

# Check-in/Check-out

Tiers 2 & 3

## Program Description, October, 2013.

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The Check-in/Check-Out (CICO) program is an intervention intended to decrease disruptive behaviors that are negatively impacting students' academic and social functioning at school. Good teachers typically check in and out with students naturally as a part of their teaching. Nevertheless, for some students who are at-risk or who are having difficulty at school, a more formalized system can be very useful to provide organization to their day. Additionally, through this system caring adults can provide a positive adult relationship that encompasses reinforcement for good school performance behaviorally and academically, and emphasizes achieving other school related goals.

## Tier 2 or 3 Intervention



### What is Check in/Check out?

Check-in/Check-out includes “checking” or meeting with a “facilitator” or “mentor” at pre-determined times to discuss daily events, behavioral goals (usually outlined on a goal or point sheet) and strategies to meet those goals. Each check may take approximately 1-10 minutes and may vary depending on the student and student goals. The general idea would be to have the checks occur when the student arrives at school and before the student leaves school at the end of the day, although for some students more frequent additional checks could be specified during the day (e.g., before morning recess, before lunch, early afternoon). There is not a standard way to organize a check-in and check-out program. A wide array of variations have been used and adapted to the needs of particular students and schools.

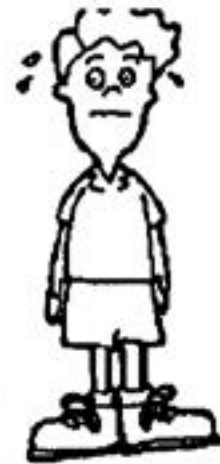
Often students take their goal sheets home at the end of the day so that parents may see how the student did each day. Facilitators and teachers may write notes on the sheet to facilitate communication between home and school. It is possible to give an additional reward to students who bring their goal sheets back to school with a parents' signature. However, since the focus of Check-in/Check-out is on the positive, if a student does not bring their note back signed there should be no penalty. The facilitator can say something such as, “that’s okay, try again tomorrow!”

**Facilitator.** The facilitator could be any adult in the school (e.g., teacher, administrator, custodian, etc.) who was designated for the check-in/check-out program. No specialized training is required, although the goals and procedures for contact with students should be clearly understood. The primary requirements are that the adult serving as the facilitator a) be consistently available for the student at the pre-set times, b) attempt to build a relationship with the student, and c) understand how to monitor and provide reinforcement for appropriate school performance.

**Feedback.** Specific feedback is typically provided through the use of a point sheet/check sheet where teachers provide points and positive comments to the student at the check in and check out meetings. For some students these cards can also be used for the student’s teachers to provide points and comments throughout the day (Myers & Briere, 2010). For example, a student would receive a rating of a 3 if he or she did a “great job,” a rating of a 2 if he or she “did okay,” and a rating of a 1 if he or she “had a hard time” (Campbell & Anderson, 2008, p. 238). Teacher feedback may also consist of statements such as, “You listened quietly when I gave instructions, you participated very well in your group this morning, taking turns and working hard, so you earned a 3 for all your expectations” or “You had a lot of trouble following my instructions today, and it was difficult for you to work in your group, so you just earned 1s this morning. I am sure you will do better after lunch” (Campbell & Anderson, 2008, p. 239).

The nature of the cards, and the goals would vary greatly based on the age and goals of the student, but should be set up to not require much staff time to add points and com-

NAME: Bobby		M	T	W	TH	F
RAISING ATTENTION	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹
TAKING TURNS			☹			
RAISING YOUR HAND		☹		☹	☹	☹
SAYING THANK YOU		☹				☹



ments. Students receive a rating for each behavioral expectation listed on their point card. The goal’s expectations should be individualized based on the needs of the student and should be stated positively. For some students the points and social feedback provides reinforcement for appropriate behavior. For other students the points might be used to “purchase” more tangible reinforcers or activities that the student would find motivating. Facilitators should also remind students of the percentage (e.g., 80% of total points) or number of points they need to receive in order to earn their reinforcer (Swoszowski, Patterson, & Crosby 2011). Behavioral expectations for Check-in/Check-out usually mirror school-wide behavior rules. Individual students may also have additional, unique expectations inserted into their Check-in/Check-out plan.

**Location.** If possible, the morning check-in and the afternoon check-out should occur in a convenient private setting (e.g., library, conference room; Boden, Ennis, & Jolivette, 2012). Morning check-ins can occur before school for secondary aged students, or during the first 15 minutes of the school day for elementary students. The first contact is pivotal in setting the tone for the day and therefore should be positive. However, the contact can also be used to read the mood and circumstances of the student and therefore anticipate and plan for



potential problems or issues during the day. For example, if the student is angry or upset as a result of events at home, the facilitator might suggest that the student go to a counselor or someone else designated to talk about the situation. If the student is hungry or lacking sleep, the facilitator would attempt to remediate, or at least alert the student's teachers to the situation. The facilitator could also check whether the student took their medications. The facilitator should interact positively with the student, motivate the student to display appropriate behaviors throughout the day, review behavioral expectations, and give points for pro-social behaviors that the student demonstrated during the check-in (Campbell & Anderson, 2008).

During check-outs, the coordinator may discuss strengths and weaknesses of the day with the student, make sure the student has homework materials and assignments, provide the daily incentive to the student, and remind the student to have their sheet signed by a parent at home. See the diagram of the process in Figure 1.

An overall check-in/check-out intervention coordinator should be assigned to make sure that facilitator-student meetings are occurring regularly, to provide problem solving support to facilitators, and to collect and analyze data from the daily point card for each of the students receiving the check-in/check-out intervention.

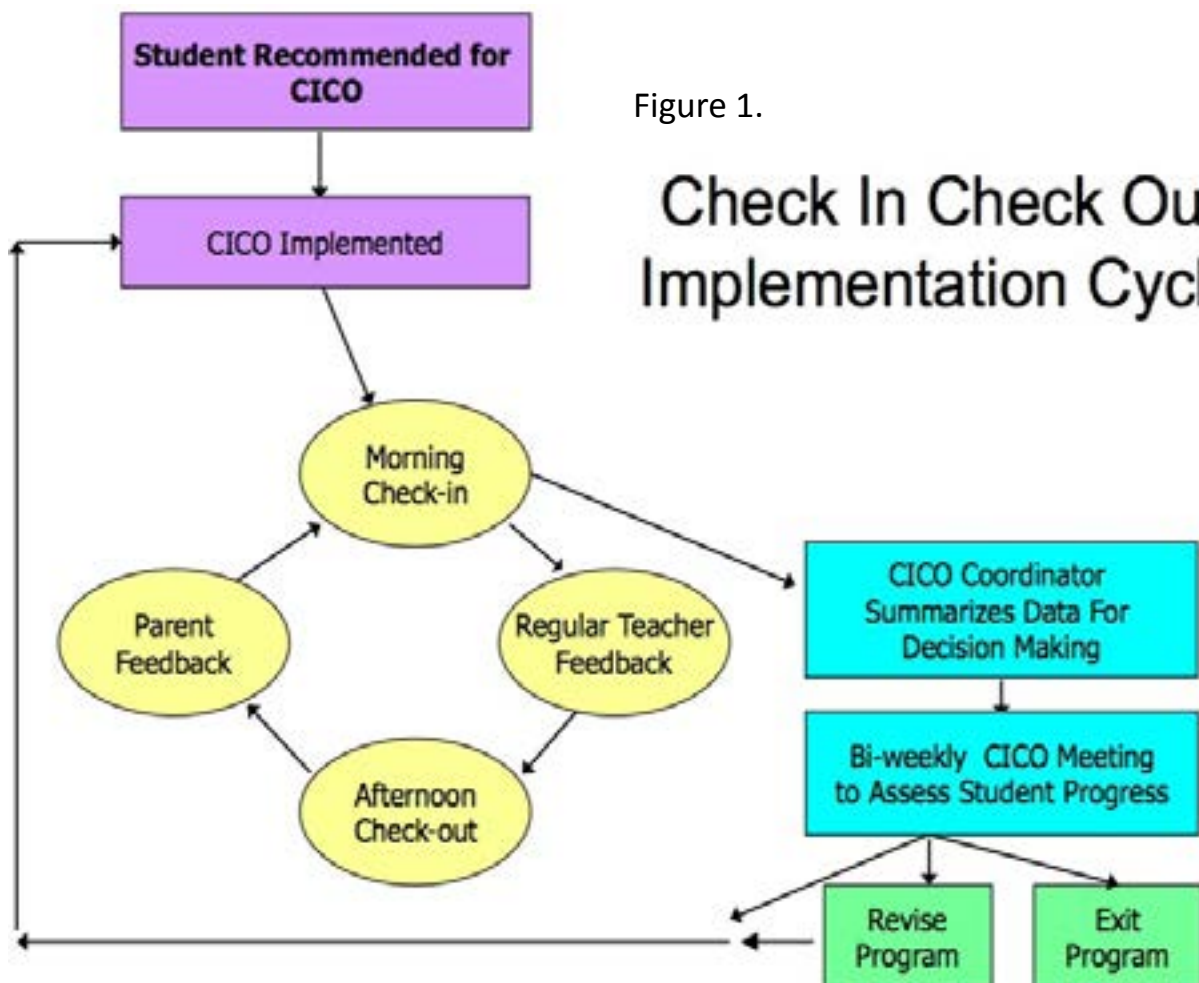


Figure 1.

## Check In Check Out Implementation Cycle



## **Target Students for Check-in/Check-out Intervention**

This type of intervention may be appropriate for a wide variety of students who are at risk of school difficulties, either with behavior and/or with academics. This may include students with disabilities or other special needs, and may range from students who simply need support in organizing their daily lives at school, to students with more serious behavioral or mental health needs. The intervention can be individualized for all ages of students as an academic support, a behavioral support, or as a drop-out prevention tool.

## **Check-in/Check-out Goals**

The goals of the program include a) increasing prompts to the student for desirable behavior, b) increasing adult feedback, c) improving the structure of the student's schedule, and d) facilitating feedback between students, their teachers, and their parents or guardians (Filter, McKenna, Benedict, Horner, & Todd, 2007). Additionally, Check-in/Check-out operates in conjunction with a token economy through which students earn tokens or other reinforcers if they reach their predetermined point goal for the day (Campbell & Anderson, 2008). Potential daily reinforcers may include stickers, pencils, or extra time with a favorite teacher. Students may also save their points to "purchase" larger rewards, such as lunch with the principal or teacher, or an extra recess (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008). Students usually take their point sheets home at the end of the day to inform their parents or guardians of their progress and have them

sign the sheets, which are then returned the following morning to document communication between school and home. An additional option is to give tokens when students return their sheet signed.

## **Comparing to Check & Connect**

The more informal check-in/check-out strategy differs from the more formal Check and Connect program in that the check-in/check-out strategy can be implemented by any adult in a school building and would entail at least two meetings with the student throughout the day, most days. In contrast, the Check and Connect program typically employs outside mentors who are not a part of school staff to monitor student progress once or twice per month (Campbell & Anderson, 2008). As a result, the frequency of meeting with students for Check and Connect is significantly less, the Check and Connect meetings are longer and emphasize mentoring and relationship building as well as a more holistic view of student progress than the more focused in check-in/check-out. Ultimately, the goals of the two programs may overlap. See the Project Description on Check & Connect for more details, as well as the strategy brief on Behavior Monitoring, both can be found at [www.k12engagement.unl.edu](http://www.k12engagement.unl.edu).

## **What Do We Know About the Effectiveness of Check-in/Check-out?**

Check-in/Check-out interventions have been shown to decrease problem behavior (i.e., students received fewer office referrals, lower frequencies of other problem behaviors), and increase academic engagement in elementary and middle school students. While the research on Check-in/Check-out has been typically implemented with general education students who have not yet qualified for special education support services (Swoszowski et al., 2011), students with disabilities have also benefited from this strategy. Many special education teachers have implemented this type of checking with many of the students on their caseload, and the use

of this type of procedure in special education is relatively common, particularly for students included in general education classrooms.

Check-in/Check-out interventions have also been rated as feasible and doable by school staff (Todd et al., 2008). Pairing a Check-in/Check-out intervention with academic tutoring has also been proven to be effective (Myers & Briere, 2010). The strengths of Check-in/Check-out interventions include providing a) prompts to students throughout the day, b) adult feedback regarding student performance, c) visual reminders of student goals, d) collection of data, and e) communication between home and school (Todd et al., 2008).

Filter et al. (2007) reported that a Check-in/Check-out program was implemented with fidelity across three elementary schools and was successful in reducing the number of office disciplinary referrals. From a social validity perspective, school district staff rated the Check-in/Check-out program as “effective and efficient” (p. 69) and should be considered an intervention for students who do not respond to universal behavioral interventions. This study was unique in that the research investigators were not involved in the training and ongoing support for the program (i.e., the program was implemented and monitored in natural conditions by school district staff), likely increasing the validity and generalizability of these findings. Other studies (Campbell & Anderson, 2008; Todd et al., 2008) used small participant samples (i.e., less than ten students) and while the results were promising, further research using larger, more diverse participant pools is necessary.

Check-in/Check-out’s effectiveness may be contingent upon students’ problem behaviors being maintained by adult attention (Campbell & Anderson, 2008; Todd et al., 2008). The impact of Check-in/Check-out is not well understood for students who engage in behaviors in order to escape or avoid demands. Therefore, the implementation of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) may be beneficial in order to determine if the student’s behavior is maintained by attention prior to enrolling him or her in

Check-in/Check-out. The results of the FBA may also be used to individualize Check-in/Check-out for a particular student.

## **Considerations for Implementing Check-in/Check-out in your School**

As with any targeted or secondary intervention, the student’s special education teacher, mentor, school psychologist, and other relevant staff should meet periodically to determine if the student is regularly meeting his or her goals and examine the intervention’s effectiveness (Boden et al., 2012). Progress monitoring should continue even if the intervention is initially deemed effective. Fortunately, Check-in/Check-out can be utilized with a variety of disruptive and inappropriate behaviors in order to encourage positive replacement behaviors (e.g., self-monitoring, appropriate verbalizations, taking breaks to calm down), however, if student behaviors become more severe and harmful, the Check-in/Check-out intervention would be unlikely to be sufficient and more intensive intervention is likely necessary.

Training on delivering appropriate feedback and praise should be provided to facilitators, teachers, and parents that are interacting with the child to ensure intervention integrity (Boden et al., 2012). When students bring their daily report cards home, parents and children should discuss the positive aspects of the day and address how to make future improvements. Parents may also integrate their own rewards for their child’s progress. Ideally, students return to school the next day to turn in their daily report card with a parent signature and may receive a reward if this step is completed successfully.

## **Conclusion**

Check-in/Check-out aims to assist students in forming positive relationships with school staff in order to increase student engagement and prevent eventual dropout. Although the effectiveness of Check-in/Check-out is unproven for students whose behavior is not maintained by attention, Check-in/Check-out appears to in-

crease academic engagement and decrease disruptive behaviors for a number of students who have not responded to initial, universal intervention efforts.who have not responded to initial, universal intervention efforts.



## Resources:

### Michigan's Behavior and Learning Support Initiative

This web link provides a variety of resources related to check in/check out including some trouble shooting suggestions, training materials, samples of daily progress report forms, and intervention evaluation suggestions. The Figure 1 diagram and the sample description of a example of a CICO situation \ included in this Program Description are quoted directly from this website.

<http://miblsi.cenmi.org/MiBLSiModel/Implementation/ElementarySchools/TierIISupports/Behavior/TargetBehaviorInterventions/CheckInCheckOut.aspx>

## Check in/Check out Example Dialogue

### Check-in 8:35 - 8:50

- Holly gets off the bus, has breakfast, goes to class and then to Check-in/Check-out in Mrs. Smith's office
- Holly receives a copy of her check sheet for the day.
- Every goal is gone over every morning. A reminder that the goal for the day is 80% or better.
- Daily Questions: Are these reasonable? Are they doable? Can you do it?
- Questions that vary depending on student:
  - Did you have breakfast?
  - Did you get enough sleep?
  - Did you take your medicine?
- Are you ready for the day or do you still need a little time?
- Okay! Off you go with "High 5s", smiles, jokes, hugs, and an "I can do it" attitude!!

### Check-Out 3:30 - 3:35

- Holly leaves class and reports to Mrs. Smith's office.
- Again, she waits her turn so that she can have one-on-one time.
- When it's her turn, her daily points are totaled - Mrs. Smith guides her to calculate her own percentage for the day (this may be dependent on age).
- Once the percentage is determined, Mrs. Smith and Holly discuss and celebrate her successes.
  - If her score is 80% or better, Holly picks a sticker or a pencil.
  - If Holly has 80% or better, daily, for a week, Holly chooses from her reward list.
- Questions that vary depending on student:
  - How did your day go?
  - Any problems or frustrations today?
  - What are your plans for the rest of the day?
  - Do you have your homework assignment and materials?
- Okay! Off you go with "High 5s", smiles, jokes, hugs, and an "I can do it"attitude!!
- Mrs. Smith sends her on her way with a positive feeling about her day and her accomplishments.

**Recommended Reference:**

Strawhun, J., & Peterson, R. L. (2013, October). *Check In/Check Out Program Brief*. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Available at: <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/project-check-check-out>.

**Note:** A related Program Description, *Check & Connect*, (2013, October), and a Strategy Brief on *Behavior Monitoring* are also available from the Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 202 Barkley Center. <http://k12engagement.unl.edu>.

**Check-in/Check-out References**

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