

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

A Peer-Led High School Transition Program Increases Graduation Rates Among Latino Males

Johnson, V. L., Simon, P., & Mun, E.-Y. (2014). A peer-led high school transition program increases graduation rates among Latino males. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 107(3), 186-196. doi:10.1090/00220671.2013.788991

SUMMARY: In this study, 268 adolescents (9th grade youth) who participated in a peer-led high school transition program were compared to youth in a control group to examine the program's impact on high school graduation rates. Male program participants were significantly more likely to graduate from high school in four years compared to those who did not; however, there was no significant difference for female students.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Male students who participated in this program had a graduation rate of 81% which was significantly higher than those who did not participate (graduation rate of 63%).
- There was no significant difference in the graduation rates for females in the intervention or the control group (72% each).
- For young men with a low probability of graduating, those who participated in the program had a significantly better chance of graduating (60% graduated) than those in the control group (30% graduated). There was no difference for young men with a high probability of graduating.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Identify young males who are least likely to graduate and provide them additional support
- Help families of youth who are least likely to graduate locate quality high school transition programs

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop a peer-mentoring program in which older military-affiliated youths mentor younger military-affiliated youths
- Partner with schools to help identify military youth who are at risk for dropping out of high school, and offer a range of supportive services

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development of peer-support programs for military youth
- Recommend professional development for individuals who work with military youth about the benefits of peer support in youth programs

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METHODS

- Incoming ninth-grade students at a mid-Atlantic, urban, low-income high school with a traditional graduation rate of 79% were assigned to randomly participate in either a Peer Group Connection program (35%) or control group (65%).
- Peer Group Connection is a program that connects groups of freshman to older peers who aid them through the transition to high school.
- All students completed a baseline survey including information on the student's demographics, discipline and absentee history, personality, academic achievement, motivation, decision-making, and attitudes toward school and peer groups.
- The group who participated in the program were compared to the control group to examine whether the program had an effect on graduation rates.

PARTICIPANTS

- Two hundred sixty-eight ninth grade students participated (50% boys).
- The average number of group meetings for those in the peer program during the ninth grade year was 18 sessions (SD = 5); the average number of group meetings in the 10th grade year was 2 sessions (SD = 1.23).
- The sample consisted of 92% Latino students, 2% Black students, and 6% students of other races.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was primarily Latino, so the results may not apply to other populations.
- All measures were self-report; students may respond to questions in a socially-desirable manner, which would influence results.
- There was no evaluation of participation in other programs that may have affected graduation rates.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Use non-self-report measures (e.g., 8th grade report cards or teacher evaluations) to strengthen these results
- Examine possible explanations regarding the efficacy of this program for females and factors that may allow the program to better meet the needs of adolescent girls
- Extend the evaluation of such programs to other populations, including military youth

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