

# Tell Us Something BHERO GOOD

“Those weekly, 30-or so minutes of undivided attention says to the students, ‘I care about you, I value you, and you having success in school is important to me.’”

—Chuck Kranz, Check & Connect Mentor

## PROGRAM

### CHECK & CONNECT

## SCHOOL

### Washington Elementary School (Minot)

#### SCHOOLS SERVED:

A well-established program, Check & Connect has been implemented across 48 states since the 1990s.

**DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE:** Check & Connect is an evidence-based intervention intended for K-12 students who show warning signs of disengagement and are at risk of dropping out. Check & Connect pairs each student with a caring, trained Mentor who utilizes student data to create personalized, timely interventions that help solve problems, build skills, and enhance competence. This program was developed out of the University of Minnesota and endorsed by the North Dakota Full-Service Community Schools Consortium

#### WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY



**COST:** The cost of implementing Check & Connect is dependent upon the most supportive Mentor model for each Check & Connect site. Regardless of the model, training and ongoing support is provided by the Central Regional Education Association.

**Primary Model** - Mentor role is employed by the Central Regional Education Association to serve the site in a mutually determined capacity. This model ensures that dedicated time is provided for this role to alleviate strain on existing school staff.

**Extender Model** - Mentor role is fulfilled by a volunteer or existing school staff with dedicated time to serve in the capacity of a Mentor.

## IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY— WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY

In his 30 years serving as a teacher and principal, Chuck Kranz developed a heart for serving all students—especially those struggling in and out of school. So when he received a phone call just one month into his retirement asking him to serve as a Mentor for a program called Check & Connect, the answer was simple.

#### ENROLLMENT

**300+ K-5 students**

In September 2021, Minot’s Washington Elementary launched Check & Connect as a member of the North Dakota Full-Service Community Schools Consortium. With support from the Central Regional Education Association, Kranz became their first Mentor, recruited through the Primary Mentor Model. Check & Connect was initially designed as a dropout prevention program targeting secondary students requiring Tier 2 support who show warning signs of disengagement and risk of dropping out. However, the program has been proven incredibly effective for elementary students preparing for transition to middle school.

#### PROGRAM PARTNERS SINCE 2021

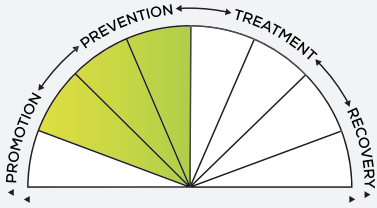
“We knew that implementing Check & Connect would help fill a void for our students that need more positive connections and support at school,” said Kendo Carlson, Principal at Washington. According to Kranz, there are three key components necessary for Check & Connect to succeed: “Relationships, relationships, relationships,” he said.

#### STUDENTS SERVED:

**In 2021, 5 students were  
paired with a Mentor**

A Mentor functions as a liaison between student, family, and school, building a strong relationship based on mutual trust and open communication. The “Check” component of this intervention consists of the Mentor conducting weekly reviews of the student’s ABCs: attendance, behavior, and coursework. This data informs the “Connect” component, in





## BH CONTINUUM OF CARE

This profile features Check & Connect as a Prevention program within the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care.

which a Mentor provides personalized, timely interventions to help students solve problems, build skills, increase engagement, and emphasize the importance of staying in school.

“Chuck’s meetings with students are, quite simply, positive connections with consistent meeting times and follow-through,” Carlson said.

Between connecting one-on-one with the student and reporting on their progress, Mentors can expect to spend about one hour per week dedicated to each student on their caseload. Connections with students happen in school, during school hours, to help ensure student attendance.

“Everyone in the school system is busy. Adding another thing to their plate is unreasonable, but at the same time, students’ needs are increasing,” Kranz said. “I’m not a teacher. I’m not a principal. I’m just Chuck the Mentor, and those weekly, 30-or so minutes of undivided attention says to the students, ‘I care about you, I value you, and you having success in school is important to me.’”

Mentors are selected based on each school’s needs and resources. It could be a current or former educator, like Kranz, or a passionate community member. Above all, it must be a caring adult who has a belief that all kids can succeed and is willing to provide persistent guidance and support.

“I don’t think there’s anybody with a passion for kids and making a difference that wouldn’t love to be a mentor,” Kranz said. “I’ve had lots of wonderful jobs in education, but I would say that this is certainly one of my most favorite things I’ve ever done.”

Carlson’s opinion of the program—and Washington’s chosen Mentor—is glowing.

“Chuck creates bridges for students to see challenges as an opportunity, and he helps guide them in managing those challenges. Finding the right mentor really makes this program click!”

### SUCCESS STORY

In his first year as a Check & Connect Mentor, Kranz has been matched with five students in need of support. He has already witnessed subtle, yet significant progress in each of these students, including improved grades, increased attendance, and reduced behavior problems.

One particular student stands out to Kranz as a success story. He had come to Washington Elementary from a school out of state.

“It was a place where he probably didn’t feel safe, and definitely didn’t feel valued,” Kranz said.

The hardships that the student had experienced had led him to adopt a sarcastic, unkind attitude to his teachers and peers as a coping mechanism. What that student needed was someone to value, care for, and listen to him. By developing a trusting relationship with Kranz and discussing the roots of his sarcasm, the student has been able to develop a more positive outlook and attitude toward school.

“It still pops up from time to time, but he has come a long long way,” Kranz said. “We’ve been able to identify and mitigate a behavior that could get in the way of life for him.”



## WHO WE ARE.

A group of educators and advocates passionate about the importance of behavioral health in our schools and communities.



B-HERO Technical Assistance Center is a collaborative effort between Central Regional Education Association and the Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Division.

## GET INVOLVED

For schools interested in learning more about Check & Connect, please reach out directly to:

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