

What Works Clearinghouse



JOBSTART

Program description *JOBSTART* is an alternative education and training program designed to improve the economic prospects of young, disadvantaged high school dropouts by increasing educational attainment and developing occupational skills. The program has four main components: (1) basic academic skills instruction with

a focus on GED (General Educational Development) preparation, (2) occupational skills training, (3) training-related support services (such as transportation assistance and childcare), and (4) job placement assistance. Participants receive at least 200 hours of basic education and 500 hours of occupational training.¹

Research One study of *JOBSTART* met What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. This randomized controlled trial included more than 2,300 youth and was conducted in 13 sites in nine states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Based on this one study, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for *JOBSTART*

to be small for completing school (see the [What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence Categorization Scheme](#)). The one *JOBSTART* study that met WWC evidence standards did not examine the effectiveness of *JOBSTART* in the domains of staying or progressing in school.²

Effectiveness *JOBSTART* was found to have potentially positive effects on completing school.

	<i>Staying in school</i>	<i>Progressing in school</i>	<i>Completing school</i>
Rating of effectiveness	na	na	Potentially positive effects
Improvement index³	na	na	Average: +14 percentile points

na = not applicable

1. The WWC dropout prevention review includes interventions designed to encourage students who drop out to return to school and earn a high school diploma or GED certificate, as well as interventions designed to prevent initially enrolled students from dropping out. For more details, see the [WWC dropout prevention review protocol](#).
2. The evidence in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.
3. These numbers show the average improvement indices for all findings across the study.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

JOBSTART, no longer an active program, has no current available developer or contact information. *JOBSTART* was developed and evaluated by MDRC as a nonresidential alternative to *Job Corps*. Using Job Training Partnership Act funds, local institutions ran the *JOBSTART* programs. Additional information about the program model and the implementation experience of the organizations that used it can be found in Auspos, Cave, Doolittle, and Hoerz (1989) listed in the “References” for this report.

Scope of use

The *JOBSTART* demonstration operated in 13 sites in nine states from 1985 to 1988. Of the 13 study sites, 3 were adult vocational schools, 1 was a community college, 6 were community-based organizations, and 6 were nonresidential *Job Corps* programs. Sites were selected because of their experience running programs that included some or all of the components in the *JOBSTART* model. *JOBSTART* was run as part of a research demonstration, and it ended when the evaluation was completed. Although the program has ended, the core components—education and occupational skills training with support services to facilitate participation—are shared with many programs for school dropouts and disadvantaged youth still operating, such as youth programs funded through the Workforce Investment Act and *Job Corps*, on which *JOBSTART* was modeled.

Research

The WWC reviewed one study of the effectiveness of *JOBSTART*. This study (Cave, Bos, Doolittle, & Toussaint, 1993) was a randomized controlled trial that met WWC evidence standards.

Cave, Bos, Doolittle, and Toussaint (1993) examined the effectiveness of *JOBSTART* in 13 sites in nine states. From 1985 to 1987, 2,312 eligible youth who applied for *JOBSTART*

Description of intervention

JOBSTART aims to improve the employment and earnings potential of high school dropouts through basic education, job training, and support services. The program serves youth who are 17 to 21 years old, have dropped out of school, read below an 8th-grade level, and meet one of the following three criteria: (1) receive public assistance, (2) have family income at or below the poverty line, or (3) are homeless. Participation in *JOBSTART* is voluntary. The program offers both basic education and occupational skills training. The education component improves participants’ basic academic skills to prepare them to obtain a GED certificate and begin occupational skills training. Participants complete workbook exercises in reading, math, and other subjects included on the GED test. Exercises are self-paced, and participants receive individualized instruction from program teachers. As part of the occupational training component of *JOBSTART*, youth select and attend vocational skills courses that offer training for specific occupations. *JOBSTART* also offers support services, such as childcare and transportation assistance, to facilitate participation. Once participants have completed their education and training, *JOBSTART* offers participants job placement assistance.

Cost

Based on data available from the study, the WWC estimates that the average cost of *JOBSTART* is about \$9,700 per participant.⁴

services across these 13 sites were randomly assigned: 1,163 to the intervention group that was offered *JOBSTART* services and 1,149 to the control group that was not. The results summarized here are based on data for the 988 *JOBSTART* youth and the 953 control group youth who responded to the 48-month follow-up survey.

4. Cave, Bos, Doolittle, and Toussaint (1993) report that the average cost per sample member randomly assigned to the program was \$4,548 in 1988 dollars. The WWC converted this estimate to 2007 dollars using the consumer price index and then divided this figure by 0.888, the proportion of sample members in the program group who received any *JOBSTART* services.

Research *(continued)*

Extent of evidence

The WWC categorizes the extent of evidence in each domain as small or moderate to large (see the [What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence Categorization Scheme](#)). The extent of evidence takes into account the number of studies and the total sample size across studies that met WWC evidence standards

with or without reservations.⁵

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *JOBSTART* to be small for completing school. No studies that met WWC evidence standards addressed *JOBSTART*'s effect on staying in school or progressing in school.

Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of interventions for dropout prevention addresses student outcomes in three domains: staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school. The *JOBSTART* study by Cave et al. examined outcomes in the completing school domain.

Completing school. The study showed a statistically significant difference between *JOBSTART* and control group youth on the likelihood of receiving a high school diploma or GED certificate. Four years after random assignment, 42% of *JOBSTART* youth had earned a high school diploma or GED certificate, compared with 29% of control group youth. This positive effect on completion came entirely from *JOBSTART*'s positive and statistically

significant effect on receiving a GED certificate. *JOBSTART* was found to have a small, but statistically significant, negative effect on the likelihood of earning a high school diploma.⁶

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates the effects of an intervention in a given outcome domain 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, the size of the difference between participants in the intervention and the comparison conditions, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#)).⁷

The WWC found *JOBSTART* to have potentially positive effects on completing school

Improvement index

The WWC computes an improvement index for each individual finding. In addition, within each outcome domain, the WWC computes an average improvement index for each study as well as an average improvement index across studies (see [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#)). The improvement

index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition and that of the average student in the comparison condition. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, the improvement index is based entirely on the size of the effect, regardless of the statistical significance of the effect, the study design, or the analyses. The improvement index

5. The Extent of Evidence Categorization was developed to tell readers how much evidence was used to determine the intervention rating, focusing on the number and size of studies. Additional factors associated with a related concept, external validity—such as students' demographics and types of settings in which studies took place—are not taken into account for the categorization. Information about how the extent of evidence rating was determined for *JOBSTART* is in Appendix A6.
6. As in other WWC dropout prevention reviews, the combined effect of *JOBSTART* on receiving a high school diploma or GED certificate was used to determine the effectiveness rating. These results are in Appendix A3. The separate effects of *JOBSTART* on receiving a high school diploma or GED certificate are in Appendix A4.2. At the end of the follow-up period, the percentage of youth who earned a high school diploma was small for both *JOBSTART* and control group youth, 4.4% and 7.5% respectively.
7. The level of statistical significance was reported by the study authors, or where necessary, calculated by the WWC to correct for clustering within classrooms or schools and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the [WWC Tutorial on Mismatch](#). For the formulas the WWC used to calculate statistical significance, see [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#). For Cave et al. (1993), no corrections for clustering or multiple comparisons were needed.

The WWC found *JOBSTART* to have potentially positive effects on completing school *(continued)*

can take on values between -50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting results favorable to the intervention group.

Based on the one study of *JOBSTART* that met evidence standards, the average improvement index for completing school is +14 percentile points.

Summary

The WWC reviewed one study of the effectiveness of *JOBSTART*. This study met WWC evidence standards. Based on the results from the one qualifying study, the WWC found potentially positive effects on completing school. The conclusions presented in this report may change as new research emerges.

References

Met WWC evidence standards

Cave, G., Bos, H., Doolittle, F., & Toussaint, C. (1993). *JOBSTART: Final report on a program for school dropouts*. New York, NY: MDRC.

Additional sources

Auspos, P., Cave, G., Doolittle, F., & Hoerz, G. (1989). *Implementing JOBSTART: A demonstration for school dropouts in the JTPA system*. New York, NY: MDRC.

Cave, G., & Doolittle, F. (1991). *Assessing JOBSTART: Interim impacts of a program for school dropouts*. New York, NY: MDRC.

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