



Trialling Check and Connect in selected secondary schools

Check and Connect is a long-term mentoring programme for students at risk of disengaging from school.

The Ministry of Education is trialling Check and Connect as part of the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project, through the Positive Behaviour for Learning programme (PB4L).

The Check and Connect trials are being developed by the Ministry of Education in partnership with a number of other organisations. The **key partners** are Schools, Ministry of Social Development, NGOs employing Youth Workers, Iwi and New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Expected benefits of Check and Connect

The Check and Connect programme was developed by the University of Minnesota in the late 1990s. It has proved to be successful and is currently offered by a number of schools across the United States, Canada and Europe.

In New Zealand, Check and Connect has demonstrated a number of benefits in Christchurch, where it has been piloted as part of the region's earthquake recovery programme.

In the short term, we expect students participating in the Check and Connect programme to:

- develop a positive attitude to learning
- increase their school attendance
- improve their academic performance.

In the longer term we would expect to see these benefits accumulate, with students participating in Check and Connect having:

- improved engagement and retention rates
- increased levels of problem solving skills
- higher levels of commitment to school and learning.

How Check and Connect works

The school nominates students based on these risk indicators:

- lateness to school
- lateness to class
- absenteeism (days and periods)
- stand downs
- referral room instances
- homework not completed
- students not achieving at their ability level.

Students accepted onto the programme are matched with a suitable and trained mentor – usually a youth worker employed by **an NGO**.

The mentor works with the student to help them to set and achieve their educational goals over a two year period. This includes working with the student's whānau/family and school, and other service providers who can help the student achieve their goals.

The mentors receive professional case supervision from an experienced supervisor employed by the **Ministry of Education** – this person is usually an educational psychologist.

This Check & Connect supervisor also:

- contributes to decisions about which students are accepted onto the programme
- works with the student's school to enable the student to access school-based learning support
- ensures youth workers are maintaining programme fidelity
- makes monthly reports to Trial Leaders to support the evaluation of the trial
- maintains fidelity with the Check and Connect practice model
- liaises with PB4L Coordinators and School-Wide Practitioners about school systems to support students nominated for the programme
- refers students to any additional, specialised support services that they may require.

Where the trials are happening

Check and Connect is being trialled as part of the Ministry of Social Development's *Youth Workers in Secondary Schools* initiative in Auckland, Wellington, Hawkes Bay and Te Tai Tokerau.

Trials are also being developed with the Social Sector Trial in Levin, and with the Ministry of Education taking a lead in two further trials in Palmerston North and Hamilton.

Christchurch has been piloting Check and Connect as part of the response to the earthquakes, and that service is also contributing to these trials.

What the trials will achieve

By trialling Check and Connect in a number of schools across the country, the Ministry of Education will work with key partners involved in all the trials to develop:

- a New Zealand Framework for Check and Connect which sets out the policy and operational context unique to our country (by March 2015)
- a service delivery model or models that could be used to implement the programme nationally (by September 2015)
- a robust analysis of the costs and benefits of these models (by January 2016)
- a set of recommendations for national implementation (by April 2016).

To support these developments, trials will be closely monitored and **New Zealand Council for Educational Research** will be evaluating progress and impacts. Information from the monitoring and evaluation activities will be regularly fed back to people involved with the trials.