

READINESS TOOL FOR IMPLEMENTING CHECK & CONNECT

The *Readiness Tool for Implementing Check & Connect* (C&C) is designed for leadership teams to evaluate a site's readiness to implement Check & Connect. This tool is organized into two parts: *Program Indicators* and *Implementing Site Indicators*.

Within each part, there are three components for sites to discuss and analyze while using this exploration tool:

- **PART 1: PROGRAM INDICATORS**
 - Evidence
 - Usability
 - Supports

- **PART 2: IMPLEMENTING SITE INDICATORS**
 - Need
 - Fit with Current Initiatives
 - Capacity to Implement

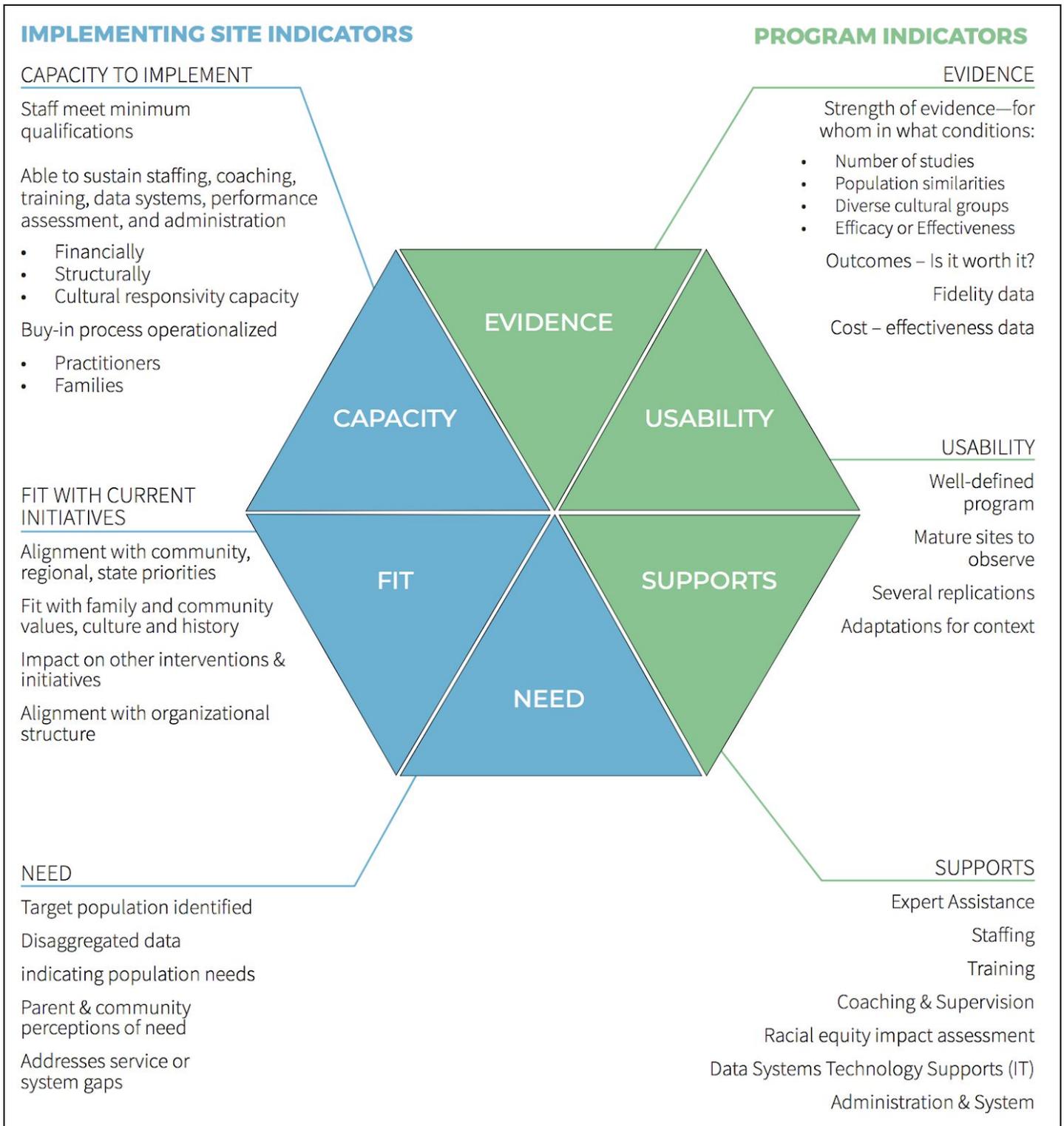
INSTRUCTIONS: Follow the checklist below to complete the *Readiness Tool for Implementing Check & Connect*:

- Identify your leadership team** who will be evaluating your site's readiness to implement Check & Connect. Begin by reviewing the NIRN Hexagon Tool on page 2.
- Review PART 1: PROGRAM INDICATORS** (*Evidence, Usability & Supports*) that the Check & Connect team has completed for you outlining the program's evidence, usability and supports available through implementing on pages 3 - 8.
- Complete** as a team, **PART 2: IMPLEMENTING SITE INDICATORS** (*Need, Fit & Capacity to Implement*) by answering each of the guiding questions on pages 9 - 13.
- Rate** on a 1 - 5 scale your readiness for each **IMPLEMENTING SITE INDICATOR** (*Need, Fit & Capacity to Implement*):



- Summarize** your findings and/or create an action plan for your site's next steps.

The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool



1. Are there research data available to demonstrate the effectiveness (e.g. randomized trials, quasi-experimental designs) of the program or practice? If yes, provide citations or links to reports or publications.

- C&C is the only dropout prevention intervention to show positive effects for staying in school based on meeting the evidence standards of the **What Works Clearinghouse**:
 - [What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report: Check & Connect](#), Updated May 2015

2. What is the strength of the evidence? Under what conditions was the evidence developed?

- Two studies reviewed by the WWC, showed that C&C had a statistically significant positive impact in the **Staying in School** domain. In this domain, C&C received a **Positive Effects** rating indicating “strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence.” The evidence was developed from two randomized control trials in urban high schools.
- One study reviewed by the WWC showed that C&C had a statistically significant positive impact in the **Progressing in School** domain. In this domain, C&C received a **Potentially Positive Effects** rating indicating “evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence.” The evidence was developed from a randomized control trial of 9th grade students in an urban high school.

3. What outcomes are expected when the program or practice is implemented as intended? How much of a change can be expected?

- Demonstrated outcomes of Check & Connect include:
 - *Decrease in truancy, tardies, behavior referrals, and dropout rates;*
 - *Increase in attendance, persistence in school, credits accrued, and school completion; and*
 - *Impact on literacy*

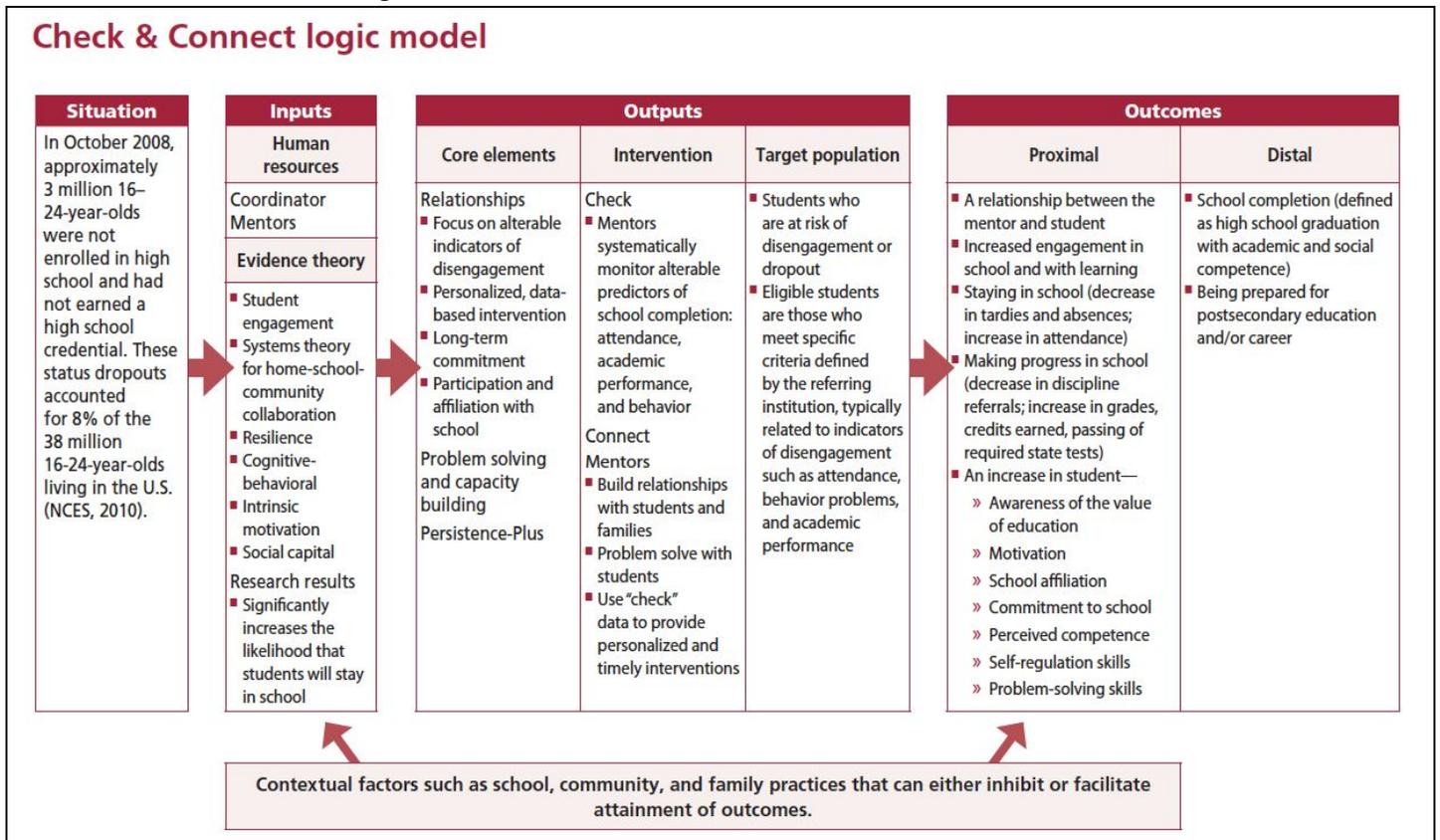
4. If research data are not available, are there evaluation data to indicate effectiveness (e.g. pre/post data, testing results, action research)? If yes, provide citations or links to evaluation reports.

- See above.

5. Is there practice-based evidence or community-defined evidence to indicate effectiveness? If yes, provide citations or links.

- Guryan, J., Christenson, S., Claessens, A., Engel, M., Lai, I., Ludwig, J., & Turner, M. C. (2017). The effect of mentoring on school attendance and academic outcomes: A randomized evaluation of the Check & Connect program (working paper series WP-16-18). *Evanston, IL: Northwestern Institute for Policy Research. Copyright, 20007-3835.*
- Hartwig, E. K., & Maynard, B. R. (2015). Practitioner perspectives of implementing Check & Connect. *Journal of evidence-informed social work, 12(4), 438-449.*
- LeBouef, S., & Dworkin, J. (2017). U Connect Minnesota–Year 3 Evaluation Report, Fall 2016–Spring 2017. <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/198304>
- Maynard, B. R., Kjellstrand, E. K., & Thompson, A. M. (2014). Effects of Check and Connect on attendance, behavior, and academics: A randomized effectiveness trial. *Research on Social Work Practice, 24(3), 296-309.*
- Powers, K., Hagans, K., & Linn, M. (2017). A mixed-method efficacy and fidelity study of Check and Connect. *Psychology in the Schools, 54(9), 1019-1033.*
- Strand, P. S., & Lovrich, N. P. (2014). Graduation outcomes for truant students: An evaluation of a school-based, court-engaged community truancy board with case management. *Children and Youth Services Review, 43, 138-144.*
- Tsai, Shu-Chen, and Lee Kern. "An Evaluation of Treatment Integrity and Acceptability of Check & Connect." *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (2018): 1063426618769067.

6. Is there a well-developed theory of change or logic model that demonstrates how the program or practice is expected to contribute to short term and long term outcomes?



7. Do the studies (research and/or evaluation) provide data specific to the setting in which it will be implemented (e.g., has the program or practice been researched or evaluated in a similar context)? If yes, provide citations or links to evaluation reports.

- Numerous studies have been conducted in various settings.
 - View <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/research/default.html>
 - Or contact C&C at checkandconnect@umn.edu or 866-434-0010 for more information.

8. Do the studies (research and/or evaluation) provide data specific to effectiveness for culturally and linguistically specific populations? If yes, provide citations or links specific to effectiveness for families or communities from diverse cultural groups.

- Please review the numerous studies conducted at <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/research/default.html>.

Evidence Ratings

- ❑ **5 - High Evidence:** The program or practice has documented evidence of effectiveness based on at least two rigorous, external research studies and has demonstrated sustained effects at least one year post treatment.
- ❑ **4 - Evidence:** The program or practice has demonstrated effectiveness with one rigorous research study.
- ❑ **3 - Some Evidence:** The program or practice shows some evidence of effectiveness through less rigorous research studies.
- ❑ **2 - Minimal Evidence:** The program or practice is guided by a well-developed theory of change or logic model, including clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for the target population, but has not demonstrated effectiveness through a research study.
- ❑ **1 - No Evidence:** The program or practice does not have a well-developed logic model or theory of change and has not demonstrated effectiveness through a research study.

Program Indicator

SUPPORTS RATING

5

1. Is there a qualified “expert” (e.g., consultant, program developer, intermediary, technical assistance provider) who can help with implementation over time? If yes, list names and/or organization (e.g. Center, University) and contacts.

- **Program Manager:** Eileen Klemm - klem0027@umn.edu • 612-624-0731
- **Check & Connect National Trainers**
University of Minnesota - Institute on Community Integration
150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 6 Pattee Hall
Minneapolis, MN 55455
 - checkandconnect@umn.edu
 - 866-434-0010 (toll-free)

2. Are there start-up costs for implementation of the program or practice (e.g., fees to the program developer)? If yes, itemize in notes section. What does the implementing site receive for these costs?

- The Check & Connect Implementing with Fidelity Manual can be [ordered](#) for implementation. Christenson, S.L., Stout, K., & Pohl, A. (2012). *Check & Connect: A comprehensive student engagement intervention: Implementing with fidelity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration
- Training and technical assistance with C&C National Trainers.

3. Are there curricula and other resources related to the program or practice readily available? If so, list publisher or links. What is the cost of these materials? Enter in notes section.

- Participant Guide (included in trainings for participants) that includes additional content and professional development activities related to implementation and support.
- Check & Connect web-based application ([C&C App](#)).
 - Supports comprehensive small- and large-scale C&C implementation
 - Enhances fidelity of implementation
 - Reduces paperwork and saves time and money in data entry for mentors
 - Interactive, real-time reports keeps the student, parents, and school staff informed of progress

4. Is training and professional development related to this program or practice readily available? Is training culturally sensitive? Does it address issues of race equity, cultural responsiveness or implicit bias? Include the source of training and professional development. What is the cost of these materials? Enter in notes section.

- The C&C training options include:

Preparation & Implementation	Mentor	Comprehensive Implementation	Fidelity of Implementation
Provides administrators and leadership teams with the Check & Connect framework and guides stakeholders through the planning steps for implementing with fidelity.	Provides in-depth training for new and/or existing Check & Connect Mentors and Coordinators .	Provides administrators, leadership teams and mentors with the Check & Connect framework, guides sites through the planning steps for implementing with fidelity and covers effective tools & strategies for the mentor role.	Customized training & support for sites to ensure ongoing fidelity after 1 or more years of implementation.

- [Check & Connect trainings](#) are accessible in the following formats:
 - Contracted on-site training available upon request
 - Open Enrollment training available at the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus
 - Train-the-Trainer model available for state level implementation
 - Train-the-Coach model available for district level implementation
 - LIVE! Online Trainings (Currently, offered for the **Preparation & Implementation Training**)
- Cultural responsiveness and sensitivity is embedded in trainings particularly with family engagement.
- Racial disparities are addressed in identifying indicators for disengagement and dropout.

5. Is coaching available for this program or practice? Is coaching culturally sensitive? If so, list coaching resources and cost in notes section.

- Included with on-site training contracts and Train-the-Trainer or Train-the-Coach models.

6. Are sample job descriptions and interview protocols available for hiring or selecting new staff for this practice? If so, identify here and any costs associated.

- Job descriptions and interview support for hiring or selecting Check & Connect Mentors are included in the *Check & Connect Implementing with Fidelity* manual on pages 32-33.
- Common tasks and functions of the role of the C&C Coordinator can be found in *Implementing with Fidelity* manual on pages 78 - 81.

7. Is guidance on administrative policies and procedures available? If so, identify resources and any costs associated.

- For guidance on administrative policies and procedures the two best resources are:
 - *The Check & Connect Implementing with Fidelity Manual* that can be [ordered](#) for implementation.
 - Technical Assistance from our *Check & Connect National Trainers* included in onsite training packages.

8. Are there resources to develop a data management plan for this program or practice (including data system and monitoring tools) available? If so, identify resources and any costs associated.

- Data management has been created in multiple forms: paper, digital and/or web-based application.

9. Is there a recommended orientation to facilitate “buy-in” for staff, key stakeholders and collaborative partners? If so, explain/describe briefly in notes section.

- There is a recommended process for introducing C&C to students, staff and families.
- A helpful way to clearly articulate C&C to staff and families is by sharing our [Check & Connect Video](#).

Support Ratings

- ❑ **5 - Well Supported:** Comprehensive resources are available from an expert (*a program developer or intermediary*) to support implementation, including resources for building the competency of staff (*staff selection, training, coaching, fidelity*) and organizational practice (*data system and use support, policies and procedures, stakeholder and partner engagement*).
- ❑ **4 - Supported:** Some resources are available to support implementation, such as resources to support staff competency but not
- ❑ **3 - Somewhat Supported:** Limited resources are available, such as a curriculum available for purchase.
- ❑ **2 - Minimally Supported:** General guidance provided but no specific resources, such as a suggestion to use strengths based approaches with staff.
- ❑ **1 - Not Supported:** Few to no resources to support implementation

1. Is the program or practice clearly defined (e.g. what it is, for whom it is intended)?

- Check & Connect is a structured intervention for students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out. At the core of Check & Connect is a trusting relationship between the student and a caring, trained mentor who both advocates for and challenges the student to keep education salient. Students are referred to Check & Connect when they show warning signs of disengaging from school, such as poor attendance, behavioral issues, and/or low grades.

2. Are core features of the program or practice identified, listed, named (e.g. key components of the program or practice that are required in order to be effective)?

- **Core Components of Check & Connect:**
 - **The Mentor:** A person assigned to a specific student(s) who builds a strong relationship with him/her based on mutual trust and open communication, nurtured through a long-term commitment focused on success at school and with learning.
 - **"Check" Component:** Systematic monitoring of student performance variables (*warning signs of disengagement such as attendance, behavior and/or course performance*) using data readily available to school personnel.
 - **"Connect" Component:** Timely, personalized, data-based interventions designed to provide support tailored to individual student needs, based on the student's level of engagement with school ("*check*" data), associated influences of home and school, and leveraging of local resources.
 - **Parent/Family Engagement:** Mentors partner with parents/families. They work with caseloads of students and families for at least two years, functioning as liaisons between home and school and striving to build constructive family-school relationships.

3. Is each core feature well operationalized (e.g., staff know what to do and say, how to prepare, how to assess progress)?

- Both the *Implementing with Fidelity Manual* and training(s) provide staff with a "road map" to implement and multiple options to assess programing.

4. Is there guidance on core features that can be modified or adapted to increase contextual fit?

- C&C is a structured intervention that is highly adaptable to local contexts. Options are presented and embedded in C&C Trainings (*Preparation & Implementation or Comprehensive*).

5. Is there a fidelity assessment that measures practitioner behavior (i.e., assessment of whether staff use the practice as intended)? If yes, provide citations, documents, or links to fidelity assessment information.

- A self-assessment for assessing your implementation of the C&C core components and elements
- Practice Profile for the C&C Mentor
- C&C Monthly Fidelity Survey

6. Has the program or practice been adapted for use within culturally and linguistically specific populations and/or is there a recommended process for gathering community input into culturally specific enhancements?

7. What do we know about the key reasons for previous successful replications?

8. What do we know about the key problems that led to unsuccessful replication efforts previously?

9. Are there mature sites with successful histories of implementing the program or practice who are willing to be observed?

- C&C began in 1990 and has multiple successful sites implementing willing to be observed.

Usable Ratings

- ❑ **5 - Highly Usable:** The program or practice has operationalized principles and values, core components that are measurable and observable, and a validated fidelity assessment; modifiable components are identified to support contextualization for new settings or populations
- ❑ **4 - Usable:** The program or practice has operationalized principles and values and core components that are measurable and observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are identified to support contextualization for new settings or populations
- ❑ **3- Somewhat Usable:** The program or practice has operationalized principles and values and core components that are measurable and observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are not identified observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are not identified
- ❑ **2 - Minimally Usable:** The program or practice has identified principles and values and core components; however, the principles and core components are not defined in measurable or observable terms; modifiable components are not identified
- ❑ **1 - Not Usable:** The program or practice does not identify principles and values or core components

Implementing Site Indicators

NEED

RATING

Instructions: Complete as a team the **IMPLEMENTING SITE INDICATORS** (*Need, Fit & Capacity to Implement*) by answering the following guiding questions on pages 9 - 13. Then assign your site's rating in the box.

1. Who is the identified population of concern?

- Check & Connect is an intervention used with K-12 students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out.

2. What is/are the identified needs of this population?

- There is a need for the Check & Connect intervention if **one or more** areas apply:
 - **Attendance:**
 - Students with absences of 10% of more school days
 - **Behavior**
 - Students with 1 or more suspensions.
 - **Course Performance**
 - **Elementary:** An inability to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
 - **Middle School:** A failure in English or Math in 6th, 7th, 8th or 9th grade.
 - **High School:** A GPA of less than 2.0 or a failure in one of more course (*any subject*).
 - **Graduation/Dropout**
- Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2012; Frazelle & Nagel, 2015

3. Was an analysis of data conducted to identify specific area(s) of need relevant to the program or practice? If yes, what data were analyzed? Were these data disaggregated by race, ethnicity and language?

- One tool we encourage sites to use for gathering data is the *Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)*.
 - SEI is a student self-report survey of 35 items that measure affective and cognitive factors of student engagement for students in grades 3-12. These are internal indicators of student engagement. Affective factors are teacher-student relationships, peer support for learning, and family support for learning. Cognitive factors are control/relevance of school work, future goals & aspirations, and intrinsic motivation.

4. How do affected individuals and community members perceive their need? What do they believe will be helpful? How were community members engaged to assess their perception of need?

5. Is there evidence that the program or practice addresses the specific area(s) of need identified? If so, how was this evidence generated (e.g., *experimental research design, quasi-experimental research design, pre-post, descriptive*)?

- Evidence can be found in reviewing [Check & Connect Research](#).

6. If the program or practice is implemented, what can potentially change for this population?

- Demonstrated outcomes of Check & Connect include:
 - *Decrease in truancy, tardies, behavior referrals, and dropout rates;*
 - *Increase in attendance, persistence in school, credits accrued, and school completion; and*

- o *Impact on literacy*

Need Ratings

- ❑ **5 - Strongly Meets Need:** The program or practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through rigorous research (e.g., *experimental design*) with comparable population; disaggregated data has been analyzed to demonstrate program or practice meets need of specific subpopulations.
- ❑ **4 - Meets Need:** The program or practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through rigorous research (e.g., *experimental design*) with comparable population; disaggregated data has not been analyzed for specific subpopulation.
- ❑ **3 - Somewhat Meets Need:** The program or practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through less rigorous research design (e.g., *quasi-experimental, pre-post*) with comparable population; disaggregated data has not been analyzed for specific subpopulation.
- ❑ **2 - Minimally Meets Need:** The program or practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through practice experience; disaggregated data has not been analyzed for specific subpopulation.
- ❑ **1 - Does Not Meet Need:** The program or practice has not demonstrated meeting need for identified population.

Implementing Site Indicators

FIT

RATING

1. How does the program or practice fit with priorities of the implementing site?

- Tier 1 interventions are in place to support priority areas (*e.g., attendance, behavior, or course performance*).
- There is a need for a Tier 2 **and/or** Tier 3 interventions at your site.
 - *Check & Connect is a Tier 2 **and/or** Tier 3 intervention.*
- Site priorities include **one or more** of the following:
 - *Increasing graduation rates*
 - *improving course performance*
 - *Attendance*
 - *Positive Behavior Supports*
 - *Decreasing Disproportionality*

2. How does the program or practice fit with family and community values in the impacted community, including the values of culturally and linguistically specific populations?

3. What other initiatives currently being implemented will intersect with the program or practice?

4. How does the program or practice fit with other existing initiatives?

5. Will the other initiatives make it easier or more difficult to implement the proposed program or practice and achieve the desired outcomes?

6. How does the program or practice fit with the community's history?

Fit Ratings

- ❑ **5 - Strong Fit:** The program or practice fits with the priorities of the implementing site; community values, including the values of culturally and linguistically specific populations; and other existing initiatives.
- ❑ **4 - Fit:** The program or practice fits with the priorities of the implementing site and community values; however, the values of culturally and linguistically specific population have not been assessed for fit.
- ❑ **3 - Somewhat Fit:** The program or practice fits with the priorities of the implementing site, but it is unclear whether it aligns with community values and other existing initiatives.

- ❑ **2 - Minimal Fit:** The program or practice fits with some of the priorities of the implementing site, but it is unclear whether it aligns with community values and other existing initiatives
- ❑ **1 - Does Not Fit:** The program or practice does not fit with the priorities of the implementing site or community values

Implementing Site Indicators

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT RATING



1. Typically, how much does it cost to run the program or practice each year? Are there resources to support this cost? If the current budget cannot support this format, outline a resource development strategy.

- A C&C Coordinator at building and/or district level is selected who will provide support and supervision to mentors and ensure program fidelity.
- Process for selecting and/or hiring mentors.
 - *The Check & Connect Implementing with Fidelity* manual is available for each Mentor.
 - C&C Training is provided by certified trainers to all Mentors.
 - Time is available for planned monthly meetings and professional development for Mentors.
 - [Implementation Options](#) with recommended Mentor caseloads.

2. What are the staffing requirements for the program or practice? (Number and type of staff, e.g., education, credentials, content knowledge)

3. Does the implementing site currently employ or have access to staff that meet these requirements?

4. If so, do those staff have a cultural and language match with the population they serve, as well as relationships in community?

5. What administrative practices must be developed or refined to support the use of this program or practice?

6. Is leadership knowledgeable about and in support of this program or practice? Do leaders have the diverse skills and perspectives representative of the community being served?

- School administration/leadership teams:
 - Attend C&C Training (*Preparation & Implementation* or *Comprehensive*).
 - Strategically introduces C&C to all school/site staff.
 - Establish a feedback with mentors to learn about program impact/successes/challenges/needs.

7. Do staff have the capacity to collect and use data to inform ongoing monitoring and improvement of the program or practice?

8. What administrative policies or procedures must be adjusted to support the work of practitioners and others to implement the program or practice?

9. Will the current communication system facilitate effective internal and external communication with stakeholders, including impacted families and the community?

10. Will the program or practice require use of or changes to building facilities? List required uses of and/or changes. Include costs if known.

11. Does the program or practice require new technology (*hardware or software, such as a data system*)? List required hardware and/or software. Include costs if known.

12. Does the program or practice require use of or changes to the monitoring and reporting system? List required uses of and/or changes. Include costs if known.

Capacity Ratings

- ❑ **5 - Strong Capacity:** Implementing sites adopting this program or practice have a qualified workforce and all of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the program or practice with integrity.
- ❑ **4 - Adequate Capacity:** Implementing sites adopting this program or practice have a qualified workforce and most of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the program or practice with integrity.
- ❑ **3 - Some Capacity:** Implementing sites adopting this program or practice have a qualified workforce and some of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the program or practice with integrity.
- ❑ **2 - Minimal Capacity:** Implementing sites adopting this program or practice have a qualified workforce and only a few of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the program or practice with integrity.
- ❑ **1 - No Capacity:** Implementing sites adopting this program or practice do not have a qualified workforce or any of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the program or practice with integrity.

