

Mentoring

This is one of a series of evidence-based strategies to help states and school districts invest Covid relief aid effectively. Read all 18 strategies in FutureEd's [Covid Relief Playbook](#).

Congressional Covid relief funding can be used to help students make up for lost instructional time through summer learning, afterschool programming, tutoring, and more. Mentoring programs are another evidence-based intervention. The National Mentoring Resource Center describes [mentoring](#) as one-to-one, group, or team environments that offer a variety of activities aimed at academic gains, improvements in school connectedness, attendance, and goals such as personal growth, artistic expression, future planning, and goal setting. Often a component of other interventions like tutoring, mentoring has been shown to boost academic achievement and social-emotional development.

THE RESEARCH

Researchers at the University of Munich, Kiel University, Catholic University, and Eichstaett-Ingolstadt in Germany randomly assigned 153 eighth- and ninth-graders to a mentoring program staffed by university students. The researchers found that participation in the program closed more than half of the math achievement gap between lower-income students and their more affluent peers. Further, the researchers found that program participation improved patience and social skills for lower-income students, as reported in their 2021 [study](#).

In June 2020, researchers from the University of Bonn, LMU Munich, and the University of Cologne [explored](#) the impact of low intensity mentoring on long-term education outcomes for German students. They found that after one year of mentoring by highly skilled mentors, lower-income students were 20 percent more likely than their un-mentored peers to enter rigorous academic programs rather than vocational, or low-track, programs.

Check & Connect, a student-engagement intervention developed in the 1990s, trains and deploys mentors to monitor at-risk students for early warning signs of leaving school. The program is listed in the U.S. Institute of Education Sciences [What Works Clearinghouse](#) as an evidence-based approach for dropout prevention. A University of Minnesota [study](#) of elementary students with problematic attendance found that 40 percent of students receiving Check & Connect services were engaged in class and regularly attending school after two years in the program—an improvement of 135 percent over baseline behavior—while 86 percent were engaged and arrived at school on time—an improvement of 104 percent over baseline behavior.

In 2018, Johns Hopkins University researchers Robert Balfanz and Vaughan Byrnes released a [study](#) demonstrating the impact of NYC's Success Mentor Corps Program on students who were chronically absent the prior school year. Students who received individual mentoring along with other attendance interventions gained almost two additional weeks (nine days) of school a year when compared to similar students who did not receive mentoring. High school students who improved their attendance also saw a slight increase in their grades and were less likely to leave school in the following years.

In Chicago, a group program known as Becoming a Man brings together mentoring and tutoring in after school sessions. The program helps students work on self-reflection, problem-solving, and relaxation strategies, as well as offering opportunities to try boxing and other sports. The participants receive math tutoring through MATCH Education. A 2014 [study](#) led by Duke University

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researcher Philip C. Cook found that students involved in the experiment showed significant academic benefits and gained 13 additional days of attendance, compared to similar students who were not involved.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Both tutoring and mentoring offer students a connection to a caring adult at school, a key to student success. The New York City program that Balfanz and Bynes studied included mentors drawn from the school staff, community-based organizations, and, in some cases, older students. In all cases, the results were strongest when mentors were in school at least three days a week; worked with a defined, managed caseload; had access to student data; and had a voice at a weekly principal-led meeting. Covid relief money could be used to launch a mentoring program and provide the necessary training and background checks.

RESEARCH

- [Can Mentoring Alleviate Family Disadvantage in Adolescence? A Field Experiment to Improve Labor-Market Prospects: **STRONG**](#)
- [Mentoring and Schooling Decisions: Causal Evidence: **STRONG**](#)
- [Addressing Student Engagement and Truancy Prevention During Elementary Years: A Replication Study of the Check & Connect Model: **STRONG**](#)
- [Using Data and the Human Touch: Evaluating the NYC Inter-Agency Campaign to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism: **PROMISING for ENTIRE CAMPAIGN**](#)
- [The \(Surprising\) Efficacy of Academic and Behavioral Intervention with Disadvantaged Youth: Results from a Randomized Experiment in Chicago: **PROMISING**](#)

RESOURCES

- [The Mentoring Effect](#)
- [Relationships Matter Toolkit](#)
- [What Research Says About School-Based Mentoring](#)
- [Student Success Planning with Adult Navigators](#)