cityconnects

City Connects: Intervention and Impact

PROGRESS REPORT 2018

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Introduction

Across America, children in high-poverty urban schools face out-of-school challenges that impede their success in the classroom and in life. In the 1960's, the Coleman Report and others concluded that socioeconomic background is a significant factor affecting students' academic achievement (Harrington, 1962; Coleman et al., 1966). Current research confirms that contexts beyond the school are critical, accounting for up to two-thirds of the variance in student achievement (Phillips et al., 1998; Rothstein, 2010).

The impact of poverty outside of school contributes to inequality in educational outcomes; in fact, Berliner (2013) has identified poverty as the single most critical factor to address in education reform. The achievement gap related to income has grown as the divide between the income levels of rich and poor families has widened (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Reardon, 2011). Collectively, this work points to a straightforward conclusion: schools cannot close the achievement gap without a systemic approach to addressing out-of-school disadvantage (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Walsh & Murphy, 2003). Yet, as noted by Carter and Reardon (2014), while much research has been dedicated to documenting the consequences of inequality, less has focused on what can be done to reduce inequality.

City Connects emerged in response to the need for a systemic approach to addressing the out-of-school factors that can impede a student's ability to succeed and thrive in school (Walsh & Brabeck, 2006). Its mission is to help students—academically, socially, emotionally, and physically—by connecting each and every child to a tailored set of prevention, intervention and enrichment services in the school and community. When a school implements City Connects, effective student support becomes central to its mission and day-to-day operations. The array of services and enrichments in the urban community also become central to the school's role in supporting students and evidence becomes available for evaluating effectiveness.

Starting more than fifteen years ago in a single Boston Public school, the partnership among Boston College, school districts, and community agencies continues to grow. As the 2017-18 school year began, City Connects was in 90 high-poverty urban public, Catholic, and charter schools across five states.

Evidence demonstrates that being in a City Connects school makes a difference for students. In elementary school, students in City Connects schools significantly outperform their peers on report card scores in reading, writing, and math (Walsh et al., 2014) and standardized test scores in reading and math (City Connects, 2014). After leaving City Connects and moving on to middle school, students scored higher on statewide math and English language arts tests than comparison peers who were never enrolled in a City Connects school (Walsh et al., 2014). Students previously enrolled in City Connects elementary schools later demonstrated lower rates of chronic absenteeism and dropped out of high school at about half the rate of comparison students (City Connects, 2014). The consistency of findings across methods, samples, and sites argues that City Connects is not merely associated with, but causes, these benefits for students (City Connects, 2016).

There is now growing national recognition that schools need interventions like City Connects—evidence-based ways to provide comprehensive supports to students in schools. The national nonprofit research firm Child Trends has produced two reports on the evidence base for this work, which they term "integrated student support" (Moore et al., 2014, 2017). These reports concluded that broadly, the evidence for positive outcomes for students is promising.

With strong evidence that comprehensive student support benefits students, the next research frontier is to better understand how. In October 2017, the Center for Thriving Children, which houses City Connects, hosted the first national research conference on integrated student support. Researchers from across the country and beyond the U.S. convened to review the evidence and set a research agenda. At the conference, a broad consensus emerged that researchers must now seek to understand more deeply how integrated student support works, including the relative importance of different elements and features of specific interventions and the influence of, and impact on, the context of implementation.

In alignment with this call to research, we offer in this report an in-depth picture of the City Connects intervention and its implementation. We begin with the story of our growth and a rationale for City Connects. Next, we offer context on our current sites of implementation, followed by a description of elements of the City Connects model, including reviews of student strengths and needs and connections to services in the school and community. We present data illustrating the nature and scope of implementation of these elements of the intervention. We also describe the impact that the intervention has on schools, as reported by teachers and principals, and communities, as reported by community partner agencies.

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The story of our growth

START UP

The partnership that led to City Connects began in the early 1990s. Researchers and leaders at Boston College, a Boston Public elementary school, and community agencies began to explore ways to address out-of-school factors that impact students' success and thriving in school.

The partners drew on best practices emerging at the time from research on student support. From 1999 to 2001, in an iterative process, they repeatedly convened school principals, teachers, other school and district staff, representatives of community agencies, and families to develop a practice that systematized the work traditionally done in schools by school counselors, nurses, psychologists, community partners, and others. The resulting system, designed to permit measurement of outcomes, was initially implemented in Boston schools in the 2001-02 academic year.

REPLICATE

City Connects has proved replicable. It expanded to a new area of the city in the 2007-08 school year. It expanded to a distant site (Dayton, OH) and to urban Catholic schools in Boston in the 2008-09 academic year. Two years later, the success of City Connects led to the program's launch in the "Turnaround" (consistently low-performing) schools in the Boston Public district. City Connects also launched in public schools in Springfield, MA.

At early stages of growth and replication, evidence of positive outcomes for students began to accumulate. Over time, the evidence base has grown dramatically, demonstrating that City Connects students outperform their peers in measures of academic achievement in elementary school. These benefits persist into middle school and high school (lower chronic absenteeism; lower likelihood of dropout).

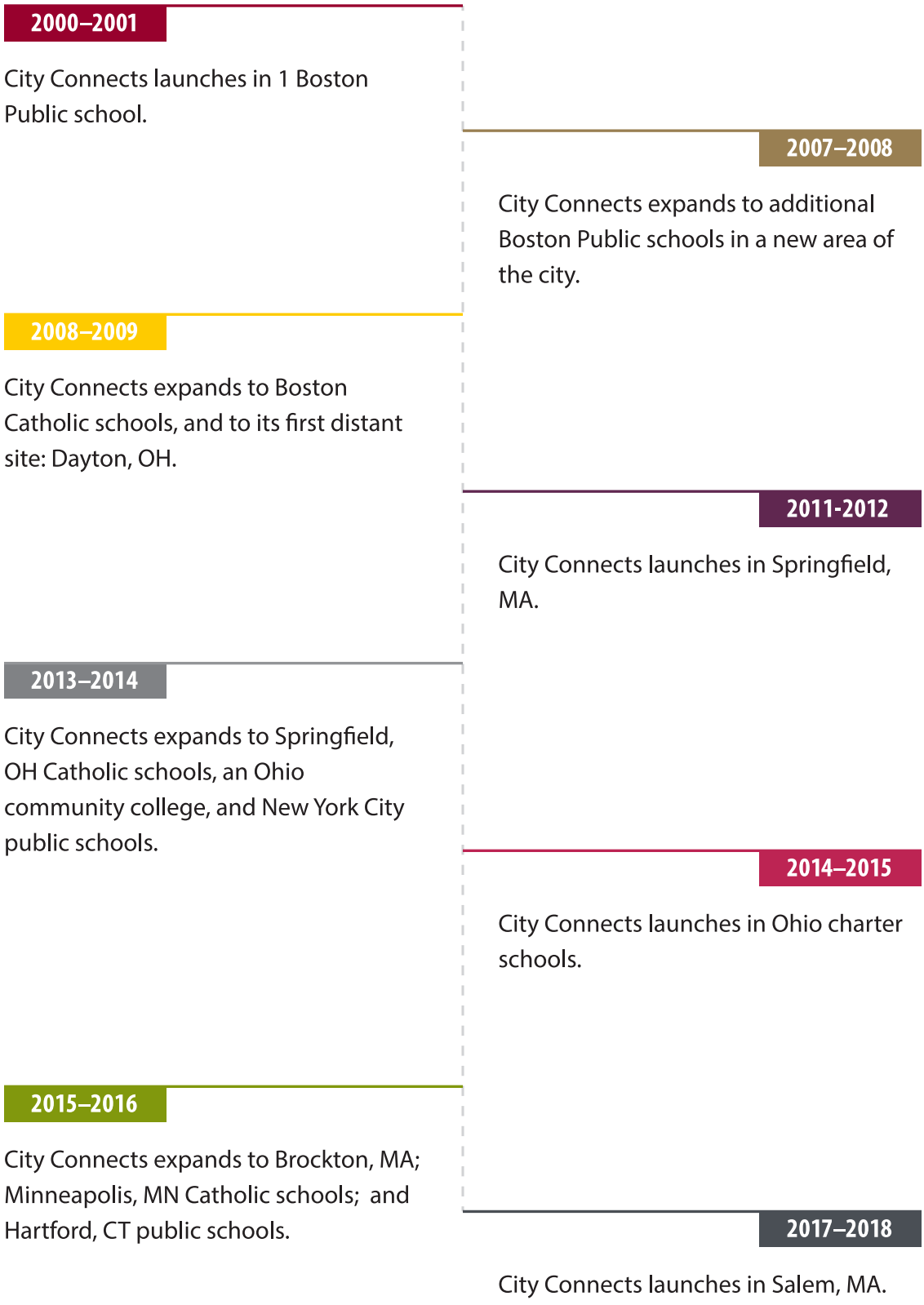
SCALE

The expanding evidence base has led more districts and states to seek out City Connects as a comprehensive approach to supporting all students. It has expanded to districts in New York City (in partnership with Children's Aid Society); Springfield, OH; Brockton, MA; Minneapolis, MN; Hartford, CT; and Salem, MA. It is now implemented in 90 public, charter, and Catholic schools in five states, serving over 27,000 students. Anonymous surveys across the network consistently indicate high levels of satisfaction among principals, teachers, and community partners.

City Connects is now recognized nationally as a comprehensive approach to student support that can be delivered at low cost and that yields significant, positive outcomes for children's achievement and life chances.

Figure 1 illustrates the growth and development of City Connects.

FIGURE 1. Timeline of City Connects' expansion



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Why City Connects?

What happens outside of school can greatly impact what happens inside of school. For students living in poverty, out-of-school factors can be pervasive and severe. Students and their families may struggle with hunger, housing, medical issues, or other needs. A lack of time or resources may mean that needs remain unmet and connections that would benefit a student or a family are not made.

The City Connects approach to addressing these out-of-school factors is grounded in developmental science. **Four core principles** of effective practice emerging from the developmental sciences have informed the development of City Connects and guide the work of addressing the out-of-school factors that impact achievement.

COMPREHENSIVE

Children develop across biological, psychological, and social domains (Bronfrenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Ford & Lerner, 1992). Each domain is simultaneously impacting each of the other domains (Rutter, 2007). For this reason, student support must take different developmental domains into account. At the same time, children's needs span a continuum of intensity, from mild to severe. Therefore, student support must be offered at various levels of intensity: prevention, early intervention, and intensive/crisis intervention (Adelman & Taylor, 2006).

CUSTOMIZED

Child development is dynamic and complex, and each child experiences a unique interaction between personal characteristics and environment (Cicchetti & Sroufe, 2000). As a result, no two children's experiences or developmental trajectories are identical (Sameroff, 2009). Also, developmental science points to the value of addressing children's strengths in addition to their needs, creating conditions for resilience (Masten & Tellgen, 2012). Thus, to be effective, student support practices must take into account and tailor approaches based on the individual strengths and needs of every student in a school.

COORDINATED

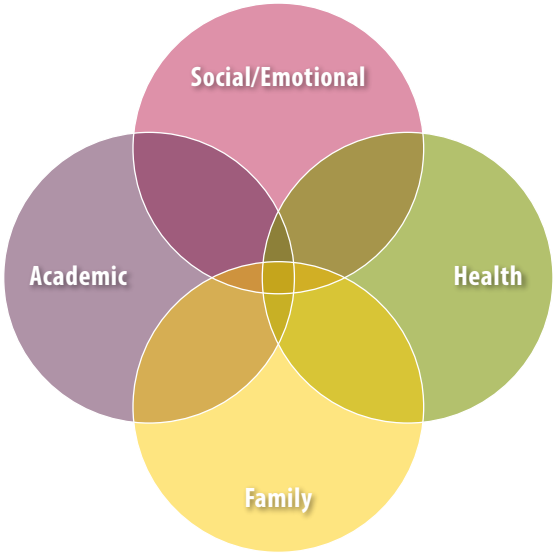
Developmental science points out the mutually influential relationships among a child and his or her home, school, and neighborhood (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Aligning efforts across these contexts is especially important for children at economic disadvantage (Dearing et al., 2016; Garcıa Coll et al., 1996). For example, given the critical role of families in children's development, it is important that student support plans be coordinated with family collaboration. Also, effective student support involves an assessment of strengths and needs with teacher input. To provide the full array of supports students need, schools should leverage the work of providers and resources from the community (Brabeck & Walsh, 2003; D'Agostino, 2013). Coordination requires communication and systems for aligning the efforts of these people and groups.

CONTINUOUS

Developmental science suggests that continuity of care in a safe, predictable, and stable environment positively impacts development (Waters, Weinfield, & Hamilton, 2000). Implementation of student support should promote this continuity and stability. Further, connecting students to the supports that best match their evolving strengths and needs is an iterative process because development is dynamic and changes over time. For example, early childhood experiences affect what happens in elementary school and beyond (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). As a result, children may need varying levels of support across the continuum of their development.

City Connects operationalizes these principles in its specific model for student support. As a comprehensive approach, City Connects considers the overlapping impact of four developmental domains—academic, social/emotional, health, and family—on children's readiness to learn and thrive in school. See Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. The interaction of children's developmental domains



Supports and services are identified in all of these areas at the levels of prevention/enrichment, early intervention, or intensive intervention.

The City Connects practice considers both strengths and needs of every student in a school across these domains, and connects each to services at appropriate levels of intensity in a **customized** way. The practice ensures that each and every child in a school is considered individually to find the unique combination of supports and services that will help that child to thrive.

Customization also occurs at the level of the school. Research indicates that the climate and overall social conditions of schools have consequences for academic development (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013). To widen opportunities for enrichment, for prevention purposes, and also in cases when a need becomes evident within or across entire grade levels, supports are brought into the school to serve large numbers of students.

City Connects is **coordinated**, structurally linking districts and schools with community partners to make available the full array of supports and services students may need, as shown in Figure 3.

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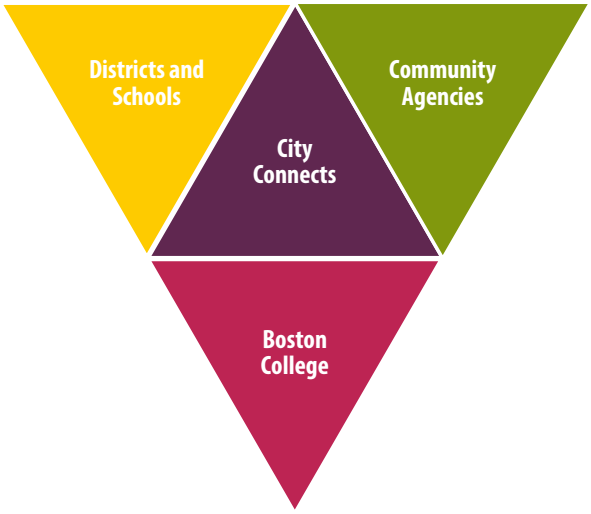
FIGURE 3. The City Connects partnership



This partnership includes structures to enable coordination. For example, core processes ensure teacher input in a review of strengths and needs of every child, close collaboration with families in developing and carrying out individual support plans, and regular communication with community agencies providing services.

Finally, to ensure that student support is **continuous**, City Connects developed a practice in which the individual strengths and needs of every student are reviewed every year, and in which a secure, proprietary database makes it easy to follow up on each student's service referrals and progress throughout the school year and across years.

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Model and implementation

Model

The City Connects approach for collaborating with a school district to implement its model is grounded in the literature on implementation science informing sustainable interventions (Foley et al., 2015). Before implementation, a steering committee is formed, typically in the spring, with representation from both City Connects and the district. The committee engages in several stages of planning. First, City Connects works with the district to conduct a needs assessment, seeking the input of principals, teachers, families, students, and community agencies to understand current strengths and needs in the area of student support. An environmental scan identifies a range of agencies and resources in the community. Next, City Connects reports findings to the district and, if the district decides to move forward with implementation, provides infrastructure and supports, including materials for recruiting and hiring, and an orientation process for principals. This process enables a shared vision for success and alignment of priorities.

Following this planning process, implementation is launched, typically at the start of an academic year. There are five key components of the implementation model:

1. CITY CONNECTS COORDINATOR

At the core of the intervention is a City Connects Coordinator in each school, trained as a school counselor or school social worker, who connects students to a customized set of services through collaboration with families, teachers, school staff, and community agencies. The Coordinator follows standardized practices codified in the City Connects Practice Manual, as shown in Figure 1 and detailed in the components below.

In some districts, the Coordinator is a new position created in the school, and in others, an existing position, such as a school counselor role, is redefined to include responsibility for implementing the City Connects model. Depending on the size of the school, two Coordinators may be hired. Typically, there is one Coordinator for every 400 students in the school.

2. WHOLE CLASS REVIEW

The Coordinator works with each classroom teacher to review each and every student in the class and develop customized support plans that addresses their individual strengths and needs. There are five aspects of the Whole Class Review (WCR):

1. Identifying the strengths and needs of each student across four domains (academic, social/emotional/behavioral, health, and family)
2. Identifying and locating appropriate school- and/or community-based services and enrichments
3. Establishing the connection between these service providers and individual children and their families

4. Documenting and tracking the delivery of services
5. Following up to ensure appropriateness of fit

As they conduct the WCR, at the most general level, the teacher and Coordinator group the students in a class into three tiers: strengths and minimal risk (Tier 1); strengths and mild (Tier 2a) to moderate (Tier 2b) risk; or strengths and severe risk (Tier 3).

3. INDIVIDUAL STUDENT REVIEW

Students identified as having intensive needs, at any point during the school year, receive an Individual Student Review (ISR). A wider team of professionals discuss and develop specific measureable goals and strategies for the student. The ISR is conducted by the student support team—an existing school structure that can include school psychologists, teachers, principals, nurses, and occasionally community agency staff members—that is typically led by the Coordinator. The Coordinator communicates with the family before and after the ISR. Typically, 8% to 10% of the students in a school receive an ISR in a given year.

4. COMMUNITY AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

A critical aspect of the Coordinator's role is developing and maintaining partnerships with community agencies and institutions. These relationships are vital to providing all students with the supports and enrichments they need to thrive. In 2016-17, over 212,000 services were delivered by more than 1,100 different community partners.

5. CONNECTING STUDENTS TO SERVICES, TRACKING, AND FOLLOWING UP

During and after these conversations with teachers, school staff and leaders, and community agency representatives, City Connects Coordinators connect each student to the particular enrichment and service programs that will best meet his or her strengths and needs. Coordinators work closely with families as students are referred and connected to particular enrichments and services.

To aid with the process, and to permit streamlined tracking and follow-up, City Connects has developed a proprietary web-based database, the Student Support Information System (SSIS). SSIS allows for secure collection of data on student reviews, individual student plans, service referrals, and providers (both school-based and community agencies) who deliver services. The database systematizes the work of referring students to services, contributing to efficiency and helping to enable one Coordinator to serve 400 students. SSIS data are used for three purposes: 1) record-keeping at the individual and school level; 2) monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the intervention throughout the school year; and 3) conducting research on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Services can be classified into three broad categories: prevention and enrichment, early intervention, and intensive/crisis intervention. Each category includes services of different types. The tailoring of services is accomplished through different combinations of quantity and type of services from these three broad categories, resulting in a unique set of services for each student.

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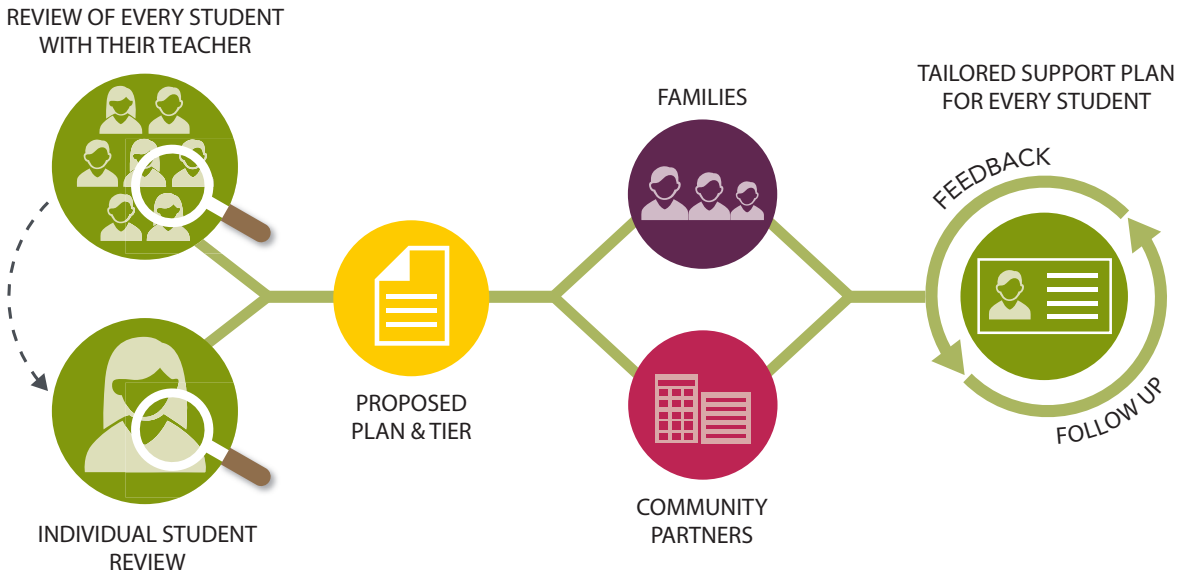
Figure 4 provides a visual overview of the core work of the City Connects Coordinator within the context of the school and community.

FIGURE 4. The City Connects core practice



Context of implementation

City Connects was implemented in 84 schools in five states across 10 school districts (totaling 29,936 students) in the 2016-17 school year. Seven of the 10 school districts were public school districts and three were Catholic school districts. Schools served students ranging from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with a majority of schools serving students in kindergarten through eighth grades. Table 1 presents a summary of pre-kindergarten through grade 12 student characteristics for each school district as well as an average across all City Connects schools.

The information on student demographics presented in Table 1 highlights the significant academic and financial needs that students in City Connects schools experience. In City Connects schools, 85% of the population includes minority students; almost half of the student population identify as Hispanic and a quarter identify as Black. There are differences across districts in student race/ethnicity, highlighting the varied contexts in which City Connects is implemented. For example, compared to the overall City Connects sample, Ohio Public Schools serve significantly more Black students; New York City and Hartford Public Schools serve significantly greater numbers of Hispanic students; and Boston Public Schools serve the greatest number of Asian students. City Connects Catholic schools are more likely than public schools to serve White students.

TABLE 1. City Connects student demographic characteristics from the 2016-17 school year, grades PK-12

	Boston Public	Springfield Public	Brockton Public	Holyoke Public	Hartford Public	New York City Public	Ohio Public	Boston Catholic	Ohio Catholic	Minn. Catholic	City Connects
Number of Students	8,638	5,957	375	937	3,389	2,937	854	3,597	1,423	1,829	29,936
Number of Schools	20	15	1	2	8	9	2	14	4	9	84
% Female	47.1%	47.8%	48.2%	45.3%	47.7%	48.7%*	51.6%	50.5%*	52.7%*	50.1%*	48.4%
% English Language Learners	37.3%	17.6%	21.1%	16.8%	28.0%	22.9%	NA	NA	NA	27.2%*	27.5%
% Economically Disadvantaged[1]	58.5%	79.1%	54.9%	67.8%	82.9%	82.7%	76.0%	NA	NA	77%*	NA[1]
% Special Education	19.3%	19.5%	18.8%	23.2%	18.0%	24.1%	7.2%	NA	NA	NA	19.5%
% Race/Ethnicity											
Black	30.2%	19.3%	53.2%	2.3%	30.9%*	21.7%	93.4%	25.2%*	18.7%*	22.5%*	26.9%
White	15.1%	8.4%	22.1%	24.7%	1.8%*	2.9%	3.2%	26.6%*	57.3%*	23.1%*	15.0%
Asian	11.4%	1.1%	6.3%	1.0%	1.6%*	1.0%	0.0%	6.1%*	1.8%*	3.8%*	4.9%
Hispanic	39.1%	69.5%	13.1%	70.0%	60.9%*	73.7%	2.0%	20%*	11.8%*	40.2%*	47.1%
Multi-Race Non-Hispanic/ Other	4.3%	1.6%	5.2%	2.0%	4.7%*	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%*	10.5%*	10.4%*	6.0%

Source: State education department websites (profiles.doe.mass.edu; www.smarterhartford.org/data-tools/school-comparison-tool; https://tools.nycenet.edu/dashboard/; reportcard.education.ohio.gov) unless otherwise indicated by *

*City Connects SSIS database or other data

NA: Data not available.

[1]Definition of economic disadvantage varies across sites (State-specific Economic Disadvantage definition: Boston, Springfield, Brockton, Holyoke, Ohio, New York City; Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch: Hartford, Boston Catholic, Ohio Catholic, Minneapolis Catholic). Aggregate City Connects total cannot accurately be computed.

Generally, more than a quarter of students in City Connects schools are English Language Learners and about 20% of students receive special education services. Further, at least two-thirds of students in City Connects schools are economically disadvantaged. It is important to note that this measure differs across school districts, and the state-specific definitions have a higher income threshold to qualify as being in economic need than the traditional metric of eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch—and thus, fewer students are classified as experiencing economic disadvantage. Turning to differences in City Connects schools across districts, Boston public schools serve the largest number of English Language Learners, more than a third of their student population. Further, Ohio public schools serve significantly fewer special education students compared to the other districts. New York, Hartford and Springfield have the highest rate of economic disadvantage, where over 75% of their students experience economic hardship. Boston and Brockton experience the lowest rates of economic disadvantage, although rates still extend to over half of their student population.

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Reviews and services

During the Whole Class Review process, as described above, the City Connects Coordinator and teacher group students into three tiers: strengths and minimal risk (Tier 1), strengths and mild to moderate risk (Tier 2), or strengths and severe risk (Tier 3). Tier 2 is divided into two levels: 2a (mild risk) and 2b (moderate risk). Table 2 shows the number and percentages of students in each tier across all districts.

TABLE 2. Number of students placed in each tier across all City Connects sites, 2016-17

	Number	Percent
Tier 1 (minimal risk)	9,021	34%
Tier 2a (mild risk)	8,554	33%
Tier 2b (moderate risk)	5,838	22%
Tier 3 (intensive risk)	2,978	11%
TOTAL	**26,391**	**100%**

Students identified as having strengths and severe risks (Tier 3) are considered for an Individual Student Review. In some cases, students experiencing significant risks are already receiving targeted supports and follow-up. Others are reviewed by a team of professionals that assesses the strengths and needs of the individual student and develops a plan with specific, measurable goals and strategies. The Individual Student Review process is described in more detail above. In 2016-17, across all districts, 2,160 students (8%) received this intensive review.

Across all districts, Coordinators work to develop and maintain relationships with community agencies that provide services to students. These services range in intensity from prevention and enrichment services, such as arts or sports programs, to intensive or crisis interventions, like mental health counseling or violence intervention. In 2016-17, City Connects worked with 1,162 unique partners to deliver more than 212,000 services to students. Table 3 shows the numbers and percentages of services delivered across categories.

TABLE 3. Total number of services delivered to students, by service category, 2016-17

	Service N	Category %	Total % of Services
CATEGORY 1 (Prevention & Enrichment)			
After-School Programs	7,330	9%	
Before-School Programs	976	1%	
School Vacation and Summer Programs	2,303	3%	
Arts Enrichment Programs	15,140	18%	
Youth Development Enrichment Programs	18,197	22%	
Academic Enrichment Programs	18,757	23%	
Sports or Physical Activity	12,481	15%	
City Connects Healthy Life Skills Curriculum	2,630	3%	
Faith-Based Programs	1,662	2%	
High School Programs for Transitions to College, Career, and Job	1,717	2%	
Violence Prevention	1,214	1%	
Category Total	**82,407**		**44%**
CATEGORY 2 (Early Intervention)			
Academic Services	24,803	31%	
Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Services	18,153	22%	
Classroom Health Lesson/Intervention	10,450	13%	
Family Services (Donations, Outreach, Conferences, Fuel and Other Assistance)	25,403	31%	
Language Services for Students and Families	218	<1%	
Mentoring Programs	1,703	2%	
Category Total	**80,730**		**43%**
CATEGORY 3 (Intensive / Crisis Intervention)			
Health/Medical Services	8,688	38%	
Counseling Services for Students	3,041	13%	
Crisis Intervention	499	2%	
Attendance Support	5,205	23%	
504 Plan Services	551	2%	
Family Services (Counseling and Family-to-Family Collaboration)	430	2%	
Special Education Identification Services	572	3%	
Violence Intervention	355	2%	
High-intensity Mental Health Services*	112	<1%	
Check-in with City Connects School Site Coordinator	3,208	14%	
Category Total	**22,661**		**12%**
GRAND TOTAL	**185,798**		

Source: City Connects Student Support Information System database, 2016-17. An additional 23,190 health screenings and 3,327 IEP-mandated services were delivered.

*Includes therapeutic mentoring, psychiatric services, and intensive care coordination. Other mental health services included elsewhere (e.g., counseling services).

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Tables 4 and 5 and Figure 5 illustrate the distribution by tier of students receiving different services.

TABLE 4. Number of services by student tier, 2016-17

	# of Students	Mean # of Services (Std. Deviation)	1-2 Services	3-4 Services	5+ Services
Tier 1 (minimal risk)	9,021	7.3 (4.6)	11.7%	18.3%	70.0%
Tier 2a (mild risk)	8,554	7.9 (5.1)	9.3%	16.7%	73.9%
Tier 2b (moderate risk)	5,838	8.6 (5.5)	7.3%	15.3%	77.4%
Tier 3 (intensive risk)	2,978	9.1 (5.5)	6.6%	12.7%	80.8%
TOTAL	**26,391**	**8.2 (5.2)**	**8.7%**	**15.8%**	**75.5%**

Source: City Connects Student Support Information System database, 2016-17.

Table 4 shows that the mean number of services per student is smallest in Tier 1 (7.3) and largest in Tier 3 (9.1). Additionally, the number of students receiving 1-2 services is highest for Tier 1 and lowest for Tier 3. The corresponding proportions for 5+ services are the highest in Tier 3 and lowest in Tier 1. In other words, on average, students with higher risk receive more services. Students in the lowest risk level (Tier 1) are more likely than their counterparts in higher risk levels to receive 1-2 services (as opposed to 3-4 or 5+ services). However, it should be noted that in all tiers, at least 70% of students receive 5 or more services.

Table 5 presents the mean number of services per category for each tier. Category 1 services are classified as prevention and enrichment services, such as before school programs and arts enrichment. Category 2 services are considered early intervention services, including academic support or mentoring. Category 3 services are intensive or crisis intervention services, such as mental health counseling or attendance support.

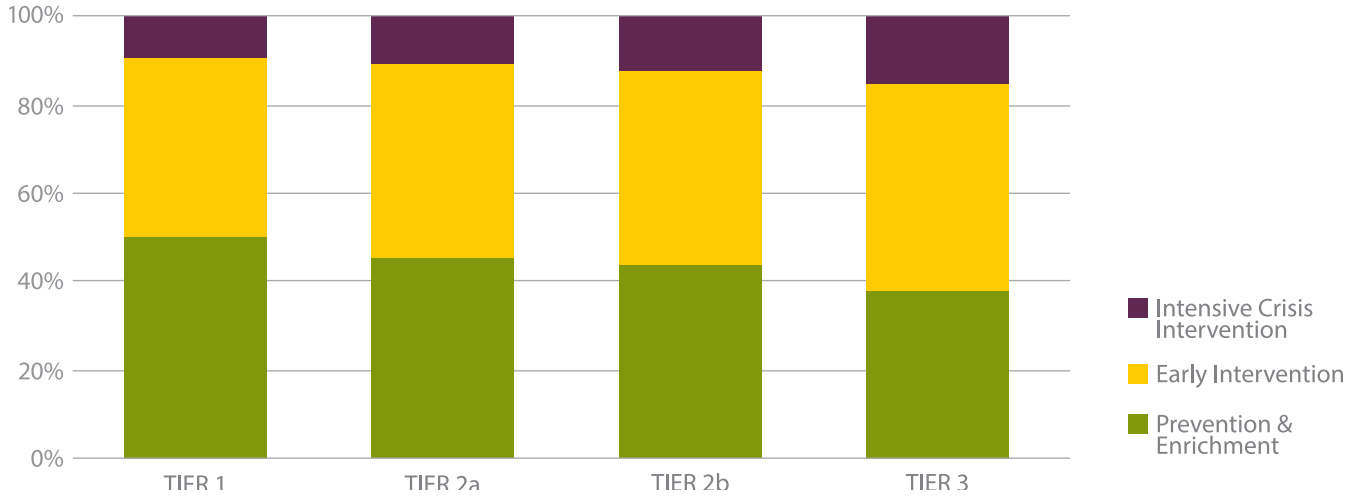
TABLE 5. Category of services by student tier, 2016-17

		Mean Number of Services per Student (Std. Deviation)		
	# of Students	Category 1: Prevention and Enrichment Services	Category 2: Early Intervention Services	Category 3: Intensive or Crisis Intervention Services
Tier 1 (minimal risk)	8,959	3.40 (3.3)	2.76 (2.4)	0.69 (0.9)
Tier 2a (mild risk)	8,501	3.39 (3.7)	3.20 (2.7)	0.87 (1.0)
Tier 2b (moderate risk)	5,819	3.43 (4.0)	3.61 (2.9)	1.09 (1.3)
Tier 3 (intensive risk)	2,975	3.11 (3.6)	3.94 (3.0)	1.45 (1.5)

Source: City Connects Student Support Information System database, 2016-17. Health screenings and IEP-mandated services not included. Student Ns are slightly lower than in earlier tables because students receiving only health screenings and IEP-mandated services are not included.

Figure 5 presents a breakdown of the proportion of services from each category (1, 2, and 3) for all tiers of risk (1, 2a, 2b, and 3). Students at all tiers, on average, received most of their services from category 1, fewer services from category 2, and the smallest percentage of services from category 3. When comparing results across tiers, students in Tier 1 receive the highest percentage of category 1 services and the smallest percentage of category 3 services. The inverse is true for students in Tier 3: these students receive the highest percentage of category 3 services and the smallest percentage of category 1 services.

FIGURE 5. Proportion of student in each tier receiving categories of services, 2016-17



Source: City Connects Student Support Information System database, 2016-17. Health screenings and IEP-mandated services not included.

CITY CONNECTS ON THE GROUND

As shown in the tables and figure above, students in City Connects schools receive multiple services, regardless of their tier. The following vignettes illustrate the array of services a school and an individual student may receive. While the vignettes are based on real data, all names of people and organizations have been changed, along with other details, to protect confidentiality.

THE SCHOOL

The Frederick Douglass Elementary School serves 400 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. It is a public school located in an urban neighborhood in the eastern U.S. In addition to school and district services, students receive supports from about 40 community partners. Some services and supports are offered to all students in the school, or all in a grade level or classroom. The Coordinator identified and contacted partners providing these services based on an understanding of school-wide, grade-specific, or classroom-specific needs. Other services are provided to smaller numbers of students based on individual strengths and needs. In these cases, too, the Coordinator contacted and cultivated connections with community agencies that can provide needed services to individual students or small groups of students.

MICAH'S STORY

Micah is a male student in grade 4 at the Frederick Douglass Elementary School. The Coordinator and teacher observed strengths as well as information and behaviors reflecting minimal educational risk for this student (Tier 1). During the Whole Class Review conversation, the teacher noted that Micah is performing above grade level in reading, math, and writing, and that he has many interests. He has a tendency to rush through work sometimes. He has a lot of energy, is positive, and has friends in class. Sometimes he can be overly social and can become distracted. Health strengths include good hygiene and a high level of activity, and family strengths include parents who are involved and communicate with the school.

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In the 2016-17 academic year, Micah received nine services/enrichment opportunities. Four of these were supports offered to the full school. These included The Arts Project, a program that aligns with the school's literacy curriculum; City Seeds, a program that offers students in urban schools experience with gardening; Play to Learn, a program that builds social-emotional skills through games; and another school-based program that builds social-emotional skills through events involving students and staff. Micah received two services offered to his grade or class: a health screening procedure and a field trip to a historical site. Finally, Micah received three individually tailored enrichments and supports. The Coordinator connected him to a music program that offers performance opportunities, which was a match for his specific musical interests, and because transportation was available. He was also connected to an after-school program that provides homework help as well as enrichment activities in science, soccer, basketball, and arts and crafts; and Fitness Fun, a before-school program that coordinates indoor and outdoor group activities.

BRAYDEN'S STORY

Brayden is a male student in grade 5. The Coordinator and teacher observed strengths as well as information and behaviors indicating intensive educational risk for this student (Tier 3). During the Whole Class Review conversation, the teacher noted that Brayden's academic strengths include reading fluency, enjoyment of school, and a capacity for hard work. Brayden is below grade level in reading comprehension and writing. He is noted for his good intentions and for the fact that he loves positive attention. He sometimes struggles with transitions, which can lead to unpredictable behavior. Health strengths include the fact that he is active and has appropriate clothing and good hygiene. He is often hungry, and has challenges with sleep and medication compliance. Family strengths include the fact that his mother is in communication with the school and has been receptive to resources and supports; his father is also involved. The family has experienced stressors including homelessness.

In the 2016-17 academic year, Brayden received fifteen services/enrichment opportunities. Four of these were supports offered to the full school. These included four of the supports described above: The Arts Project; City Seeds; Play to Learn; and a school-based program promoting social-emotional skills. One of the enrichments Brayden received was provided for his entire grade—a field trip to a museum. The ten remaining supports and services were individually tailored to his specific strengths and needs. Two were family assistance services related to housing, which were specific to the family's circumstances and which were set up through communication between the Coordinator and Brayden's mother. A third was a medical service, also set up in collaboration with the family, tailored to meet the identified need for support with medication compliance. Other supports included two additional medical services, a family conference, an intervention service that helped address the student's struggles with transitions, a crisis intervention, attendance support, and a behavior support service.

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Outcomes summary

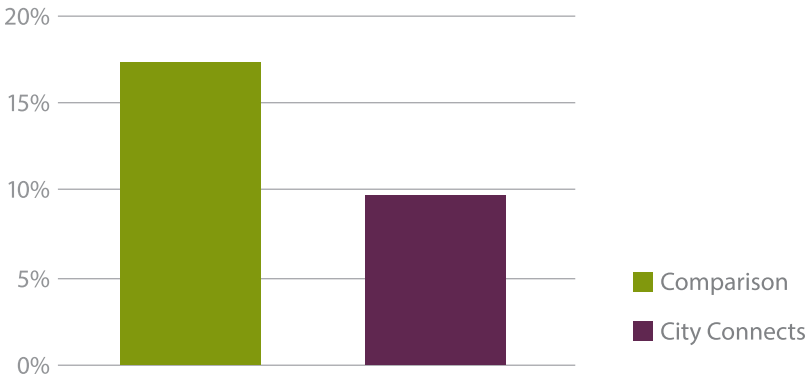
A consistent set of findings demonstrates that being in a City Connects school makes a difference. Beginning in elementary school, and after leaving the City Connects and moving on to middle schools, City Connects students outperform comparison peers on measures of academic achievement:

- Despite starting with lower report card scores in first grade, students in City Connects schools demonstrated significantly higher scores than those in comparison schools in reading, writing, and math by the end of fifth grade. The magnitude of these positive effects was as large as the negative effects of poverty (City Connects, 2010).
- English language learners (ELL) experienced significantly larger treatment benefits on literacy outcomes than non-ELL students. By third grade, ELL students in City Connects schools demonstrated similar reading report card scores to those proficient in English in comparison schools, thereby eliminating the achievement gap in reading between ELL and non-ELL students (City Connects, 2010).
- Immigrant students who experienced City Connects significantly outperformed immigrant students who never experienced the intervention on both reading and math achievement test scores. City Connects also narrowed achievement gaps between immigrant students and their English-proficient peers (Dearing et al., 2016).
- Students who experienced City Connects in elementary school significantly outperformed comparison peers on measures of academic achievement (statewide test scores in English and mathematics and grade point averages) in grades 6, 7, and 8 (Walsh et al., 2014)

Beyond academic achievement, students who experience City Connects in elementary school outperform comparison peers on indicators of educational success and life chances:

- City Connects students at greatest educational risk demonstrated lower rates of retention (being held back in grade) than comparable students never enrolled in City Connects (City Connects, 2012).
- Students enrolled in City Connects elementary schools demonstrated lower rates of chronic absenteeism in middle and high school (defined as being absent from school 10% of days or more) than students in comparison schools (City Connects, 2014).
- Once they reached high school, students previously enrolled in a City Connects school from kindergarten through grade 5 dropped out of school at about half the rate of students enrolled in non-City Connects schools at the same time (Walsh et al., 2017). See Figure 6.

FIGURE 6. Cumulative percentage of students who drop out from high school, comparison vs. City Connects students



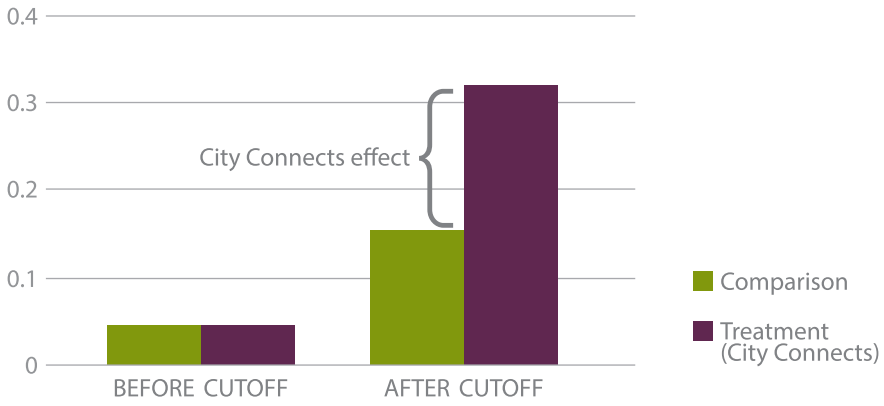
Proportions adjusted for student demographic characteristics. Source: District enrollment and withdrawal code data, 2001-2014. Comparison N=10,200; City Connects N=894

More recently, evidence that City Connects benefits students has converged across methods, samples, and sites:

Robustness across methods

- In a difference-in-differences analysis, although City Connects students had significantly lower report card scores in reading and math than comparison students at the start of implementation, City Connects students demonstrated significantly greater improvement in report card scores, catching up to comparison students in reading by fifth grade and in math by fourth grade. By the end of fifth grade, City Connects students outperformed comparison students in math (City Connects, 2016).
- A natural experiment taking advantage of the cutoff age for enrollment in kindergarten (in essence, a regression discontinuity design) demonstrated that students who experienced an additional year of City Connects performed significantly better on statewide tests of English language arts (third grade) and math (third and fifth grade) than students who missed out on that year. The figure below presents mean MCAS (statewide) math test scores for grade three students in City Connects and comparison groups born both before and after the cutoff date, illustrating the "City Connects effect" seen for those who were born after the cutoff and received the City Connects intervention for an additional year (City Connects, 2016).

FIGURE 7. Mean score, statewide math test, comparison vs. City Connects students



Source: Boston Public Schools Data, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, 2006-07 through 2011-12

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- Methodological improvements to an earlier study of middle school achievement uncovered larger effect sizes than seen in previous work. Students who experienced City Connects in elementary school significantly outperformed comparison peers on measures of academic achievement in grades 6, 7, and 8 (statewide test scores in English and math and grade point averages). The beneficial effects were not only statistically significant but also practically significant, with effect sizes ranging from 0.29 to 0.67 (An, 2015).
- Experiencing City Connects in sixth grade led to significant gains in middle school academic achievement (beyond the positive effects of attending a City Connects middle school) when school characteristics were taken into account (City Connects, 2016).

Robustness across samples

Positive findings replicated for a new sample of students in Boston: those enrolled in schools with "Turnaround" (consistently low-performing) designation. Before the Turnaround designation, failing schools that would later become City Connects schools performed significantly worse than comparison schools in statewide English and math tests. However, the gaps in test score performance narrowed after the launch of City Connects in these Turnaround schools (City Connects, 2016).

- For grade 3 English and math, grade 4 math, and grade 5 math, gaps in student performance between City Connects Turnaround schools and comparison schools were narrowed to insignificant levels after just one year.
- For grade 4 and 5 English and math, the gap narrowed to insignificant levels after two years of City Connects.

Robustness across sites

Positive findings seen in Boston Public Schools replicated in Springfield, MA schools designated as "Transformation" schools, a reform model for consistently low-performing schools. Before the Transformation designation, failing schools that would later become City Connects schools performed significantly worse than comparison schools in statewide English and math tests. However, the gaps in test score performance narrowed after the launch of City Connects in these Transformation schools (City Connects, 2016).

- By 2013-14, after three years of implementation, there were no significant differences between students in City Connects schools and students in non-City Connects comparison schools with respect to statewide test performance in grades 3, 4, and 5.
- For grade 3 math, grade 4 English and math, and grade 5 English, these gap reductions exceeded What Works Clearinghouse standards for substantively important effect sizes.

Findings also replicated in Catholic schools in Boston (Shields et al., 2016).

- For math, scores in sixth grade were significantly higher for students in City Connects Catholic schools than for those in comparison schools after controlling for demographics. This difference was larger than the achievement advantage that students who did *not qualify* for free or reduced-price lunch had over those who *qualified* for free or reduced-price lunch.
- For reading and language, scores in sixth grade were higher for students in City Connects schools than for students in comparison schools, but the difference was not significantly different.

- Lower-income students in City Connects schools started out with slightly lower language scores in third grade than lower-income students in comparison schools, but surpassed them by sixth grade.
- The rate of math, reading, and language achievement growth was significantly higher for students in City Connects than for students in comparison schools.

The results of evaluation studies demonstrate the positive effects of City Connects repeatedly, across methodological approaches, sites, and samples. Consistently, across methods, City Connects students are seen to significantly outperform comparison peers on a variety of measures of academic achievement and thriving. The accumulation of evidence now permits an argument that City Connects causes these benefits for students (City Connects, 2016).

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Impact on schools

Each spring, City Connects conducts confidential surveys of principals, teachers, and community partners who work with City Connects. The survey is administered electronically using the Qualtrics survey tool. Principals across all districts are surveyed annually. Teachers and community partners are surveyed every other year after three years of implementation in a district. The online surveys are designed to assess participants' satisfaction with City Connects and to identify both strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The findings below are presented in aggregate across all districts. They were calculated using the most recent survey data available from Boston and Springfield, MA; New York City; Hartford, CT; Dayton and Springfield, OH Catholic and charter schools; Boston Catholic schools; and Minneapolis, MN Catholic schools. For principals, all data was collected in the spring of 2017. For teachers and community partners, who are surveyed on a rotating basis as described above, the data used was collected in the springs of 2016 and 2017.

Principal satisfaction

In the spring of 2017, public, Catholic, and charter school principals and administrators at all sites were invited to participate in City Connects annual satisfaction survey.[1] Across all districts, 92% of principals reported satisfaction with City Connects, and 94% would recommend City Connects to another principal. Three quarters (75%) report having more time for their core work, and 94% reported that student support had improved in their schools as a result of City Connects. In the words of a Boston principal,

> "With the support of City Connects, we now have the opportunity to really meet the needs of our students on a socio-emotional and more personal level than before. More specifically, resources are being given to students in a more direct and aligned manner."

Principals reported that Coordinators communicating with and supporting families was a particular area of strength for the intervention: 87% of principals report that the Coordinator plays an important role engaging families, and 91% report being satisfied with the supports that the Coordinator provides for families. When asked to identify ways the City Connects Coordinator works with families in the school, a majority of principals reported that Coordinators served as a point of contact for families in the school (86%), reached out to families on behalf of the school (88%), supported teachers in having difficult or sensitive conversations with families (83%), connected families to services (80%), and supported families with transitions (77%).

In addition to being satisfied with City Connects' work with families, principals also reported satisfaction on a range of Coordinator-provided supports. See Table 6.

1 The survey was sent to 114 principals and assistant principals across districts, and 88 (77%) participated. Not every principal responded to every question. Therefore, item-level Ns may vary.

TABLE 6. Percentage of principals satisfied with the Coordinator-provided supports in each area

I am satisfied with the support City Connects provides to:	N=82
Students (e.g., securing services, providing individual support, running lunch groups)	91%
Teachers (e.g., conducting Whole Class Reviews and assisting with behavior challenges in the classroom)	89%
Families (e.g., family outreach, following up with families, assisting with parent meetings)	91%
Principals/Administrators (e.g., coordinating Student Support Team, supporting administrative activities)	90%
The School (e.g., their presence on the playground, bus and lunch duty)	85%
Community Partnerships (e.g. maintaining communication with agencies, following up to secure services, coordinating agency work in the school)	88%

Source: City Connects 2017 principal survey

Principals also reported on how helpful they found various aspects of City Connects in their schools. As shown in Table 7, a large majority of principals (89% or more for all items) found each aspect of the program helpful, with coordination of Whole Class Reviews and connecting students to services being the highest-rated program aspects. In the words of a Boston principal,

> "[The Whole Class Review] allows teachers to consider each child in their class in a meaningful way. Focus is not only on high risk students but on all students."

TABLE 7. Percentage of principals rating specific program aspects as (somewhat/very) helpful

The following aspects of City Connects have been somewhat/very helpful in my school:	N=85
Facilitation of the Student Support Team	93%
Coordination of Whole Class Reviews	98%
Students being connected to services	96%
Individual and small group student support	93%
Behavior management support	89%
Teacher support	89%
Family support	89%
Focus on health	90%
Having the extra staff member in the building	93%
Management of relationships with community agencies	91%
Administrative support	89%
Student support data (e.g., Mid-year report, End-of-year report)	91%

Source: City Connects 2017 principal survey

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Principals also reported on other features of the program's impact. For example, 90% or more of principals rated City Connects as somewhat or very helpful at impacting the following: student academic achievement (90%), student health and well-being (93%), the quality of supports and enrichments provided to students in the school (94%), and school climate (92%).

In the words of an Ohio principal,

> "I have been in schools for close to 40 years and I have never had a support system like City Connects. That support is provided to the entire school community: students, parents, teachers, and staff. They are my 'go to' people. They are also so generous with their time and creative with the opportunities they afford our students."

Teacher satisfaction and impact on teaching

Teachers across all City Connects districts and sites were invited to take part in a survey in spring 2017, with the exception of teachers in districts beyond their third year of implementation, who were surveyed in either 2016 or 2017.[2] Like principals, teachers reported high levels of satisfaction: 90% of teachers report that they are satisfied with City Connects *and* would recommend the intervention to a colleague. 89% are satisfied with the supports City Connects provides to the school, 87% are satisfied with the supports provided to students, and 85% are satisfied with the supports they receive as teachers.

Teachers were also asked about the Whole Class Review process, in which the teacher and Coordinator review the strengths and needs of each individual student across academic, social/emotional/behavioral, health, and family domains. As shown in Table 8, teachers report that this process influences various aspects of their work with students.

TABLE 8. Percentage of teachers who agree with each statement about the Whole Class Review

I agree that:	N=696
The Whole Class/Grade Review process enhanced my awareness of the dynamics of my class as a whole.	88%
The Whole Class/Grade Review process enhanced my awareness of my students as individuals.	88%
The Whole Class/Grade Review supported my ability to identify new options for working with my students.	83%
The Whole Class/Grade Review was helpful to me.	84%
My instructional practices were enhanced as a result of the Whole Class/Grade Review	71%
The Whole Class/Grade Review process added to my knowledge of the non-academic aspects of my students' lives (e.g., neighborhood and family context).	83%
The Whole Class/Grade Review process increased my empathy for students.	85%

Source: City Connects 2016 and 2017 teacher surveys

2 This section reports the most recent survey findings from each district. The survey was sent to 1,551 teachers, and 911 (59%) participated. Not every teacher answered every question. Therefore, item-level Ns may vary.

As seen in Table 8, the Whole Class Review process may lead to a shift in teachers' perspective on individual students. In the words of a Hartford teacher,

> "[The] City Connects Whole Class Review allowed me to take time to focus on each child individually and determine strengths, areas of weakness, at-risk level, and most importantly, what steps could be taken to make each child have a successful year. [Coordinator] facilitated the process efficiently and is an incredible asset to our school!"

Teachers who participated in the Whole Class Review process report that knowing more about the non-academic aspects of their students' lives influences their teaching practice. 90% or more of teachers reported that they:

- Provided more differentiated instruction to meet the various learning styles of their students (e.g., small group work, visuals, and movement);
- Are patient with their students because they better understand the non-academic issues that contribute to their struggles in the classroom; and
- Thought about the factors influencing student behavior before reacting to the behavior.

In the words of an Ohio public teacher,

> "City Connects is a bridge that connects home to school [and] vice versa. You have a better understanding of students' needs and support to better serve your students and families in their community."

In addition to the Whole Class Review process, teachers were also asked to respond to a set of questions regarding the Individual Student Review, which 70% of teachers reported participating in. In an Individual Student Review, the Coordinator brings a team together to discuss strengths, needs, and specific goals for students experiencing intensive risk. In addition to the Coordinator and teacher, the team may include a principal or assistant principal, a school nurse or other support staff member, community agency representatives, and/or family members. Teachers who participated had positive feedback about the process: 92% agreed that students who would benefit from an Individual Student Review received one, and 93% felt that the goals and objectives set for students were on target. Furthermore, 88% of teachers agreed that having a tailored plan in place for the student(s) who received an Individual Student Review made a difference to them as teachers. A majority of teachers were satisfied with follow-up after the review (81%) and the quality of services their students received as a result of it (83%). In the words of a Boston teacher,

> "The Whole Class Review and the Individual [Student] Review allow me to have a good insight into my student's background and family history."

Teachers also responded to a set of questions regarding the specific ways City Connects Coordinators supported their work. Coordinators' ability to serve as a source of knowledge about student support, to assist teachers in their work with families, to obtain services for students, and to be someone to talk to were among the top-rated supports provided to teachers. In the words of a Minnesota teacher,

> "City Connects helps me to do my job in caring for the whole student and their different needs."

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Teachers also reported on the helpfulness of City Connects in addressing other issues. For example, 83% of teachers reported that City Connects helps them to follow through in securing non-academic supports for their students. More than three quarters of teachers agreed that City Connects helped them to address student behavior, to ensure students came to class prepared to learn, and to help them connect with students' families. 73% of teachers reported that City Connects helped make their classrooms more conducive to learning, and more than half of teachers agreed that City Connects helps them increase the amount of time available to prepare for instruction.

City Connects Coordinators also support teachers through their work with families. Teachers report that Coordinators support their work by serving as a point of contact for families in the school (76%) and increasing teacher awareness of the services available for families, such as translation, housing, and transportation (71%). More than half (57%) of teachers agreed that Coordinators supported them in having difficult or sensitive conversations with families, and 60% reported that Coordinators contacted families on their behalf. In the words of an Ohio teacher,

> "The most important thing is the connection/communication between parents and teachers. The City Connects Coordinator can address certain issues with parents and explain interventions that their student may need to improve their behavior or academics."

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Impact on community agencies

Community agency partners across all City Connects districts were invited to take part in a survey in spring 2017, with the exception of community partners in districts beyond their third year of implementation, who were surveyed in either 2016 or 2017.[3] Like the principals and teachers who were surveyed, community partners reported high levels of satisfaction with City Connects. For example, 96% of community partners reported overall satisfaction with City Connects and felt that City Connects was effective at identifying the needs of the students they work with; 95% would recommend City Connects to another agency; and 93% agree that City Connects is effective at matching students to services. In the words of a Boston partner,

> "City Connects is very helpful in identifying students that may benefit from our services, recommending our services to teachers, and helping to coordinate across a grade level or whole school which students should be matched with our services. In addition, City Connects has helped identify which students are a priority for matching with our services, where appropriate. They are a very helpful contact to improve follow-up and understanding at a school, rather than individual classroom, level."

Community partners were also asked to indicate their level of satisfaction when working with schools with City Connects and schools without City Connects across specific aspects of school-related work, such as communication, referrals, and follow-up. Participants were first asked to respond to a set of survey questions pertaining to their work with City Connects schools. They were then prompted to answer the same set of questions related to their work with other (non-City Connects) schools.

Across each dimension of good collaboration, community partners were more satisfied with City Connects schools than schools without City Connects. The results are shown in Table 9.

3 This section reports the most recent survey findings from each district. The survey was sent to 703 community agency representatives, and 222 (32%) participated. Not every community agency respondent answered every question. Therefore, item-level Ns may vary.

TABLE 9. Percentage of community partners who are satisfied (very/somewhat) with dimensions of partnership with City Connects and non-City Connects schools

I am satisfied with:	City Connects Schools N=104	Non-City Connects School N=104
Communication with primary contact	98%	76%
Referral process (e.g., identifying students that would benefit from your services)	94%	80%
Follow-up on service delivery (e.g., checking to ensure the student(s) received the service)	94%	74%
Effectiveness of your partnership in reaching goals	92%	76%
Providing you with feedback that would improve service delivery, when appropriate	93%	66%
Providing opportunities for you to provide feedback to the school	94%	70%
The cultural competence of your primary contact in the school	98%	81%

Source: City Connects 2016 and 2017 community partner surveys

As the table illustrates, across all dimensions, partners were more satisfied in their work with City Connects schools than with non-City Connects schools, particularly in the areas of communication and feedback. In the words of a New York City partner,

> "We find that having a City Connects Coordinator at one of our schools is crucial and has been so beneficial to students/families and a great support to our program. We work very closely with the City Connects Coordinator to assure students get the services they need and the follow that is provided to these families is essential. We can see a big difference of lack of services and coordination of services at the schools where we do not have a City Connects Coordinator."

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Conclusions

City Connects is an approach to providing supports to students that align with effective practices emerging from the developmental sciences. By design, specific features of the intervention enable these effective practices. For example, City Connects is **comprehensive**. It provides a codified practice for paying attention to the different domains in which students are developing: academic social/emotional/behavioral, health, and family. Both strengths and needs in all of these domains are considered through a guided process for conversations between the City Connects Coordinator, classroom teachers, and other staff in the school. It is also **customized**. Each student's developmental trajectory is unique, so the City Connects Coordinator meets with every classroom teacher individually to discuss each student in the class, one by one, considering both strengths and needs across developmental domains. This enables the Coordinator to connect each student to a tailored set of prevention, enrichment, early intervention, and/or intensive supports. These connections are **coordinated:** the City Connects database and communication practices ensure that not only the classroom teacher but also the student's family and any community partners remain in close communication with the Coordinator. Finally, to ensure **continuous** support, the database includes reminders and protocols for tracking the effectiveness of supports throughout the school year and across school years. The ongoing communication that Coordinators maintain with teachers, families, and community partners contributes to the stability and continuity of care that developmental science identifies as critical to supporting students' growth.

The City Connects intervention is feasible because the intervention model supports both comprehensiveness and efficiency. The practice database enables Coordinators to tailor supports, quickly identifying the right service providers from among hundreds of community partners in a city. Individual students can be connected to a constellation of services that best address their individual strengths and needs. While students experiencing intensive needs often receive more services, the majority of students receive at least three services in a given academic year. Students experiencing any level of risk may receive supports from any category.

Findings from surveys of principals and teachers demonstrate the beneficial impact of City Connects on schools. Both of these groups note that their own work is enhanced because of City Connects. Principals point out the benefits to collaboration with families, and teachers report that City Connects increases their patience and empathy, because they have a deeper understanding of the out-of-school lives of their students. Clarity of understanding and closer collaborations lead to stronger relationships, enhancing the network of support surrounding each student.

The research on City Connects demonstrates that paying attention to the individual strengths and needs of every student makes a difference.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

City Connects was developed through a two-year planning process that involved Boston Public School principals, teachers, administrators, families, Boston College researchers, and community partners. Its early partners included the YMCA and a small number of other community service providers. It launched in a single Boston Public School in 2001. During the 2002-03 school year, the number of partnerships grew to 40, and 212 students received a service recommendation. At the request of the district, City Connects expanded in different geographic areas of the city, and is now in 21 schools. Today, more than 7,900 Boston Public students are connected to services, and 275 community partners work with City Connects in the Boston Public schools.

BOSTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In the fall of 2008, City Connects launched in 17 schools in the Archdiocese of Boston. Seven years of evaluation data have revealed that principals, in particular, are consistently satisfied with their school's partnership with City Connects. One Boston Catholic principal reported, *"I've been a principal in Catholic schools for a long time and I always did sort of everything. I was limited in what I had time to do and limited in resources. What I've found with this program, having someone I can rely on [the Coordinator] to help with whatever situation, but also to find the resources that we need to help students, that is just a God-send. It's been wonderful."* In the most recent anonymous surveys Boston Catholic principals reported 100% satisfaction with the intervention, and 100% would recommend City Connects to another principal.

SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In Springfield Public Schools, City Connects' work with families is a particular strength. 92% of principals are satisfied with City Connects' work with families, reporting that the Coordinator serves as a point of contact for families in the school, reaches out to families, supports teachers in having sensitive conversations with families, connects families to services, and supports families with transitions. 84% of teachers agreed that City Connects helps them to connect with students' families. Teachers reported benefits in their relationships with families as a result of knowing more about the non-academic aspects of their students' lives, such as reaching out to families for support regarding students' needs and progress, and collaborating with families in regard to students' academic and non-academic needs.

OHIO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

City Connects' first site outside of Massachusetts was at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Elementary School in Dayton, Ohio. Today, City Connects is implemented in four Ohio Catholic Schools, serving students from preschool through high school, and principals, teachers, and community partners in Ohio consistently report high levels of satisfaction with the intervention. Four years of satisfaction survey data reveals that year after year, 100% of Ohio Catholic principals are satisfied with City Connects and would recommend the intervention to a colleague. In the words of an Ohio Catholic principal, *"we have a process that has become a part of who we are as a community. City Connects keeps us student focused!"*

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OHIO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

City Connects launched the Dayton Early College Academy, at both the elementary and high school level, in the fall of 2014. In its first year, City Connects collaborated with 20 community partners to deliver 1,162 services to students at DECA Prep and DECA. In its third year of implementation, during the 2016-17 school year, the number of partners had grown to 39, and the number of services delivered to DECA Prep and DECA students had increased tenfold, to 11,806.

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Three years of evaluation data show that City Connects has been appreciated by principals and teachers in New York City schools. Every year, more than 90% of principals and teachers report that they would recommend City Connects to a colleague. In the words of a New York City teacher, *"One of the most important benefits of City Connects at [our school] has been having a trusted liaison between families and outside service providers so that our students and their families can get all the help they need to thrive."*

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

City Connects began implementation in Hartford Public Schools in the fall of 2015. In its first year in the district, City Connects delivered 6,672 services to 1,955 students. The following year, a thousand more students were served (2,957 in all) and a total of 23,013 services were delivered. In the words of a Hartford teacher, *"It really helped me learn and understand the outside services available to students and families. My coordinator was able to contact these organizations and not only support the students inside school, but outside of school."*

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

A strength of City Connects in Minnesota Catholic schools is in the area of partnerships and services. Community partners in Minnesota report high levels of satisfaction with City Connects, which have increased over two years of implementation. In 2015-16 (the first year of implementation) 78% of community partners reported that they were satisfied with City Connects and would recommend it to another agency. In the 2016-17 school year, 100% of community partners reported that they were satisfied and would recommend City Connects. In its first year, City Connects partnered with 29 community agencies. The following year, City Connects had established partnerships with 277 organizations. The number of services delivered also increased, from 9,501 in 2015-16 to 12,655 in 2016-17. In the words of a Minnesota partner, *"as an outside agency, it is so helpful to have people inside the school with connections to the families make the initial contact with families. Not being part of the school is sometimes difficult to integrate ourselves, and I think our City Connects Coordinator really sees our value and advocates for getting us more involved with the school, which will ultimately help the students we serve and the teachers of those students as well."*

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