

# 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.<sup>1</sup>

**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.<sup>2</sup>

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

	Staying in school	Progressing in school	Completing school
Rating of effectiveness	na	na	Potentially positive effects
Improvement index <sup>3</sup>	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.





**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](#).**

# Appendix

## Appendix A1 Study Characteristics: Cave, Bos, Doolittle, & Toussaint, 1993 (randomized controlled trial)

Characteristic	Description
<b>Study citations</b>	Cave, G., Bos, H., Doolittle, F., & Toussaint, C. (1993). <i>JOBSTART: Final report on a program for school dropouts</i> . New York, NY: MDRC.
<b>Participants</b>	<p><i>JOBSTART</i> served youth who were: (1) 17 to 21 years old, (2) lacking a high school diploma or GED certificate, (3) reading below an 8th-grade level, and (4) economically disadvantaged. To meet enrollment targets, sites could waive the poor-reading-skills criterion for 20% of their enrollees. Applicants were considered economically disadvantaged if they: (1) received public assistance, (2) had a family income at or below the poverty line, or (3) were homeless.</p> <p>From 1985 to 1987, <i>JOBSTART</i> participants were recruited and enrolled by 13 sites in nine states. All participants were high school dropouts, and half had not worked at all in the year prior to enrolling in the program. Most <i>JOBSTART</i> recruits were non-White, 44% African-American, and 44% Hispanic. Just over half enrollees (54%) were women, and about half the women were young mothers. At baseline, 27% of sample members were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children or general assistance, while 38% were receiving food stamps.</p> <p>In the <i>JOBSTART</i> demonstration, 2,312 youth were randomly assigned to either <i>JOBSTART</i> or a control condition. The analyses in this report are based on data collected in the 48-month follow-up survey, to which 85% of <i>JOBSTART</i> youth and 83% of control group youth responded. Among the 1,941 respondents, the study authors compared the baseline characteristics of <i>JOBSTART</i> and control group youth, including their gender, ethnicity, family structure, employment history, and whether they received public assistance. They found no statistically significant differences between the research groups on these characteristics.</p>
<b>Setting</b>	<p><i>JOBSTART</i> was evaluated in 13 study sites in nine states: Arizona (Phoenix), California (Los Angeles, Monterey Park, San Jose), Colorado (Denver), Connecticut (Hartford), Illinois (Chicago), Georgia (Atlanta), New York (Buffalo, New York City), Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh), and Texas (Corpus Christi, Dallas). The sites differed in their organization and structure: four of the sites were adult schools (three vocational, one community college), six were community-based organizations, and three were nonresidential <i>Job Corps</i> programs.</p>

(continued)



## Appendix A1 Study Characteristics: Cave, Bos, Doolittle, & Toussaint, 1993 (randomized controlled trial) (continued)

Characteristic	Description
<b>Comparison</b>	Control group youth were not eligible to participate in <i>JOBSTART</i> but could voluntarily participate in other services available in the community. Based on survey responses, many control group youth participated in education and training programs during the follow-up period—but their rate of participation was substantially lower than it was among <i>JOBSTART</i> youth (Cave et al., 1993). During the four years after random assignment, 56% of control group youth reported receiving remedial or occupational instruction, compared with 94% of <i>JOBSTART</i> youth. Over this period, the average amount of participation in education and training was 432 hours for control group youth, compared with 800 hours for the <i>JOBSTART</i> youth (including their participation in <i>JOBSTART</i> as well as other education and training activities).
<b>Primary outcomes and measurement</b>	One relevant outcome from the <i>JOBSTART</i> study is included in this summary and used for rating purposes: receiving a high school diploma or GED certificate within 48 months of random assignment. For a more detailed description of the outcome measure, see Appendix A2. The study also examined the program's effects on employment, hours worked, total earnings, welfare receipt, pregnancy, criminal activity, and drug use. These outcomes, however, do not fall within the three domains examined by the WWC's review of dropout prevention interventions (staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school). So, they are not included in this report.
<b>Staff training</b>	Many <i>JOBSTART</i> staff were former teachers from public schools or community colleges. In many instances, these teachers had experience working with disadvantaged youth or adults. In some instances, they had taught GED preparation classes or remedial education prior to working for <i>JOBSTART</i> . Other <i>JOBSTART</i> staff had previously worked in other employment programs for disadvantaged youth (Auspos, Cave, Doolittle, & Hoerz, 1989).

## Appendix A2 Outcome measures for the completing school domain

Outcome measure	Description
<b>Earned a high school diploma or GED certificate within 48 months of random assignment</b>	This binary measure represents the percentage of students who either received a high school diploma or GED certificate within 48 months of random assignment. This measure was based on the sample member's response to the 48-month survey.











## Appendix A6    Extent of evidence by domain

Outcome domain	Number of studies	Sample size		Extent of evidence <sup>1</sup>
		Schools	Students	
Staying in school	0	na	na	na
Progressing in school	0	na	na	na
Completing school	1	13	1,941	Small

na = not applicable/not studied

1. A rating of “moderate to large” requires at least two studies and two schools across studies in one domain and a total sample size across studies of at least 350 students or 14 classrooms. Otherwise, the rating is “small.”