What Works Clearinghouse

ies INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

Twelve Together

Program description

Twelve Together is a one-year peer support and mentoring program for middle and early high school students that offers weekly after-school discussion groups led by trained volunteer adult facilitators. Each peer discussion group consists of about 12 participants, who are a mix of students at high risk of academic failure and others at lower academic risk. Group discussions are based on student interest, usually focusing on personal, family, and social issues. The program also offers homework assistance, trips to college campuses, and an annual weekend retreat.

Research

One study of *Twelve Together* met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards with reservations. The study was a randomized controlled trial that included 219 eighth-grade students in nine middle schools in one California school district.[1]

Effectiveness

Twelve Together was found to have potentially positive effects on staying in school and no discernible effects on progressing in school.

	Staying in school	*Progressing in school*	*Completing school*
Rating of effectiveness	Potentially positive effects	No discernible effects	na
Improvement index[2]	Average: +13 percentile points	Average: –6 percentile points	na

na = not applicable

1. The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.
2. These numbers show the average improvement index for all findings across the study.

Absence of conflict of interest

The *Twelve Together* study summarized in this intervention report was prepared by staff of Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Because the principal investigator for the WWC dropout prevention review is also an MPR staff member as well as the lead author of the *Twelve Together* study, the study was rated by staff members from Caliber, an ICF International Company, who also prepared the intervention report. The report was then reviewed by MPR staff members and by members of the WWC Technical Review Team and external peer reviewers.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

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Scope of use

Twelve Together was developed and implemented in the early 1980s by the Metropolitan Detroit Youth Foundation as a program to serve at-risk ninth graders in Detroit public schools. The program operated in 20 Detroit high schools before ending in the early 1990s. In the late 1980s, the June Burnett Institute brought *Twelve Together* to southern California and adapted it for middle school use. The institute operated the program in the late 1980s and 1990s in nine middle schools and one high school in Chula Vista and one alternative high school in San Diego. Its current scope of use is not known.

Description of intervention

Twelve Together is a peer support and mentoring program for middle and high school students. The one-year voluntary program offers weekly after-school discussion groups. Each group consists of about 12 students, who are a mix of students at high risk of academic failure and others at lower academic risk. Groups are led by two trained volunteer adult facilitators who moderate discussions. Topics, chosen based on student interest, focus on personal, family, and social issues. In addition to attending discussion sessions, participants agree to study regularly, not to skip classes, and to work to improve their grades. Facilitators, usually college students, also provide homework assistance. To promote group cohesion and develop teamwork skills, the program begins with a weekend camping outing. It also provides other activities such as visits to college campuses and social events.

Cost

Independent researchers estimated the cost of *Twelve Together* in Chula Vista, California, to be $307 a student per month of program participation.[3]

Research

The WWC reviewed two studies of the effectiveness of *Twelve Together.* One study (Dynarski, Gleason, Rangarajan, & Wood, 1998) was a randomized controlled trial that met WWC evidence standards with reservations because of differential attrition between the intervention and control groups.[4] The other study did not meet WWC evidence screens.

The Dynarski et al. (1998) study of *Twelve Together* was part of a larger evaluation examining the effectiveness of 16 middle

3. See Rosenberg, L., & Hershey, A. (1995). *The cost of dropout prevention programs.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Costs have been converted to 2006 dollars using the Consumer Price Index. The *Twelve Together* program relied heavily on volunteer facilitators to lead the weekly discussion sessions. This cost figure includes an estimate of the cost of this volunteer time.
4. The survey response rates for the two research groups were 92% for the intervention group and 86% for the control, exceeding the 5% differential attrition threshold used for WWC dropout prevention reviews.

Research *(continued)*

school and high school dropout prevention programs. The *Twelve Together* study used a random assignment design and was conducted in nine middle schools in one California school district. It included 219 students who were recruited to participate in the program. Study participants were eighth graders in the 1992–93 school year.[5] Random assignment occurred at the beginning of the 1992–93 school year. Results summarized here were drawn from a follow-up survey administered at the end of the third year following random assignment.

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 Dynarski, Gleason, Rangarajan, and Wood (1998) study examined outcomes in the first two domains.

Staying in school. At the end of the three-year follow-up period, Dynarski et al. (1998) found that 8% of *Twelve Together* students had dropped out of school compared with 13% of control group students. Although this difference was not statistically significant, it was large enough to be considered substantively important based on WWC standards.

Progressing in school. Dynarski et al. (1998) found that, at the end of the three-year follow-up period, *Twelve Together* had no effect on progressing in school as measured by the highest grade completed.

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,[6] the size of the difference between participants in the intervention and comparison conditions, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the WWC Intervention Rating Scheme).

The WWC found *Twelve Together* to have potentially positive effects on staying in school and no discernible effects on progressing in 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 and 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 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 analyses. The improvement index can take on values between –50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting results favorable to the intervention group.

The improvement index is +13 percentile points for staying in school and –6 percentile points for progressing in school in the one study reviewed.

Summary

The WWC reviewed two studies on *Twelve Together.* One study met WWC standards with reservations; the other did not meet

5. Dynarski et al. (1998) identified the *Twelve Together* program in Chula Vista as a program for seventh graders. Based on additional review of evaluation materials, the study authors confirmed for the WWC that the program actually served eighth graders.
6. 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. See Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations for the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance. In the case of *Twelve Together,* no corrections for clustering or multiple comparisons were needed.

WWC evidence screens. Based on this one study, the WWC found potentially positive effects on staying in school and no discernible effects on progressing in school. The conclusions presented in this report are limited and may change as new research emerges.

References

Met WWC evidence standards with reservations

Dynarski, M., Gleason, P., Rangarajan, A., & Wood, R. (1998). *Impacts of dropout prevention programs: Final report. A research report from the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program evaluation.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Additional sources:

Dynarski, M., & Gleason, P. (1998). *How can we help? What we have learned from evaluations of federal dropout-prevention programs.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Hershey, A., Adelman, N., & Murray, S. (1995). *Helping kids succeed: Implementation of the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Rosenberg, L., & Hershey, A. (1995). *The cost of dropout prevention programs.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Did not meet WWC evidence screens

Orr, M. T. (1987). *Keeping students in school. A guide to effective dropout prevention services.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.[7]

For more information about specific studies and WWC calculations, please see the WWC *Twelve Together* Technical Appendices.

7. Lack of evidence for baseline equivalence: the study, which used a quasi-experimental design, did not establish that the comparison group was equivalent to the intervention group at baseline.