Check & Connect: A Model for Engaging and Retaining Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education

November 30, 2012
Presenters: Jean E. Ness; Mary Sam; Jay Morrison; Ann Chouinard; and Aaron Mertes
Why Implement a TPSID Model in MnSCU Institutions?

- Occupational Skills Programs (OSP) designed for students with Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) have existed on MnSCU campuses for more than 30 years.

- Schools with OSP programs have experience integrating ID/DD into regular classrooms, shops, and labs.

- Number of students with ID/DD growing in MnSCU schools.

- Lessons learned at CLC and Ridgewater in the TPSID Model can support other institutions in MnSCU and nationally.
What Is Check & Connect (C&C)

A Model that Provides:

- A comprehensive intervention designed to enhance students’ engagement at school and with learning
- An evidence-based, targeted intervention
- Targeted strategies to fuel students’ academic motivation and persistent regardless of students’ family/home circumstances
The Check & Connect Model focuses on factors that educators, students, parents, and communities can change and influence to promote successful educational and work experiences.
Components of C&C:

1. Coaches – who keep education salient for students
2. Systematic monitoring – the “check” component
3. Timely and individualized intervention – the “connect” component
4. Partnering with families – enhancing home-school communication and home support for learning
What TPSID Coaches Do:

• Check-in regularly with students
• Monitor attendance, grades and progress in school
• Provide timely intervention to ensure student success
• Collaborate with faculty, disability services, administration, etc. to help student be successful
• Support students’ problem solving development
• Assist in finding outreach/support services
• Provide study groups
• Sponsor socially integrated activities external to school
How Coaches Engage Students:

- Voluntary participation creates atmosphere of learning and fun!
- Referrals from Disability Services, Voc. Rehab, Occupational Skills Program, High Schools
- C & C Club
- Summer Orientation Camp
- Transition Fairs Statewide
- Guest speakers (e.g.: Integration of arts in problem solving)
- Special education cooperatives
- Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC) Meetings
Strategies to Increase Retention:

- **Tutor**: Provide study labs, train peer tutors, coordinate with peer tutors
- **Mentor**: Facilitate relationships with non-disabled students, “coaches in training!”
- **Assistive Technology**: Provide Kurzweil, Dragon Speaks, WordQ, Read Write Gold, Dolphin
- **Fun Events**: Offer game nights, movie nights: “*If you feed them, they will come*”
- **Project monitoring**: State Advisory Council, Design Team, OSP Advisory Council
Student Mentors
Mary Sam, Director Intercultural Services, Diversity, and Tribal Relations
Central Lakes College
msam@clcmn.edu; 218-855-8159

Jean E. Ness, Research Associate
University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration
nessx008@umn.edu; phone: 612-625-5322