

What Works Clearinghouse



Connect with Kids

Program description

Connect with Kids aims to promote prosocial attitudes and positive behavior of elementary (grades 3–5) and secondary (grades 6–12) school students by teaching core character values. Lesson plans include videos, story summaries, discussion questions, student games, and activities for both core and supplemental character traits. The classroom curriculum is reinforced by a

website component and a schoolwide and community outreach components. The program can be incorporated into an existing curriculum or used as a standalone program. The school or teacher decides on the number of character traits covered in each session, so the program duration may vary from one semester to an entire academic year.

Research

One study of *Connect with Kids* met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards with reservations. This study, which included more than 800 elementary, middle, and high

school students from 46 classrooms in eight urban, suburban, and rural school districts in Kansas and Missouri, examined results on students' behavior.¹

Effectiveness

Connect with Kids was found to have potentially positive effects on middle and high school students' behavior.

	<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Knowledge, attitudes, and values</i>	<i>Academic achievement</i>
Rating of effectiveness	Potentially positive effects	Not reported	Not reported
Improvement index²	Average: +16 percentile points Range: +10 to +23 percentile points	Not reported	Not reported

1. The evidence presented in this report is based on the available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.

2. These numbers show the average and the range of improvement indices for all findings across the two studies.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

Connect with Kids Network, Inc. 6285 Barfield Road, 2nd Floor, Atlanta, GA 30328. Web: www.connectwithkids.com. Email: assistance@cwknetwork.com. Telephone: 888-598-KIDS (5437).

Scope of use

CWK Network, Inc., founded in 1998, produces the *Connect with Kids* television series. In 2001 *Connect with Kids* piloted educational programs focused on children's health and wellness issues in key school districts through Georgia Public Broadcasting Education Network. According to the developer, *Connect with Kids* has been implemented in hundreds of schools and districts across the country, including Washington, D.C., New York City, Los Angeles, Houston, Miami-Dade, and Broward, Florida. According to the developer, implementation sites represent a diverse student population for grade level, age, race, ethnicity, urbanicity, and socio-economic status. *Connect with Kids* may have changed since the study was conducted. The WWC recommends asking the developer for information about the most current version of this curriculum and take into account that student demographics and school context may affect outcomes.

Teaching

Connect with Kids teaches character and life skills by incorporating peer-to-peer videos based on real stories of children and youth. Each skill is supported with grade-appropriate lesson plans based on story summaries, student activities, vocabulary, and discussion questions and is supplemented by web resources. At the elementary level there are eight units—three character traits per unit that include 48 student activities for both core and supplemental traits (two per trait). The middle/high school program has 36 lessons introducing 26 character traits that include 104 student activities for both core and supplemental traits (four per trait). The teacher resources include a teaching manual, story summaries, discussion questions, lesson plans, assessment guidelines, rubrics, and correlations between the program and national standards.

Each lesson begins with an introduction of the trait being taught followed by the *Connect with Kids* video for that trait. There are three video segments for each character trait in the middle/high school program and one video per character trait in the elementary school program. The video is followed by teacher-led discussions using questions from the teacher resource guide. One to two weeks after the video and discussion lesson a follow-up activity is taught. Students practice and demonstrate behaviors associated with the character trait being taught through cooperative learning exercises and other activities. Students are also introduced to monthly television specials aired on local stations. Parents are encouraged to view the show with their child. Some schools record the shows for classroom use, and teachers lead discussions following the airing of the shows. Teachers can access the *Connect with Kids* website to view weekly examples of the character traits being taught. Students and their parents can use the website in association with the classroom lessons.

The CWK Network offers one day of in-person or long-distance professional development for teachers. This workshop incorporates lectures, discussions, peer-to-peer interaction, and simulated activities. The CWK Network also provides ongoing technical assistance support through its toll-free hotline and dedicated email address.

Cost

The *Connect with Kids* program and professional development for elementary and middle/high school students costs \$4,000 per school. This cost includes an eight-video series that teaches core character values, a curriculum guide in English or Spanish, an evaluation and assessment tool, correlations between the curriculum and national standards, a six-video series titled "Character Parent Outreach," professional development for the school staff, one-year unlimited access to Connect with Kids WebSource, and ongoing educator support through a toll-free hotline.

Research One study (Page & D’Agostino, 2005) reviewed by the WWC investigated the effects of the *Connect with Kids* program. This study used a quasi-experimental design that met WWC evidence standards with reservations.

The Page and D’Agostino study included more than 800 elementary, middle, and high school students from 46 classes in

12 schools (2 rural, 7 suburban, and 3 urban) in eight school districts in Kansas and Missouri. Outcomes for students participating in the *Connect with Kids* program were compared with those for students who did not use the curriculum. This study focused on *Connect with Kids* as implemented in classrooms rather than as a schoolwide intervention.

Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of character education addresses student outcomes in three domains: behavior; knowledge, attitudes, and values; and academic achievement.

Behavior. Page and D’Agostino reported findings for four measures of student behavior related to six core character traits: honesty, kindness, perseverance, responsibility, self-control, and tolerance. The study examined students’ final scores relative to their baseline scores. The study reported statistically significant differences favoring the intervention group for middle and high school students’ reports of their own and their classmates’ behavior (middle/high school student survey part I and part II). The WWC confirmed the statistical significance of these differences. The study found no statistically significant effects

on elementary school students’ assessments of their own or their classmates’ behavior (elementary school student survey part I and part II). The average effect across all four outcome measures was positive and statistically significant.³

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates interventions as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative. The rating of effectiveness takes into account four factors: the quality of the research design, the statistical significance of the findings (as calculated by the WWC), the size of the differences between participants in the intervention condition and the comparison conditions, and the consistency of the findings across studies (see the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#)).

The WWC found *Connect with Kids* to have potentially positive effects on behavior

Improvement index

For each outcome domain, the WWC computed an improvement index based on the effect size (see the [WWC Improvement Index Technical Paper](#)). The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition versus the percentile rank of the average student in the comparison condition. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, the improvement index is entirely based on the size of the effect, regardless of the statistical significance of the effect, the study design, or the analysis. The improvement index can take on values between -50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting favorable results. The average improvement index for

behavior is +16 percentile points, with a range of +10 to +23 percentile points across findings.

Summary

The WWC reviewed one study on *Connect with Kids*. This study met WWC evidence standards with reservations. Performance on two student outcome measures for middle and high school students was also positive and statistically significant. The average effect size across the four student outcomes examined in this study was positive and statistically significant. WWC found no statistically significant effects for elementary school students. The WWC rated the program as having potentially positive

3. The level of statistical significance was calculated by the WWC and where necessary, corrects for clustering within classrooms or schools, and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the [WWC Tutorial on Mismatch](#). See the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#) for the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance. In the case of the *Connect with Kids* report, a correction was needed for multiple comparisons, but not for clustering.

effects on behavior. Character education, an evolving field, is beginning to establish a research base.

The evidence presented in this report is limited and may change as new research emerges.

References **Met WWC evidence standards with reservations**

Page, B. & D'Agostino, A. (2005). *Connect with Kids: 2004–2005 Study Results for Kansas and Missouri*. Available from: Compass Consulting Group, LLC. 5726 Fayetteville Road, Suite 203, Durham, NC 27713.

For more information about specific studies and WWC calculations, please see the [WWC Connect with Kids Technical Appendices](#).

Appendix

Appendix A1 Study characteristics: Page & D'Agostino, 2005 (quasi-experimental design)

Characteristic	Description
Study citation	Page, B. & D'Agostino, A. (2005). <i>Connect with Kids: 2004–2005 Study Results for Kansas and Missouri</i> . Available from: Compass Consulting Group, LLC. 5726 Fayetteville Road, Suite 203, Durham, NC 27713.
Participants	More than 800 elementary, middle, and high school students from 46 classrooms (24 intervention and 22 comparison) at 12 schools participated in the study. The study authors describe the sample as representing a diverse student population for urbanicity (urban, suburban, and rural school districts), socio-economic status, gender, ethnic and racial background, and grade level.
Setting	The sample was drawn from 12 elementary, middle, and high schools from eight rural, suburban, and urban school districts in Kansas and Missouri.
Intervention	The program was implemented during one of the following subject-matter classes, which varied among schools: English, Math, Social Studies, Life 101, Mentoring, or Choir. Intervention classrooms in both elementary and secondary schools covered the character traits in as few as 1–2 months and as many as 8 months, with the authors reporting an average of 5–6 months. Assessment of the quality of implementation indicated high quality in the elementary schools and moderate quality in the secondary schools.
Comparison	The comparison group was drawn partly from the intervention schools and partly from different schools in the same school district. Comparison students did not participate in any aspect of the <i>Connect with Kids</i> program at school.
Primary outcomes and measurement	Students responded to a student survey measuring their perception of their classmates' and their own behavior regarding six designated character traits. Teachers responded to a survey measuring their perception of students' classroom behavior. Some items represented positive behaviors (helping each other even if they are not friends) while others represented negative behaviors (solving problems by fighting).
Teacher training	A one-day workshop is offered with lectures, discussions, peer-to-peer interaction, and simulated activities that address classroom video and print materials, the password-protected website, and the shows that air on network television.

Appendix A2 Outcome measures in the behavior domain

Outcome measure	Description
Elementary school student survey—part 1	On this 21-item survey, developed by the study authors for this study, elementary school students rate how often students in their class demonstrate certain behaviors associated with six core character traits: honesty, kindness, perseverance, responsibility, self-control, and tolerance.
Elementary school student survey—part 2	On this 21-item survey, developed by the study authors for this study, elementary school students rate their own class behavior relative to six core character traits: honesty, kindness, perseverance, responsibility, self-control, and tolerance.
Middle/high school student survey—part 1	On this 29-item survey, developed by the study authors for this study, middle and high school students rate how often students in their class demonstrate certain behaviors associated with six core character traits: honesty, kindness, perseverance, responsibility, self-control, and tolerance.
Middle/high school student survey—part 2	On this 29-item survey, developed by the study authors for this study, middle and high school students rate their own class behavior relative to six core character traits: honesty, kindness, perseverance, responsibility, self-control, and tolerance.

Appendix A3 Summary of study findings included in the rating for the behavior domain

Outcome measure ²	Study sample	Sample size (classrooms/students)	Author's findings from the study		WWC calculations			
			Mean outcome (standard deviation ¹)		Mean difference ³ (<i>Connect with Kids</i> –comparison)	Effect size ⁴	Statistical significance ⁵ (at $\alpha = 0.05$)	Improvement index ⁶
			<i>Connect with Kids</i> group (column 1)	Comparison group (column 2)				
Page & D'Agostino, 2005 (quasi-experimental design)								
Elementary school student survey—part 1 ⁷	Grades 3–5	24	3.92 (0.61)	3.75 (0.63)	0.17	0.27	ns	+10
Elementary school student survey—part 2 ⁷	Grades 3–5	24	4.56 (0.42)	4.44 (0.51)	0.12	0.25	ns	+10
Middle/high school student survey—part 1	Grades 7–12	22	3.84 (0.79)	3.37 (0.68)	0.47	0.61	Statistically significant	+23
Middle/high school student survey—part 2	Grades 7–12	22	4.25 (0.64)	3.94 (0.59)	0.31	0.48	Statistically significant	+19
Domain average⁸ for behavior (Page & D'Agostino, 2005)						0.40	Statistically significant	+16

ns = not statistically significant

1. The standard deviation across all students in each group shows how dispersed the participants' outcomes are: a smaller standard deviation on a given measure would indicate that participants had more similar outcomes. The student-level standard deviations were requested by the WWC and submitted by the study authors. Thus, the standard deviations reported here are different from the standard deviations in the study report.
2. This review focuses on variations among students both in their perceptions of their own behavior and their perceptions of the behavior of their peers. Additional teacher-reported outcomes were excluded because the effects on students (effect size) could not be estimated for this outcome. The teacher survey represented global ratings at the classroom level rather than ratings of individual students. And standard deviations for this measure represented variations among teachers rather than variations among students.
3. The *Connect with Kids* mean equals the comparison group mean (column 2) plus the mean difference (difference between treatment and comparison gain scores; column 3). The mean difference reported here takes into account students' change from baseline (gain scores), which were used to calculate effect size. So, the intervention mean reported here is different from the mean in the study report. For an explanation of effect size calculation, please see the [WWC Technical Working Paper on Effect Size](#).
4. Although *Connect with Kids* is intended for schoolwide implementation, this study tested it using individual classrooms. Consequently, results may not reflect the true nature of the program, when enacted school-wide and involving all teachers and students. Positive differences and effect sizes favor the intervention group; negative differences and effect sizes favor the comparison group.
5. Statistical significance is the probability that the difference between groups is a result of chance rather than a real difference between groups. The level of statistical significance was calculated by the WWC and where necessary, corrects for clustering within classrooms or schools, and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the [WWC Tutorial on Mismatch](#). See the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#) for the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance. In the case of the *Connect with Kids* report, a correction for multiple comparisons, but not for clustering, was needed.
6. The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition and the average student in the comparison condition. The improvement index can take on values between –50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting favorable results.
7. The study also reported on an additional statistical analysis that controlled for percentage of female and minority students. This analysis found a statistically significant positive effect on total scores on the elementary school student survey parts 1 and 2. But, because of incomplete data, the WWC could not confirm the statistical significance of these findings. The reviewed statistical analyses of elementary and middle/high school students' outcomes did not take into account demographic characteristics of the sample.
8. This row provides the study average, which is also the domain average in this case. The WWC-computed domain average effect size is a simple average rounded to two decimal places. The domain improvement index is calculated from the average effect size.

Appendix A4 Rating for the behavior domain

The WWC rates interventions as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative.¹

For the outcome domain of behavior, the WWC rated *Connect with Kids* as having potentially positive effects. It did not meet the criteria for positive effects, because it only had one study. The remaining ratings (mixed effects, no discernible effects, potentially negative effects, negative effects) were not considered because *Connect with Kids* was assigned the highest applicable rating.

Rating received

Potentially positive effects: Evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence.

- Criterion 1: At least one study showing a statistically significant or substantively important *positive* effect, thus qualifying as a *positive* effect.

Met. In the one study on *Connect with Kids* that examined behavior, the average effect size was positive and statistically significant. Further, the effects on two student outcomes were positive and statistically significant.

- Criterion 2: No studies showing a statistically significant or substantively important *negative* effect. Fewer or the same number of studies showing *indeterminate* effects than showing statistically significant or substantively important *positive* effects.

Met. The WWC analysis found no statistically significant negative effects or indeterminate effects in this domain.

Other ratings considered

Positive effects: Strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence.

- Criterion 1: Two or more studies showing statistically significant *positive* effects, at least one of which met WWC evidence standards for a strong design.

Not met. *Connect with Kids* had only one study meeting WWC evidence standards.

- Criterion 2: No studies showing statistically significant or substantively important *negative* effects.

Met. The WWC analysis found no statistically significant or substantively important negative effects in this domain.

1. For rating purposes, the WWC considers the statistical significance of individual outcomes and the domain level effect. The WWC also considers the size of the domain level effect for ratings of potentially positive effects. See the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#) for a complete description.