Connected Futures: Evaluating a Web-Based Curriculum for Empowering Youth to Build Social Capital

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Connected Futures

Building students' confidence, connection, and success!

WHAT IS IT?

Connected Futures is a curriculum designed to help students form meaningful connections with supportive adults in their lives. These mentors are a critical resource for students' success. Students learn skills to build their own social networks.

Learn More

WHO IS IT FOR?

Connected Futures is a great resource for any student from the pre-teen years through young adulthood. The curriculum has been adapted for middle school, high school, and college students. Students select the curriculum for their educational stage.

Learn More

HOW IT WORKS

Each student creates a profile and moves through four, interactive online lessons at their own pace. The course takes about an hour to complete. As they progress through the lessons, students build a "toolkit" of resources that are theirs to keep.

Get Started

WHAT IT DOES

Research evidence shows that *Connected Futures* works! Students learn practical skills that give them confidence in approaching adults for the help they need to achieve their goals. This brief intervention can even improve GPA across the first year of college.

Resources

Get Started

L1: What is social support and social capital? How can mentors help me?

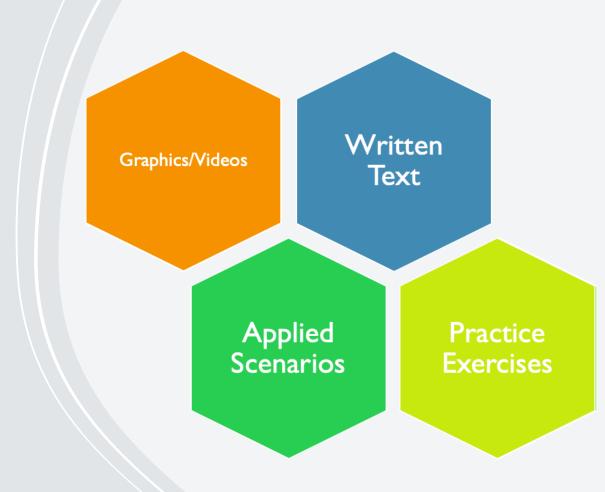L2: Mapping and evaluating your current social supports

L3: Skills for successfully navigating mentoring relationships and meetings

Conduct your interview: Putting your skills into Action

L4: Making connections at school and maintain connections over time
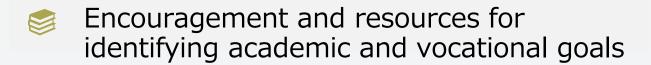
Topics Covered At All Levels

•Importance of social capital

•Mapping different kinds of social support

•Identifying potential mentors

•Age-appropriate networking, and interview skills

•Handling rejection

•Maintaining relationships

•Connecting during online/remote learning

Graphics/Videos

Written Text

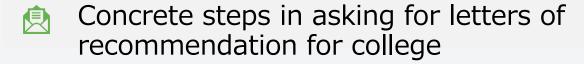Applied Scenarios

Practice Exercises

Age-appropriate Templates and Guides

- Eco-Map
- Dressing for Meetings
- Networking Map
- Thank You Notes
- Pie Chart for Handling Difficult Social Situations
- Teacher/Professor Connections
- Conflict Resolution Strategies & Tips
- School Support & Resources Guide
- Preparing for an Interview

Encouragement and resources for identifying academic and vocational goals

Steps for de-mystifying the process of applying to college, choosing jobs/clubs/internships, exploring academic majors and career options

Concrete steps in asking for letters of recommendation for college

Ideas for age-appropriate "networking"

Vignettes that illustrate the impact mentoring relationships have on vocational and academic goals

Highlights of the High School Curriculum

Testing *Connected Futures* within Community-Based College Access Programming for High School Students

Bronx-Based College Access Programming

Study Design

- Rolling recruitment + randomization (throughout 2023)

- Baseline assessment

- Four months of usual programming with or without access to *Connected Futures*
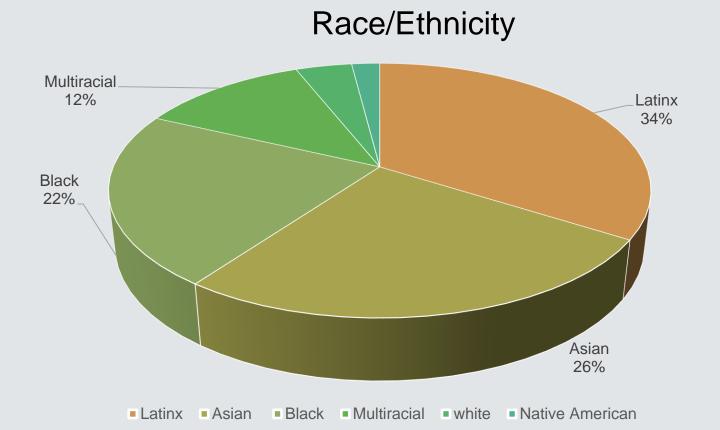
- Follow-up assessment

Research Aims

Aim 1: Determine if *Connected Futures is* acceptable and feasible for high school students in traditionally underserved populations

Aim 2: Test whether access to *Connected Futures* increases youth's amount of informal mentoring relationships
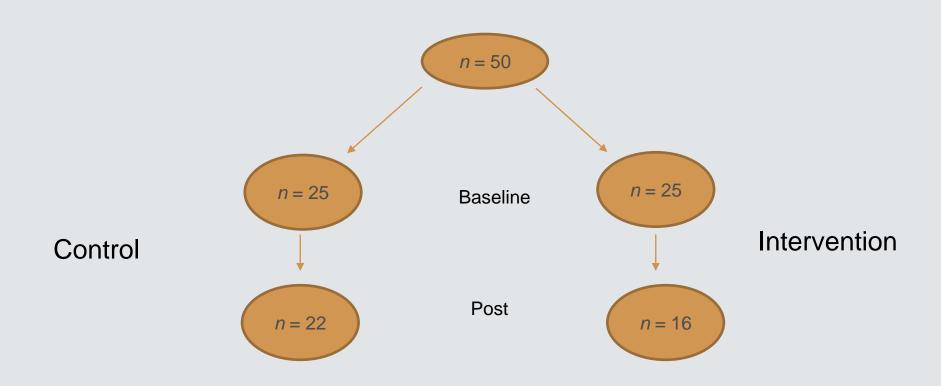
Aim 3: Test whether *Connected Futures* positively shifts students' beliefs about help-seeking around academic tasks.
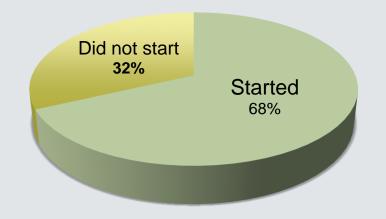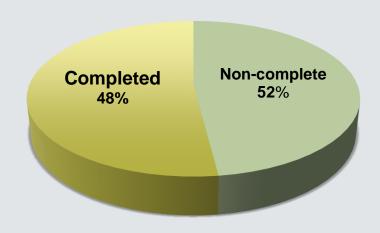
Participants

Race/Ethnicity

Latinx
34%

Asian
26%

Black
22%

Multiracial
12%

■ Latinx ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Multiracial ■ white ■ Native American

Preliminary Sample

Aim 1: Feasibility and Acceptability of the online *Connected Futures*

Did not start
32%

Started
68%

Completed
48%

Non-complete
52%

Client satisfaction questionnaire (Bob et al., 2016): *M* = 31.8 out of a possible total of 40 (SD = 5.30)

Aim 2: Impact on informal mentoring relationships

No effects of *Connected Futures* on:

- *the number of mentors overall*

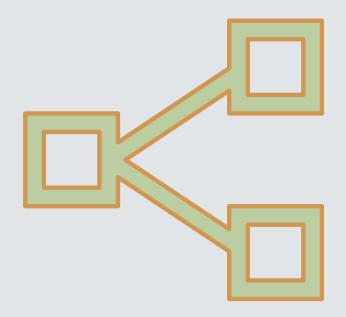- *the number of mentors at school*

- *quality of relationships with teachers*

Aim 3: Impact on help-seeking beliefs

Variable	Group Effect B (SE), *p*	Time Effect B (SE), *p*	Group x Time Interaction B (SE), *p*
Network orientation	-2.47 (2.29), .27	0.79 (2.14), .71	0.35 (2.57), .89
Help-seeking threat	**-1.07 (0.59), .07**	**-1.05 (0.55), .06**	**1.49 (0.67), .03**
Help-seeking avoidance	**1.69 (0.75), .03**	**2.59 (0.70), < .001**	-0.94 (0.84), .27
Self-advocacy	-0.06 (0.34), .87	-0.29 (0.32), .36	0.33 (0.38), .39

Aim 3: Impact on help-seeking beliefs

Network Orientation ($d = .35$)

Help-Seeking Threat ($d = .72$)

Help-Seeking Avoidance ($d = .50$)

Self-Advocacy ($d = .61$)
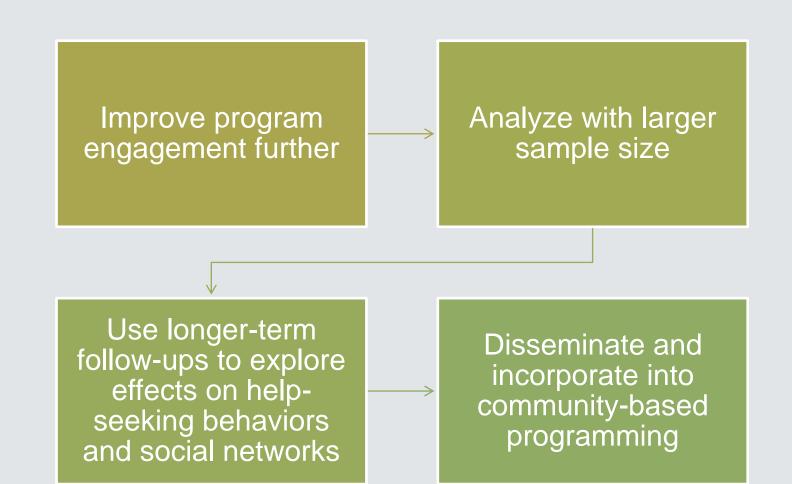
Implications

01
Feasible to deploy with little support to diverse high school-aged youth

02
Improved help-seeking attitudes and beliefs

03
No clear impact on quantity of mentoring relationships immediately post-intervention

Future Directions

Thank you!

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QUESTIONS?

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Find out more about *Connected Futures* here:

academy.mentorpro.com