



Evidence in Action

A K20 Center Research Brief

A Tier 1 Intervention to Increase Ninth Grade Engagement and Success

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Introduction

This intervention brief explores the research article titled "A Tier 1 Intervention to Increase Ninth Grade Engagement and Success" by Flannery et al. (2020). The authors highlight the critical importance of 9th grade as a pivotal year for determining high school graduation rates. They cite literature indicating that students who fall behind in 9th grade are significantly less likely to graduate. The research problem centers on the need for effective interventions to increase school engagement, attendance, credits earned, and GPA among 9th graders. The objectives of the study were to assess the effects of a Tier 1 intervention model designed to improve these outcomes. The significance of the research lies in its potential to inform practices that can prevent high school dropout and promote student success.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study employed a randomized controlled trial design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Freshmen Success (FS) intervention. Schools were randomly assigned to either the treatment group, which implemented the FS components, or the control group, which continued with business as usual.

Sample:

The study included 1,588 9th grade students across four comprehensive high schools in the Pacific Northwest. Two schools were assigned to the treatment group, and two schools were assigned to the control group. The sample was diverse, with students from various ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses.

Data Analysis:

Data were collected on student motivation, engagement, attendance, credits earned, and GPA. The analysis involved multilevel linear regressions to account for clustering at the school level. Covariates such as 8th grade attendance and initial motivation and engagement scores were included in the models. Effect sizes were calculated to assess the impact of the intervention.

Results

The FS intervention had several significant outcomes:



- **Motivation and Engagement:** Students in the treatment schools showed higher levels of positive motivation and engagement, and lower levels of negative engagement compared to control schools. These effects were small but educationally meaningful.
- **Attendance:** The intervention led to a slight but significant increase in attendance rates among 9th graders in the treatment schools.
- **Credits Earned:** There was a large effect on credits earned, with students in the treatment schools earning significantly more credits than those in control schools.
- **GPA:** No significant differences were found in GPA between treatment and control schools.

These results suggest that the FS intervention can effectively increase student engagement, attendance, and credit accrual, which are critical factors for high school success.

Application into Practice

To replicate the FS intervention in a school context, the following steps can be taken:

1. **Establish a 9th Grade Leadership Team:** Form a team consisting of administrators, teachers, and support staff to monitor implementation and use data for decision-making.
2. **Implement the FS Curriculum:** Develop and deliver a curriculum focused on engagement skills, including study strategies, goal setting, and problem-solving. This can be integrated into advisory periods or other relevant classes.
3. **Utilize Peer Navigators:** Recruit and train upperclassmen to support 9th graders, reinforcing curricular concepts and providing guidance on school engagement.

By following these steps, schools can create a supportive environment that fosters 9th grade student success and reduces the risk of dropout.

Work Cited

Flannery, K. B., McGrath Kato, M., Kittelman, A., McIntosh, K., & Triplett, D. (2020). A Tier 1 Intervention to Increase Ninth Grade Engagement and Success. *School Psychology*, 35(1), 88-98. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000347>