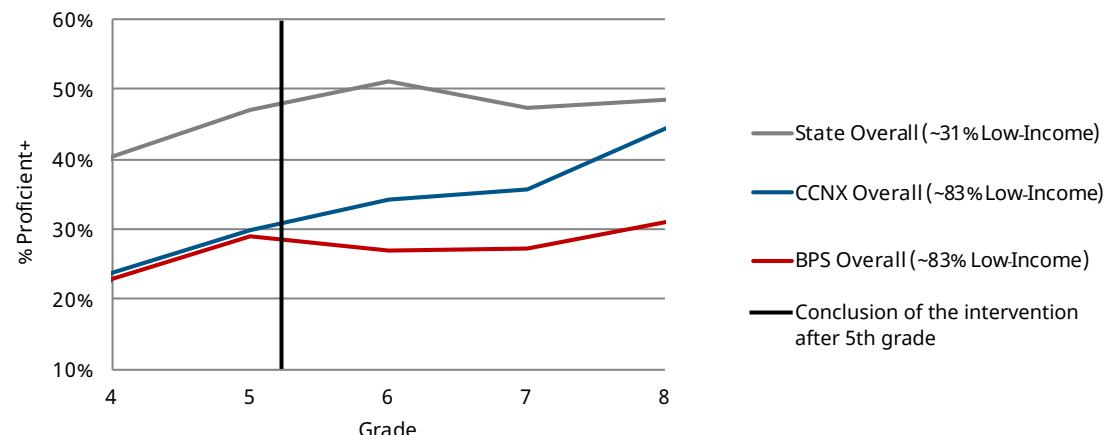
Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Figure 4: Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient or Above, MCAS English Language Arts



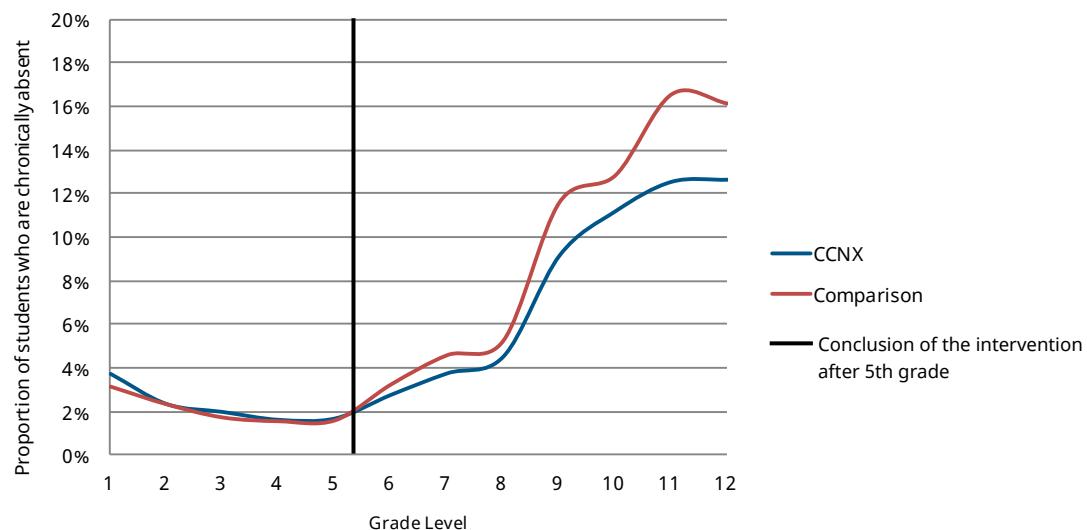
Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Figure 5: Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient or Above, MCAS Math



Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Figure 6: Proportion of Students who were Chronically Absent, CCNX vs. Comparison Students



Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

reading. But after first grade, they surpassed the reading scores of the comparison students and continued to outperform them throughout each year of elementary school. Figure 3 shows that English Language Learners (ELL) saw tremendous gains as a result of the intervention and closed the gap with non-ELL comparison students.

Improved Academic Performance After the Intervention

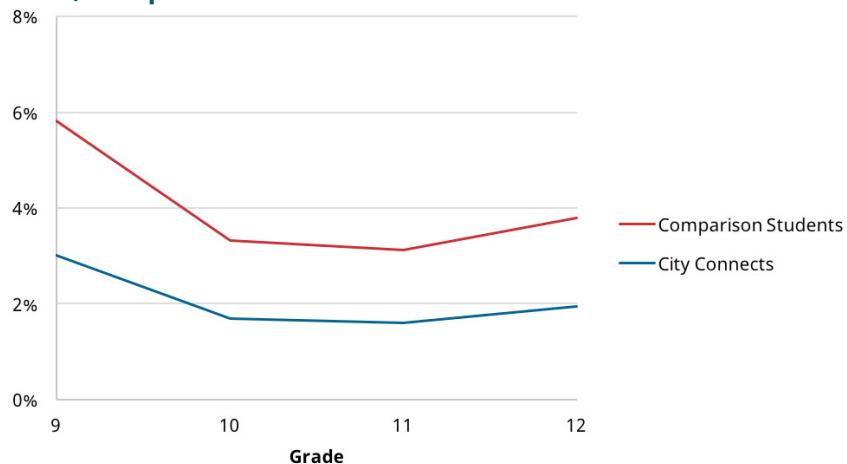
The improvement in student academic outcomes is even more remarkable in the years after the intervention concludes. Figures 4 and 5 compare the performance of three sets of students on the MCAS English language arts and math tests between grades four and eight. In both figures, the top line represents the performance of Massachusetts students overall (approximately 31 percent low-income) and the bottom line is the performance of Boston Public Schools (approximately 83 percent low-income). The difference between the two lines is the achievement gap between largely non-poor Massachusetts schools and largely poor Boston schools. The line in the middle represents the performance of CCNX students. The vertical line marks the end of the intervention in grade five.

Students who attended City Connects schools in Boston (also approximately 83 percent low-income) between kindergarten and fifth grade outperformed their comparison BPS students in middle school, after the intervention ended. Indeed, they came close to closing the achievement gap with largely non-poor Massachusetts students.

Improved Attendance Rates After the Intervention

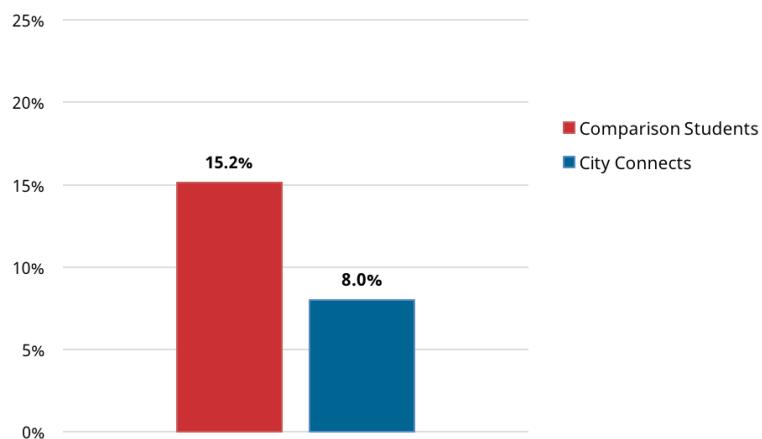
High rates of absenteeism from school are an important predictor of academic risk and dropout. Students who attended City Connects schools in elementary school (K-5) are significantly less likely to be chronically absent (defined as being absent for 10 percent or more of the days within the school year) than students who never attended City Connects schools. Figure 6 presents the longitudinal change in chronic absenteeism for the City Connects and comparison groups. Like Figures 4 and 5, it follows the students after the intervention ends in fifth grade.

Figure 7: Proportion of Students who Drop Out from School at Each High School Grade Level, Comparison vs. CCNX Students



Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Figure 8: Cumulative Percentage of Students who Drop Out from High School, Comparison vs. CCNX Students



Source: City Connects Progress Report 2014, CCNX and comparison schools: Boston Public Schools MCAS data, 2003-2009. Boston Public Schools and state data: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Declining Dropout Rates After the Intervention

Students who attended City Connects schools in elementary school are significantly less likely to drop out of high school than comparison students who attended non-City Connects elementary schools.¹³ As shown in Figure 7, this is true at every grade level, but it is particularly noteworthy in grade nine when the likelihood of dropping out approaches 6 percent for the comparison set of Boston Public School students but hovers around 3

percent for those who received City Connects in elementary school.

This change in dropout patterns adds up. City Connects finds that the cumulative percentage of students who drop out across the four years of high school is 8 percent for students who received City Connects in elementary school. By contrast, it was almost double, 15 percent, among comparison students. This difference, shown in Figure 8, translates to almost 50 percent lower odds of dropping out in high school for students in City Connects elementary schools.

City Connects students outperformed their Boston Public School comparison students during the intervention and, even more significantly, after the intervention was over in fifth grade.

Explaining the Outcomes: What Drives the Success of City Connects?

1. City Connects focuses on connecting **each** child with the **unique, tailored** set of prevention, intervention, and enrichment services s/he needs to thrive.

Each fall, the School Site Coordinator meets with every teacher and discusses each child in the room — where they are thriving, what they are enjoying and also where they are struggling, and what challenges they are facing. They discuss not only the student's academic performance but also his or her social and emotional well-being, health, and family circumstances. Importantly, in each aspect of their conversation, the teacher and the SSC focus on student strengths, in addition to their needs. Those conversations provide the basis for an individually tailored plan for each student, which ensures that no student is left behind and each receives what he or she most needs to succeed and thrive.

While the model is prescriptive in its practice, the plans it generates are anything but prescriptive. They are shaped by each student and the strengths and needs he or she has; moreover, the plans are all informed by what is happening in the broader community. "If we're in a school where homelessness is a persistent problem, we're going to focus there," said DiNatale. "If we're in a school where the pervasive problem is violence, then we'll lean that way. The practice allows for that degree of customization."

In traditional student support systems, a small percentage of students receive the bulk of attention, whether due to student emergencies or

the convening of Student Support Teams. The systemic nature of City Connects backs up this more individually specific work while ensuring that students who aren't in crisis and who seem to be "doing fine" are being supported and encouraged.

2. City Connects deliberately and systematically works with **all teachers** and, by doing so, engages and supports them as partners in their students' success.

City Connects provides a structure that supports every teacher in the building. There is a growing body of research that suggests why such a structure can be transformative for teachers and their students. At a basic level, most educators today accept that students' academic experiences are impacted by a wide range of social, behavioral, familial, and health-related factors. Teachers are expected to understand the "whole child" and differentiate instruction and support accordingly. But that understanding can be difficult to acquire from bits of conversation, test scores, and even the most careful of observations. It can also be frustrating, depressing, and isolating work.

Teachers who *have* a coherent, systematic way to develop that understanding, through a program like City Connects, are better positioned to change their mindsets, their classroom practices, and their relationships with students. And new research shows that many do. In a two-year study of teacher attitudes and experiences, teachers supported by City Connects reported feeling better equipped to deal with challenging student

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behavior after working with City Connects, and most teachers reported changing classroom practices (such as by providing breaks) after learning more about the individual strengths and needs of his or her students. Moreover, teachers reported that City Connects eased their own stress and made them feel more supported in their day-to-day work with students, which could have contributed indirectly to positive academic outcomes for their students.¹⁴

3. City Connects builds on **existing professional** infrastructure; uses **data** to drive improvement; is committed to **fidelity** of implementation; and provides high quality, regular **support** for the School Site Coordinator.

City Connects grew out of existing school structures and a desire to reform them from the inside out. As a result, it relies on an existing field of student support professionals while specifying a set of practices, professional development opportunities, and ongoing evaluation that enables those professionals to do their jobs most effectively. There is a specific job description, comprehensive onboarding, and ongoing professional development led by Boston College and supported by local leadership.

Maintaining student records in the SSIS data system is an essential part of the SSC's work and plays a vital part in the program's success. The SSIS data system is used for three purposes: 1) record-keeping at the individual and school level; 2) monitoring

and evaluating the implementation of the intervention throughout the school year; and 3) conducting research on the effectiveness of the intervention. In schools with high rates of teacher and principal turnover, this kind of student record-keeping is invaluable as it allows a continuity of care and stability of support. It also means that as students move from one school to the other, their comprehensive records can follow them. Finally, the data system enables principals, district administrators, and other funders to better understand the services being utilized and the outcomes achieved.

The ongoing professional support and comprehensive data system allow the program to be implemented with a high degree of fidelity. The model is both robust and flexible; its core practices can be implemented consistently in any school, and the database allows fidelity to be monitored. While customization happens at the level of the individual student plans, the core practice is always the same, which gives integrity to the work and to the outcomes it produces.

Some may claim that City Connects is "just counseling," and to a certain extent, that's precisely right. City Connects echoes the American School Counselor Association's best practices for what a school counseling program should look like. Unfortunately, however, many schools have nothing that looks like this kind of program. Some do not have the necessary staff; others might have talented, hard-working individuals doing whatever they can do to help students, but they are working in a chaotic

Positive Partner Feedback

Ron Cope, Program Manager for City Connects at the Children's Aid Society of New York:

"The whole-class review allows us to flag issues and understand who's there, where they came from, and what they need. So we know quickly, for example, who went to Head Start and who went to pre-K and who's coming to us directly from the arms of Abuela. That knowledge makes us all better."

"The CCNX process allowed us to challenge our practice in our schools. Without City Connects we were doing a lot of quick assessments on the fly, which meant that we ended up sending lots of kids for mental health services because they needed something and that seemed like a good thing to provide. But City Connects has challenged us on that front and made us better. It might not be a mental health issue; a student might have a major challenge with reading. We didn't know until we talked with each teacher systematically."¹⁹

environment that is crisis-driven and reactive. Walsh maintains that student support has to be viewed with the same seriousness as math and reading. "We don't want something so loose that everyone is doing whatever they want. We would never do that with math, with literacy. We shouldn't do it with student support."

4. City Connects has been **successfully replicated** in cities outside of Boston.

Launched in a handful of Boston schools 15 years ago, City Connects has grown slowly and steadily while refining its practice and growing its evidence base. Now in 84 schools in nine cities, it has proven a replicable model capable of adapting to different districts and community populations.

City Connects' expansion into districts outside of Boston has almost always come at the behest of a district superintendent interested in replicating City Connects' outcomes. Most recently, in the 2015-2016 school year, the superintendent of the Hartford, Connecticut public schools invited City Connects to support five of its lowest performing schools, two of which were Community Schools and three were not. Hartford has since expanded its contract to include two more in the upcoming school year. Even as it has grown, City Connects

retains its popularity in its hometown. There are 14 Boston Public Schools on the waiting list to partner with City Connects.

When City Connects expands into a new city, it hires local leaders and school personnel to direct the program and its work in schools. Local staff bring knowledge of the community and the students who will be served by the program, and they are trained and supported in their work by the City Connects team in Boston and peers across the network. In this way, the community benefits both from national best practices and local leadership and expertise. Local capacity is also enhanced as the practice is implemented and adapted to local communities and takes root within schools and school districts.

Would it Work in Baltimore?

City Connects is predicated on being able to access programs and interventions at school and in the community. Baltimore's Community School strategy, currently being implemented in 54 schools with five more in the planning stage, has built a robust network of resources and partnerships that provide a strong foundation for the introduction of City Connects. Whether City Connects is

Positive Partner Feedback

Sandra Ward, Director of Community Partnerships, Hartford Public Schools:

"We did not have a process, let alone a robust process for Student Support Teams, and our social workers were drowning in IEPs and crisis management. City Connects brings in a person whose job is to create a system, not just for the kids in crisis but for every kid."

"It isn't about adding more capacity in order to continue to operate in chaos-mode. It's about changing how we do business."²⁰

implemented in existing Community Schools to deepen and enhance the work they are already doing, or it is deployed in one of the 120+ non-Community Schools, it will increase the number of students receiving tailored enrichments, services, and supports.

Even with Baltimore's foundation of resources and partnerships, there is still a question as to whether City Connects will operate with the same level of success in schools where those programs are difficult to access. In Boston, for example, City Connects can leverage that city's (highly functioning) public transportation system to bring services to students or take students to services. Baltimore's public transportation is less robust, and large areas of the city are isolated from resources in other areas.

A second major challenge involves the commitment of Baltimore City Schools to this initiative. In a high-needs district with multiple priorities and limited funding, even the highest potential programs can go unfunded. City Connects requires the addition of a full-time school counselor or school social worker for every 400 students in a school, in addition to costs associated with program

implementation and support. These are not insignificant burdens.

And yet, one of City Connects' greatest assets is its ability to optimize human and programmatic resources already being spent. Researchers at Columbia University found that City Connects had a program benefit cost ratio of 3:1, a calculation that included not only City Connects' direct costs but also a portion of the costs of community partner services received by students.¹⁵ *The New York Times* recently highlighted the Columbia report's key finding that "providing the program to 100 students over six years would cost society \$457,000 but yield \$1,385,000 in social benefits" including higher incomes, lower incarceration rates, better health, and less reliance on welfare.¹⁶ If the additional community partner costs are excluded from the calculation, researchers estimated a benefit cost ratio of 11:1.¹⁷

City Connects has a proven record of improving student achievement by working directly with teachers to optimize and individualize asset-based student support within the schoolhouse. As Baltimore City Public Schools explores how best to integrate comprehensive student support in its schools, City Connects should be at the top of the list for consideration.

Endnotes

- 1 Mary Walsh et al., "A New Model for Student Support in High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools: Effects on Elementary and Middle School Academic Outcomes," *American Educational Research Journal* 51, no. 4 (August 2014): 704-37.
- 2 Community Schools in Baltimore are partnerships between Baltimore City Schools, the Family League, and Lead Agencies. Community Schools are committed to enhancing school climate and student well-being by supporting children, their families, and the communities in which they live. There are currently 59 schools in Baltimore's Community School Strategy, and each Community School has a full-time site coordinator and participates in professional development with the Family League.
- 3 *The Impact of City Connects: Annual Report 2010* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Optimized Student Support, Lynch School of Education, Boston College). Available: www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/lsoe/cityconnects/pdf/CityConnects_AnnualReport_2010_web.pdf
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- 10 The Education Trust, "Transformation of Role of School Counselor," Washington, DC, November 25, 1997.
- 11 <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/ASCA%20National%20Model%20Templates/ANMExecSumm.pdf> Accessed January 28, 2016.
- 12 "Making the Grade."
- 13 In conducting this analysis, City Connects examined student-level longitudinal enrollment data and excluded students who transferred to a different district or were retained in grade. As a result, these findings (for both the treatment and the control groups) represent a narrowly defined (and thus more accurate) "dropout" population.
- 14 Erin Sibley et al., "The Impact of Comprehensive Student Support on Teachers: Knowledge of the Whole Child, Classroom Practice, and Teacher Support" (manuscript under review).
- 15 A. Brooks Bowden et al., "A Benefit-Cost Analysis of City Connects" (Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2015).
- 16 David L. Kirp, "To Teach a Child to Read, First Give Him Glasses," *The New York Times*, August 6, 2016.
- 17 "A Benefit-Cost Analysis of City Connects."
- 18 Mary Driscoll, interview with author, February 18, 2016.
- 19 Ron Cope, interview with author, April 10, 2015.
- 20 Sandra Ward, interview with author, August 18, 2016.

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By Sarah Manekin, Ph.D., Abell Foundation
October 2016

About the Abell Foundation

The Abell Foundation is dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life in Maryland, with a particular focus on Baltimore. The Foundation places a strong emphasis on opening the doors of opportunity to the disenfranchised, believing that no community can thrive if those who live on the margins of it are not included.

Inherent in the working philosophy of the Abell Foundation is the strong belief that a community faced with complicated, seemingly intractable challenges is well-served by thought-provoking, research-based information. To that end, the Foundation publishes background studies of selected issues on the public agenda for the benefit of government officials; leaders in business, industry and academia; and the general public.

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