

Best Practice Submission Form

School Name:	Academy for Science and Design
Best Practice Title:	Building Positive Connections
Applicable Categories:	 Accountability and Performance Monitoring Business Operations Community/Student Engagement Curriculum Design Fundraising Leadership & Governance Professional Development Recruitment and Retention (Staff or Student) School Culture OtherStudent Wellness
School Mission:	Through our innovative STEM-focused program, the Academy for Science and Design fosters an environment that inspires, nurtures, and challenges every student cultivating their individual abilities to lead advancements in science and technology, as well as to become thoughtful, compassionate, and engaged citizens.
Purpose:	The 2021-2022 academic year marked the introduction of the +Connections (Positive Connections) initiative at ASD, which was further developed during the 2022-2023 academic year. +Connections was established as a safe haven within our school. Its primary purpose is to offer students additional support, access to counseling and resources, particularly those from challenging backgrounds or circumstances. Currently, approximately 10% of our student population, translating to over 50 students, are actively utilizing the resources available through this initiative.
Summary:	Facilities and Resources: The designated space for +Connections is designed to foster a sense of comfort and security. It is equipped with dim lighting, comfortable seating arrangements, and a range of materials, from educational aids to art supplies. Despite the evident value of this initiative, our current budget does not accommodate any further enhancements for the upcoming academic year. Therefore, additional funding channels are being explored. Program Impact: A significant portion of the students accessing +Connections face challenges such as depression, anxiety, autism, and ADHD. Preliminary feedback indicates that the initiative is having a positive impact. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the space is not only benefiting the students emotionally but also academically. Notably, several students, previously identified as



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frequently absent, have shown marked improvement in attendance after engaging with the with +Connections program.

Future Endeavors:

Looking forward, our aim is to enhance the resources available in the +Connections space. Furthermore, we are keen to introduce an external Social an Emotional Learning (SEL) Challenge Day. This proposed workshop aims to further enrich our students' understanding of connectivity and inclusivity within the community.

Community Engagement:

Community engagement is a core tenet of ASD's approach to promoting student success. We've engaged in partnerships with the Nashua Children's Home and have also been active in various charitable ventures. Additionally, we have strong relationships with local entities such as the Chamber of Commerce. Such collaborations underline our commitment to both learning from and contributing to the wider community.

Team and Support:

The +Connections initiative is overseen by a devoted staff member, complemented by the support of two guidance counselors and the Dean of Students. With the appropriate funding, we are poised to expand and improve the resources available to our students under this program.

Conclusion:

In summary, the +Connections initiative at ASD is showing promise in its early stages. The program, with its focus on support and inclusivity, has the potential to be a cornerstone of our holistic educational approach. We look forward to collaborative opportunities with fellow educators and departments to enhance and expand this initiative, ensuring the continued well-being and development of our students, and believe sharing our Best Practices in this area could help to promote and foster that collaboration.

Partner(s) in Development:

ASD Administration, Counseling Department, Dean of Students

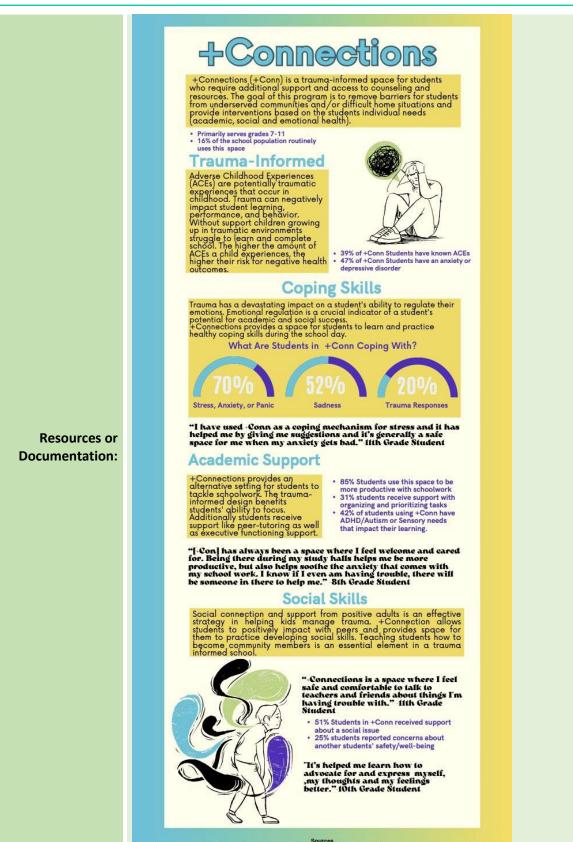
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Sources Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Leveraging the Best Available Evidence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cole, S.F., Elsener, A., Gregory, M., & Ristuccia, J. (2013). Helping Traumatized children learn. Massachusetts Advocates for Children.