

Youth Attendance Navigators: Building Community-School Alliances for Youth Success

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Section A: Significance

“Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow” - Attendance Works

A.1 Potential Contribution to Increase Knowledge and Address Educational Problems

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are confronting the escalating and daunting reality of chronic student absenteeism. Student absenteeism is a primary and longstanding educational concern, but the latest findings from the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection reveal an unprecedented rate of absenteeism nationwide (Rodgers, 2024). To address this epidemic of absenteeism, the White House in September 2023 called for an “all-hands-on-deck approach,” emphasizing that irregular school attendance is a “predictor of high school dropout, which has been linked to poor labor market prospects, diminished health, and increased involvement in the criminal justice system” (City Health Dashboard, 2023; White House Council of Economic Advisers, 2023). This call from the highest levels of our government underscores that absenteeism is not just an individual issue; its impact is felt across communities, affecting economic stability, public health, and social cohesion (Binder & Bound, 2019; Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2006; Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Collaborative efforts among schools, families, and communities are critically needed to create environments that support regular student attendance and promote social–emotional learning (SEL) to address underlying issues contributing to this widespread problem.

For over a decade, the Urban League of Nebraska has worked with urban middle and high schools in the state to reduce chronic absenteeism and promote SEL among high-needs populations (i.e., underrepresented, underperforming, and economically disadvantaged students) through their Youth Attendance Navigators program. This program embeds adult mentors having lived experience, known as Youth Attendance Navigators, in high-needs Title I schools. Mentors provide at-risk youths with direct, ongoing support. They offer coaching and skills instruction, monitor students’ alterable high-risk school behaviors, facilitate youth Restorative Circles, and provide experiential learning activities. Because mentors are embedded in schools but not directly employed by the school system, they give students and families a unique sounding

board, build trust and engagement with teachers and school staff, and support school personnel to better understand and address student educational and SEL needs.

The program has been well received, and consistently demonstrates high student engagement and acceptability (see review in Section A.2), but several challenges have hindered its replication and expansion locally and nationally. Impediments include the lack of standardization in implementation, as well as the absence of a system to track fidelity of implementation, evaluation, and data collection. Other obstacles include outdated techniques such as paper-based data-collection instruments, and the absence of a rigorous external evaluation to document program effects on student attendance and educational outcomes.

A partnership between the Urban League of Nebraska, Oregon Research Institute, and Abt Global was established to systematize the existing Youth Attendance Navigators program, develop mechanisms for scale-up and replication, and gather further evidence of program effectiveness. The Oregon Research Institute team is well-positioned to assist with scale-up and replication, having developed and refined programming for high-needs populations with other large national organizations (R324B07003; R324A120260; R324A160170; S411C23011; U411C190009). This work starts with local sites in Nebraska, such as the Boys Town home campus and KVC Nebraska, and expands nationwide after program development and evaluation for scale-up and replication. Abt Global has extensive experience conducting rigorous external evaluations of federally funded projects, including providing technical assistance on, and formal evaluation of, Oregon Research Institute EIR-funded projects (S411C23011; U411C190009).

The proposed collaborative project will: (a) iteratively develop, modify, and evaluate the effects of the Youth Attendance Navigators program on the attendance, SEL, and educational outcomes of urban, high-needs middle and secondary students who are underrepresented, underperforming, or economically disadvantaged; and (b) develop the infrastructure (e.g., database, training and implementation manuals, supervision manual, marketing materials) necessary to sustain, expand, replicate, and evaluate the Youth Attendance Navigators program over time—meeting *What Works Clearinghouse* standards for national dissemination. The

proposed project aligns with EIR Absolute Priorities 1 (demonstrates a rationale; see Sections A.1 and A.2, and Existing Evidence Form) and 4 (meets student social, emotional, and academic needs; see Section A.2 and Existing Evidence Form), as well as Competitive Preference Priority 1 (promotes equity in student access to educational resources and opportunities: implementers and partners; see Section C) and 2 (addresses impacts of COVID-19 through the use of evidence-based approaches that enable students to access the educational opportunities they need to succeed in school and reach their full potential; see Section A).

“Every missed school day is a day of missed education, and the negative effects are incremental.” (p. 2, Johnsen et al., 2022)

In line with Absolute Priorities 1 and 4, as well as the Notice Inviting Applications for the Improving Student Achievement Agenda, this project directly responds to the critical need to cultivate a “culture of attendance” and improve student outcomes. Student absenteeism is a major concern in educational settings, as it reflects not only attendance itself, but also serves as an indicator of a range of underlying factors that can substantially impact a student's academic achievement and holistic well-being (see Appendix J, Table 1 for an overview of the literature demonstrating impacts of chronic absenteeism on student outcomes). Prior to COVID-19, one in four students (25%) attended schools reporting “high” or “extreme” absenteeism. In 2021–2022, this rate surged to two out of three students (66%) (American Enterprise Institute, 2024). The alarming increase points to the urgency of addressing chronic absenteeism. Nearly 14.7 million students (29.7%) were reported as chronically absent in 2021–2022, almost doubled from 2018 (Attendance Works, 2023).

Chronic absenteeism is often a symptom of systemic problems. When students miss school frequently, it is rarely due to a single cause; rather, it often results from a combination of personal, familial, educational, and socio-economic factors (see Figure 1, Youth Attendance Navigators Conceptual Framework, in Section B.1; Johnsen et al., 2022; Lomholt et al., 2022; London et al., 2016). Personal health problems, mental illness, academic delays, low engagement with school activities, or lack of connectedness to the school environment can deter students

from regular attendance. Unstable home environments, parental disengagement, unreliable transportation, and economic hardships can exacerbate absenteeism (London et al., 2016; NAESP, 2024). As these problems compound, they create a barrier to learning that affects not only individual students, but also the educational community.

A multidimensional strategy is essential to combat chronic absenteeism and boost student outcomes. Educators and community stakeholders must collaborate to create a supportive network for students. By taking a holistic approach that encompasses academic, social, and emotional support, schools and communities can reduce chronic absenteeism, and thus promote the overall well-being and success of high needs, underrepresented, underperforming, and economically disadvantaged students.

A.2 Development and Demonstration of Promising New Strategies, Absolute Priority 4, Competitive Preference Priority 2

To address the growing problem of chronic absenteeism in the state's largest school district and urban Title I schools, the Urban League of Nebraska collaborated with the school district and experts to create and launch the Youth Attendance Navigators program in 2013. Over the past decade, the program has evolved and grown, serving nearly 1,500 high-needs students districtwide (see Appendix J, Tables 2 and 3 for enrollment and student demographic data). The program's continued success is largely due to its model, which positions Urban League staff as a community partner within the school environment, where mentors provide daily student support.

Services are implemented through an integrated model of evidence-based practices by a trained Youth Attendance Navigator, who is often a member of the same geographic community and shares lived experiences with the students referred to the program due to chronic nonattendance (i.e., 5 unexcused absences in the current year or 8 in the previous year). Students are referred and enrolled on a rolling basis and can stay in the program until they graduate from high school. Primary program goals are to help students: (a) stay below 20 unexcused absences, which triggers a truancy referral to the county attorney; (b) improve one letter grade in each enrolled course; and (c) increase SEL functioning through school connectedness, relationships,

and affective constructs. These goals align with Absolute Priority 4 by promoting school engagement and addressing the holistic needs of students. Moreover, staying in the program through graduation gives students the continuous support, mentorship, and growth opportunities they need to develop self-efficacy and empowerment as they navigate adolescence, addressing individual, contextual, and malleable factors. This comprehensive support also relates to Absolute Priority 4 by fostering a learning environment conducive to academic success and emotional well-being, which promotes long-term success beyond high school and impacts post-secondary domains (see Logic Model, Appendix G).

The school–community partnership can be strongly sustained with continuing financial and resource support from community organizations and local and state government agencies. The Youth Attendance Navigators program operates in four high-needs middle schools and three high-needs high schools (i.e., Title I schools with high percentages of free and reduced-price lunch participants and chronic absenteeism, listed as “needing improvement” by the Nebraska Department of Education). There is interest in expanding and replicating the program statewide and nationally with Urban League affiliates (see Letters of Support). The present proposal is designed to support broad dissemination by conducting a rigorous evaluation of the program's effects, which could enhance opportunities for financial support and aid sustainability.

The Urban League of Nebraska recognizes the importance of program evaluation. The group has invested in internal and external evaluations, employing independent, third-party evaluators to examine aspects of social validity and targeted outcomes (see Table 1 and Appendix J, Table 4 for 2 years of internal data).

Two external program evaluations were conducted in the past 4 years. The first, a 3-year (2020–2022) independent review by the University of Nebraska Omaha Juvenile Justice Institute (2023) examined the program’s middle school implementation. This evaluation resulted in a rating of “promising,” based on positive changes in student educational outcomes, such as increased school attachment and improved letter grades. The evaluation also highlighted areas in need of improvement, such as attendance measurement and case closure.

Table 1. *End-of-Year Youth Attendance Navigators Participant Satisfaction Data*

Item	2022-2023 (n=101) ^a	2023-2024 (n=167) ^a
I am encouraged to attend school daily.	84 (83%)	128 (77%)
The YAN program helped me set goals for myself.	98 (97%)	154 (92%)
The YAN program supported me to reach the goals I have set for myself.	94 (93%)	148 (87%)
My YAN helped me understand why it is important to attend school.	87 (86%)	146 (89%)
Since starting the YAN program, my parents are more engaged in school.	56 (55%)	97 (58%)
I liked the activities offered by the YAN program.	96 (95%)	155 (93%)
I would recommend the YAN service to other students.	98 (97%)	159 (95%)
Overall, I have benefitted from the YAN program.	92 (91%)	156 (93%)

Note. In 2022–2023, 101 students completed the end-of-year survey for a 49% overall response rate. Two schools were unavailable for data collection due to staffing issues. The response rate was 81% in 2023–2024. ^a % reflects those who marked strongly agree or agree.

The Urban League addressed several of these areas in its January 2023–March 2024 external evaluation of the entire organization. This review included an additional evaluation of the Youth Attendance Navigators program across two high schools and four middle schools (Johnson, 2024) among all program participants ($n=189$) enrolled during the period. About 64% of participants stayed below the threshold for truancy referral to the county attorney (systems involvement) and 99% matriculated to the next grade or graduated from high school.

These evaluations provide evidence of the program’s promise to address students’ attendance and SEL outcomes in urban, high-needs schools. With program refinements and new standardization elements (e.g., training and supervision protocols, implementation fidelity monitoring, social validity measurement, dosage, and engagement tracking), the program will be ready for scale-up, replication, and eligibility for more financial support, enabling long-term sustainability. The proposed work could be instrumental in addressing chronic absenteeism across Nebraska and nationally through the 90 Urban League affiliates, helping school districts better serve high-needs students (see National Urban League Letter of Support).

Youth Attendance Navigators Program Core Components and Activities

The Youth Attendance Navigators program is implemented directly with students 4 days per week in designated school buildings. Implementation varies by school day, time, and student availability, but each participant receives the core components. On average, students have 2 hours of support (e.g., one-on-one meetings, weekly lunch-and-learns, quarterly experiential

learning opportunities) from program mentors, who carry a maximum caseload of 35 students.

Keeping attendance, educational attainment, and SEL outcomes at the forefront, mentors help students create an action plan for monitoring goals. Mentors meet one-on-one with students at least once monthly, conduct weekly lunch-and-learn sessions using Restorative Circles, monitor students' alterable risks through the online school portal at least weekly, organize quarterly experiential learning trips (e.g., visits to historically Black colleges and universities, museums), communicate routinely with caregivers, and provide individual guidance. Because mentors are fully immersed in the educational environment, they also support school professionals in a collaborate partnership to meet student educational and behavioral needs.

Mentors attend weekly supervision meetings and give updates on each student's progress to track engagement and program delivery, which is also documented in weekly reports. Each core component is grounded in empirical literature establishing positive effects for high-needs students (see Table 2). When core components are systematically delivered to students, they boost attendance, academic performance, and SEL outcomes, which aligns to Competitive Preference Priority 2 (see Logic Model, Appendix G).

Table 2. *Empirical Evidence for Program Components with High-Needs Populations*

<i>Mentoring through Lived Experience</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Mentoring programs are associated with improved academic adjustment, attendance, and course grades; increased goal mastery, self-efficacy, and empowerment; and decreased alterable risks such as tardiness (Cavell et al., 2018; Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Van Schalkwyk, 2020).– Results from a meta-analysis of published studies revealed positive effects of mentoring on student academic achievement (Cohen's $d=0.11$), drug use ($d=0.16$), delinquency ($d=0.21$), and aggression ($d=0.29$) (Tolan et al., 2014).
<i>Monitoring of Alterable Risks</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Monitoring risks, such as tardiness, skipped classes, and failing grades, significantly impacted truancy, dropout, credits obtained, school connectedness, and successful school completion (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2010; Maynard et al., 2014; What Works Clearinghouse, 2010).
<i>Restorative Circles</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Implementing restorative practices with high-risk students led to improved behavior, school connectedness, and relationships, and decreased bullying, office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary disparities (Darling-Hammond, 2023; Gadd & Butler, 2018; Gregory et al., 2018; Klevan, 2021).– Participating in Restorative Circles improved SEL in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Art in Action, 2022; Joseph-McCatty & Hnilica, 2023).

Experiential Learning

- Experiential learning yielded improved student self-efficacy, problem-solving skills, motivation, educational outcomes, and relationships with adults (Ambrose & Poklop, 2015; Gallagher & Thompson, 2020; Kuh, 2008; Lake, 2021).
 - Participating in experiential learning activities linked to positive long-term outcomes such as higher employment rates and wages (Gallagher & Thompson, 2020; Hora et al., 2020).
-

Key components of the Youth Attendance Navigators program provide a foundation for replication and scale-up. However, refinements and additional development work are necessary to standardize training, supervision, programming, fidelity monitoring, and social validity assessment. The proposed project will not change the program’s core components and implementation activities but will refine and develop elements for standardization. Table 3 outlines the program’s existing components and activities, as well as those that will be revised and newly developed through the proposed project’s iterative development and evaluation process. Revised and added program elements will be tested in current schools as a preliminary evaluation of the expanded program. Specifically, we will include one new school (i.e., Omaha Central High School) and add three mentors in the highest-needs schools within Omaha Public Schools (i.e., Omaha North High School, Nathan Hale Middle School, and Monroe Middle School). Data from 2022–2023 indicate ongoing challenges with chronic absenteeism in the targeted schools, particularly among underrepresented students (see Appendix J, Table 5 for current rates by school and race/ethnicity).

Table 3. *Youth Attendance Navigators Program Proposed Modifications and New Developments*

<i>Program Components</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Refinement</i>	<i>Development</i>
Student action planning	•		
Monthly one-on-one meetings	•		
Weekly lunch-and-learns (Restorative Circles)	•		
Weekly monitoring of alterable risks	•		
Quarterly experiential learning trips	•		
Mentoring through lived experiences	•		
Training protocol		•	
Supervision protocol		•	
Program manual		•	
Program satisfaction measurement		•	
Program fidelity tool			•
Program competency test			•
Engagement and implementation database			•

Comparison to Existing Programs. To ensure that the Youth Attendance Navigators program adheres to *What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)* standards, and to compare its components with evidence-based practices, we reviewed relevant clearinghouses and databases, including *WWC*, Evidence for ESSA, and Attendance Works databases (see Appendix I, Table 6 for full comparisons). We identified six interventions with supporting evidence, with at least one supporting this study, some dating back to the early 2000s. Given the rise in chronic absenteeism and its impact on SEL outcomes, there is a need for innovative solutions (Absolute Priority 1). The Youth Attendance Navigators program stands out by (a) integrating multiple evidence-based practices, (b) using mentors with lived experience, (c) offering long-term support through high school graduation, and (d) embedding community mentors in schools to support students and school personnel.

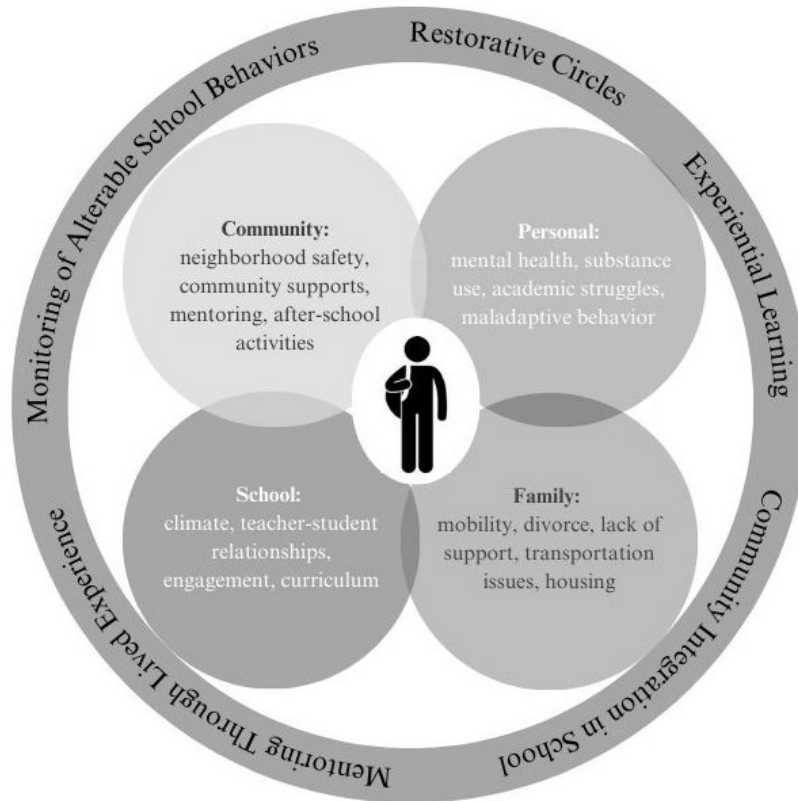
Section B: Project Design

B.1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework underlying the Youth Attendance Navigators program. This framework integrates several relevant theories and approaches to support student development. Grounded in the Developmental Relationships Framework, which emphasizes care, challenging growth, sharing power, and expanding possibilities, mentors guide students through difficult situations and systems while fostering empowerment and confidence (Li & Julian, 2012; Pekel, 2020; Pekel et al., 2018; Search Institute, 2020). The program also draws on the Positive Youth Development Framework to shape healthy, productive, and engaged students. This framework emphasizes critical environmental aspects such as assets (e.g., skill-building activities), enabling environments (e.g., healthy relationships, bonding, belonging, mentorship, positive expectations, and safe spaces), and contributions (e.g., individual roles, expression, and involvement; Scales et al., 2016). In addition, the program is informed by developmental–ecological theory (Anderson & Mohr, 2003), which considers the various individual and contextual elements impacting school success. This theory highlights the roles of individuals, schools, families, environments, and communities to enhance student outcomes

(Lenhoff & Pogodzinski, 2018). By integrating these frameworks, the Youth Attendance Navigators program offers a comprehensive and intensive approach to student development.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



The Youth Attendance Navigators program aims to instill in students the skills and behaviors needed to promote resilience, empowerment, and connection. It also seeks to achieve short- and long-term SEL success by maintaining a dynamic, student-centered focus. With this conceptual framework, we hypothesize that consistent delivery of the evidence-based practices in the Youth Attendance Navigators program will result in positive changes in educational and SEL student outcomes (Johnson, 2024; UNO Juvenile Justice Institute, 2023; Pekel, 2020; Scales et al., 2016; Search Institute, 2020; Van Schalkwyk, 2020).

B.2 Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

The proposed iterative development and testing of an expanded Youth Attendance Navigators program will be completed in three distinct phases. Phase A will guide work to be conducted in Phase B, which will inform the final program and evaluation components. The

main objective of Phase A is to gather information from key stakeholders through focus groups and surveys to identify two primary outcomes: (a) key areas for program standardization and (b) necessary development work for measuring implementation fidelity. These will be integral to creating a comprehensive program ready for scale-up and replication.

Phase A will be guided by one primary goal, with multiple objectives and proposed outcomes (see Table 4). We will host a series of focus groups with currently enrolled students ($n=8$), school personnel (e.g., counselors, social workers, teachers, school administrators; $n=8$), and Urban League staff ($n=8$). Focus groups will rely on the nominal group technique (Delbecq et al., 1986) to identify barriers to implementation and youth engagement. Specifically, we aim to: (a) identify common challenges, such as logistical issues, resource limitations, and motivational obstacles; (b) understand and triangulate perspectives within and across groups to refine the program; and (c) pinpoint targeted refinements to enhance implementation and engagement. We have successfully used this approach with high-needs students, school professionals, and community agencies in our previous development and evaluation research as the first step in iterative development work, including two ongoing EIR early-phase projects (S411C23011; U411C190009). Our proven recruitment methods, as well as our strong relationship with the Urban League of Nebraska and the primary school district, will ensure the success of Phase A of the proposed project (see Letters of Support). This method's effectiveness in triangulating results will allow the external evaluators to quickly identify key barriers and essential refinements to prepare for Phase B.

In addition to focus groups, we will survey at least 50 former students who participated in the program within the past 2 years. We will ask them to identify aspects they found most and least helpful (e.g., time involvement, reinforcements, topics covered with mentors, amount of support received), impact on educational and SEL goals (e.g., setting post-secondary goals, establishing routines to promote independence, improving affective constructs), and recommendations for improvement across components (e.g., one-on-one meetings, lunch-and-learns, Restorative Circles, action planning, experiential learning). We will use survey results to

make improvements in student engagement strategies, and to inform refinements to standardize program delivery and fidelity assessment. The Urban League will be the primary recruiter for this work, using existing contact methods (text, phone call, email, fliers) to reach out to former program enrollees and invite them to complete the survey. Potential respondents will include individuals who graduated from high school, obtained a general equivalency diploma, switched schools, dropped out of school, or withdrew from the program. Surveys will be sent digitally, and managed and analyzed by the external evaluation team.

Table 4. *Phase A Goals, Objectives, and Anticipated Outcomes*

<p><i>Goal 1: Refine, develop, and standardize Youth Attendance Navigators program components to address the educational and attendance needs of urban, high-needs students (January–July 2025).</i></p> <p><i>Objectives:</i> (1) Use the nominal group technique to gather information from three focus groups with key stakeholders (students, school personnel, agency staff) to identify program challenges, triangulate stakeholder perspectives to reflect various views, and identify necessary elements for program standardization; (2) Use a survey of former program participants to gather information to inform and improve student engagement and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of necessary refinements for program standardization; (3) Refine program training and supervision protocols; and (4) Refine and develop tools and measures for program fidelity, implementation, dosage, and quality (i.e., <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Manual^a</i>, <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Satisfaction Tool^a</i>, <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Competency Tool^b</i>, <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Engagement and Implementation Database^b</i>, and <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Fidelity Instrument^b</i>).</p> <p><i>Outcomes:</i> (1) Barriers to student engagement and program implementation will be summarized to inform program refinements; (2) A fully developed prototype of the Youth Attendance Navigators program (i.e., components, training, and supervision) will be created that can be tested with urban, high-needs schools; (3) Prototypes of newly developed program implementation fidelity measures will be created; and (4) A database will be developed for pilot implementation and evaluation.</p>

Note. ^aRefined from existing program. ^bNewly developed.

In Phase B, we will conduct a 6-month pilot study of the refined Youth Attendance Navigators program. The primary goal will be supported by multiple objectives and outcomes (see Table 5). We will: (a) evaluate program implementation based on Phase A input; (b) further refine training and program implementation; (c) evaluate participant buy-in and retention; (d) test the quality of measures and implementation fidelity; (e) test the *Youth Attendance Navigators Engagement and Implementation Database*; (f) document the acceptability of the refined program; and (g) determine whether mentor caseloads need adjustment. We will conduct follow-up surveys and interviews to finalize program, training, supervision, evaluation, and fidelity

procedures to be tested in the Phase C randomized controlled trial.

Table 5. *Phase B Goals, Objectives, and Anticipated Outcomes*

<i>Goal 2: Examine the refined Youth Attendance Navigators program through a 6-month pilot study (August 2025–July 2026).</i>
<i>Objectives:</i> (1) Conduct 60 hours of program training with 2 mentors and 2 administrative staff; (2) Attain 90% proficiency for mentors on the <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Competency Tool</i> ; (3) Obtain consent/assent for 70 students; (4) Implement the program with 90% fidelity; (5) Complete pre/post assessments to examine acceptability and test outcome measures; (6) Conduct follow-up interviews with program staff to determine implementation feasibility; (7) Modify the <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Engagement and Implementation Database</i> for Phase C testing; (8) Finalize all remaining measure refinements; and (9) Finalize all remaining program refinements.
<i>Outcomes:</i> (1) The Youth Attendance Navigators program will be fully refined (i.e., components, training, and supervision); (2) Implementation, fidelity, and outcomes measures will be fully developed; and (3) Fully developed <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Engagement and Implementation Database</i> .

Recruitment Method. The first 70 assenting students (and consenting caregivers) referred by school personnel (see Letters of Support) from August–December 2025 will be eligible to participate in the pilot study if they meet inclusion criteria: (a) have a minimum of 8 unexcused absences from the prior school year or 5 unexcused absences in the current year; (b) be defined as a high-needs student (i.e., underrepresented, underperforming, or economically

Table 6. *Measures for the Phase B Pilot Study*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Measure(s)</i>	<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Occasion</i>
Educational outcomes	School records BASC-3	School	Pre/Post
		Mentor	Pre/Post
		Student	
School connectedness	School Connectedness Scale	Student	Pre/Post
Demographic data	Survey	Student	Pre
		Mentor	
Implementation/Alliance /Adherence	<i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Fidelity Instrument</i> <i>Youth Attendance Navigators Engagement and Implementation Database</i> <i>Youth Strength of Relationship Scale</i> <i>Mentor Strength of Relationship Scale</i>	Supervisors	Weekly/Monthly
		Mentor	
		Supervisors	
		Database	
		Student	Pre/Post
Social validity/ Acceptability	<i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Satisfaction Tool</i> Interviews	Student	Post
		Mentor	
		Supervisors	

disadvantaged); (c) be enrolled in grades 6–12; and (d) speak English. Schools will refer eligible

students to program staff, who will contact students and caregivers to explain study involvement and conduct assent/consent procedures (see Letters of Support). This recruitment process also will be used for the randomized controlled trial in Phase C.

Goal 3 (see Table 7) will be addressed in Phase C, which is planned for August 2026–December 2029. The project team will conduct a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effects of the revised Youth Attendance Navigators program on the educational outcomes of urban, high-needs students. In line with the EIR objective to develop programs and identify practices that demonstrate a significant impact on high-needs student outcomes, we will assess outcomes related to student school attendance, academic performance, connectedness to school, mentorship alliance, and social validity (see Table 8; Appendix I, Table 7 for full measure descriptions). Small effects may have little impact on overall outcomes, so we are particularly interested in evaluating effects that demonstrate clinical importance and suggest a significant and meaningful effect on long-term educational success and stability.

Table 7. *Phase C Goals, Objectives, and Anticipated Outcomes*

Goal 3: Examine the effects of the Youth Attendance Navigators program on the educational engagement, performance, and school stability of urban, high-needs students (August 2026–December 2029).

Objectives: (1) Obtain consent/assent from a minimum of 277 treatment and 277 comparison (business-as-usual) students and caregivers; (2) Train 11 mentors and 2 administrative staff; (3) Collect baseline, and 6-, 12-, and 18-month data from 85% of the proposed sample; (4) Implement the program with 90% fidelity; (5) Complete data analyses addressing all research questions; (6) Finalize all program materials to prepare for scale-up and replication; (7) Disseminate locally, regionally, and nationally to replicate and expand; (8) Meet with community partners to share project findings and seek funding mechanisms for sustainability; and (9) Meet with national and state Urban League affiliates to discuss mechanisms to support continued program implementation after study completion.

Outcomes: (1) Students will have improved access to supports that increase attendance, school stability, school connectedness, and academic outcomes; (2) Students will have improved SEL skills (e.g., social skills, relationships, self-efficacy); (3) Students will have greater long-term success in post-secondary education, employment, and social-emotional well-being; and (4) Products will be ready for program scale-up and replication.

Method. In Phase C, we will randomly assign a minimum of 554 students to the Youth Attendance Navigators program or a “business-as-usual” (BAU) comparison condition, using the same recruitment procedures and eligibility criteria as in the Phase B pilot study. Students are

referred to the program throughout the year based on risk, so a rolling admissions process will begin in August 2026 and continue through May 2029. We will collect baseline, and 6-, 12-, and 18-month data to examine short- and long-term program impacts. Urban League staff will contact eligible students and their caregivers to describe the study and obtain informed consent and student assent (see Human Subjects and Phase B recruitment). Based on previous program participation, we anticipate consent/assent rates to be at least 80%. Following consent/assent, students will be asked to complete baseline surveys, then will be randomly assigned to the two treatment conditions to ensure equal group size. For schools with one mentor, students will be assigned only to a study condition. For schools with two mentors, students will be assigned to a study condition and then assigned to a mentor. Comparison group students will receive traditional school supports. Given the rate of participation in the Youth Attendance Navigators program over the past decade (see Appendix J, Table 2 and school Letters of Support), and an average annual withdrawal rate of about 5%, we anticipate high student and school retention.

Table 8. *Measures for the Phase C Randomized Controlled Trial*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Measure(s)</i>	<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Occasion</i>
Educational outcomes	School records	School/Mentor	Pre/6/12/18
	BASC-3	Student	Pre/6/12/18
	School Placement Questionnaire	School/Mentor	6/12/18
School connectedness	School Connectedness Scale	Student	Pre/6/12/18
Demographic data	Survey	Student/Mentor	Pre
Implementation/ Alliance/ Adherence	<i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Fidelity Instrument</i>	Mentor Supervisor	Weekly/ Monthly
	<i>Youth Attendance Navigators Engagement and Implementation Database</i>	Database	
	<i>Youth Strength of Relationship Scale</i>	Student	6/12/18
Social validity	<i>Mentor Strength of Relationship Scale</i>	Mentor	6/12/18
	<i>Youth Attendance Navigators Program Satisfaction Tool</i>	Student Mentor	6/12/18 6/12/18

B.3 Meeting the Needs of the Target Population

The development and evaluation design for the proposed project to meet the needs of the target population is based on our previous experience with large U.S. Department of Education-funded research to support and evaluate educational outcomes for high-needs students (see

resumes in Appendix B), as well as Urban League program evaluations. Given our research team's experience with experimental designs and preliminary evidence of promise (see Section A), we anticipate that a formal impact study with a rigorous design and similar recruitment approach will yield positive outcomes for high-needs students in urban middle and high schools.

This hypothesis is supported by our iterative development and rigorous evaluation design approach in ongoing work (R324B07003; R324A120260; R324A160170; S411C23011; U411C190009); current program evaluation data (see Section A; see Appendix J, Table 3); the involvement of key stakeholders experienced with the Youth Attendance Navigators program in the refinement and development process (Phase A); and empirical evidence of the benefits of mentoring, monitoring of risk behaviors, the use of Restorative Circles, and experiential learning (see Table 5; see Appendix I, Table 1). The integration of these components, combined with stakeholder-informed program refinements and new elements, will address the educational and SEL requirements of high-needs students in the study sample and in future national scale-up.

Section C: Personnel

A major strength of the proposed project is the multidisciplinary collaboration among professionals in program development, education, urban community support, research, and evaluation. Our team (see Table 9) comprises experts from diverse fields, including education, intervention development, high-risk populations, and urban environments. Additionally, team members come from underrepresented backgrounds, including multiracial and economically disadvantaged groups, enriching their understanding of the project. These experts will work together to refine and evaluate the program using an iterative approach, ensuring continuous improvement and effectiveness. See Appendix B for detailed resumes.

Recruitment of Members from Traditionally Underrepresented Groups. The Program Director and Co-Program Director are scientists at Oregon Research Institute, an independent behavioral sciences research center focused on understanding human behavior and improving quality of life by addressing health, educational, and social problems. The institute prioritizes collaboration with diverse and vulnerable populations to foster educational growth,

enhance physical and mental well-being, and promote equity and justice. The institute advances diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism within its organization and the broader community through community partnerships and the Racial Equity Working Group, which makes recommendations to the Board of Directors to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging among employees, research partners, and community groups. To recruit project employees, we will actively seek individuals from diverse communities, backgrounds, and abilities who have been traditionally underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

Partnerships to Promote Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Competitive Preference Priority 1). The Urban League of Nebraska will be the community partner that provides student and school support within the educational setting. The original Urban League was founded in 1910 to help African American migrants from rural and urban Southern communities adjust to societal and economic problems in the North. Over time, this movement grew. There are 92 Urban League affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia serving 300 unique communities.

The Urban League of Nebraska, established in 1927, has been instrumental in creating opportunities for African Americans and minorities. Through strategic efforts and collaborations with community partners, the league has helped end racial segregation in low-rent federally subsidized housing, promoted the building of new housing, advocated for the hiring of minority teachers in the state's largest school district, created meaningful employment opportunities, and worked to close educational and socio-economic gaps. This group is at the forefront of promoting equity, emphasizing the importance of education, ensuring access to resources, teaching job skills, and providing scholarships and opportunities for African Americans, other ethnic communities, and disadvantaged families. These efforts have helped clients achieve social equality, educational outcomes, economic independence, and personal growth.

Table 9. *Project Key Personnel, Training, and Experience*

<i>Research and Development Team – Oregon Research Institute</i>
<p>██████████ (Program Director), Senior Scientist. ██████████ has 15 years of experience in intervention research, development, and dissemination across middle and secondary educational settings. She has served as key personnel on nine federally funded projects involving high-needs students. She is the Program Director of a current EIR early-phase project to improve educational outcomes for students involved in child welfare (U411C190009) and the Co-Program Director of an ongoing EIR early-phase project to enhance health literacy among urban and suburban high-needs students (S411C23011).</p> <p>██████████ (Co-Program Director), Senior Scientist. ██████████ has over 20 years of experience in developing, evaluating, and disseminating interventions in secondary educational settings, and has secured over \$20 million in federal funding and evaluation contracts. She has been the Program Director or Co-Program Director on numerous funded projects through the Institute of Education Sciences and the Office of Special Education Programs. She is the Program Director of an ongoing EIR early-phase project to improve health literacy among high-needs students (S411C23011) and the Co-Program Director of a current EIR early-phase project to address the educational needs of child welfare system-involved youth (U411C190009).</p>
<i>Community Agency Team – Urban League of Nebraska</i>
<p>██████████, President and Chief Executive Officer. ██████████ has been with the Urban League since 2017, serving as CEO and previously as Vice President of Programs. In this role, he managed the Urban League of Nebraska’s Education and Youth Development and Employment and Career Services. He has also served the Omaha community in other non-profit roles, including Chief Career Officer of Avenue Scholars and Vice President of the Omaha Community Foundation, demonstrating extensive knowledge and expertise in supporting high-needs students in urban education settings.</p> <p>██████████, Director of Youth and Education. ██████████ has been with the Urban League of Nebraska since 2017 and has served as the Director of Youth and Education for 3 years. He previously was Youth Attendance Navigators Coordinator for 4 years. ██████████ has extensive knowledge of the program, service delivery, and the schools in which the program operates, making him a valuable school–community partner.</p> <p>██████████, Youth Attendance Navigators Program Coordinator. ██████████ has been with the Urban League of Nebraska since 2015, serving as Program Coordinator for 3 years. Previously, she worked as a Family Support Worker, house parent in a residential program, and after-school program site director. With over 20 years of experience, she has extensive skill in supervising mentors, mentorship, program implementation, and fostering school–community partnerships in underserved communities.</p>
<i>External Evaluation Team – Abt Global</i>
<p>██████████, Abt Global. ██████████ is a policy analyst and program evaluator with expertise in designing and implementing statistical analyses and the design and implementation of randomized controlled trials. She has served in project management roles on evaluations of education, training, and health interventions, and is a program evaluator on one of the project team’s current EIR early-phase projects (S411C23011).</p> <p>██████████, Abt Global. ██████████ has experience throughout the full research cycle: designing and conducting focus groups; performing quantitative and qualitative data analyses and visualizations; synthesizing information from multiple data sources; and writing reports. She is skilled in managing project tasks, deliverables, and teams. Her past teaching experiences at the K–12 and postsecondary levels motivate her work in the education space.</p> <p>██████████, Abt Global. ██████████ is a methodologist expert in evaluation design, research methods, data analysis, and dissemination of technical results. He has conducted various evaluations for agencies like IES, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor. He is the Director of Analysis for Abt Global’s evaluation of four EIR-funded projects.</p>

Section D: Management Plan

Oregon Research Institute researchers will oversee all aspects of project management, including IRB approval, budgeting, measure development and refinement, participant and school recruitment, implementation fidelity, Youth Attendance Navigators program refinement, data collection, dissemination, and sustainability planning. Urban League staff will be involved in program refinement, training, consenting/assenting research participants, implementation, supervision, data collection, dissemination, and sustainability efforts. Statisticians at Abt Global will be the external evaluators, assisting with the randomization scheme, outcome measure development and refinement, data collection and analysis, and dissemination (see Table 10). This team has extensive experience collaborating on large federally funded projects and conducting rigorous evaluations. Each entity understands its independent objectives to contribute to the larger project goals, ensuring the research plan is executed on time and within budget.

Table 10. *Project Timeline, Milestones, and Responsible Person(s)*

<i>Project Activity</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Responsible Person(s)</i>
<i>Phase A: Initial Development Milestones (January 2025–December 2025)</i>		
Hold post-award meeting	TBD	PD, Co-PD, EE, KP1
Prepare and submit IRB materials	1/25-2/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-2, EE, RA
Train for focus groups (nominal group technique)	2/25	PD, Co-PD, EE, RA
Recruit focus group participants (N=24)	2/25-3/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, SD
Conduct focus groups	3/25	PD, Co-PD, RA
Prepare and analyze focus group data	4/25	PD, Co-PD, RA, EE
Develop and refine survey	2/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, EE, RA
Recruit respondents and distribute surveys (N=50)	2/25-3/25	CO-PD, KP 1-3, SD, EE
Prepare and analyze survey data	4/25	EE
Refine measures	2/25-4/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, EE
Develop database	2/25-5/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-4
Refine program training protocols/materials	3/24-5/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, 5, RA
Develop program marketing materials	4/25-6/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, 5
Hold weekly/monthly planning meetings	1/25-7/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, RA, EE
Prepare required research design documents	6/25-9/25	PD, Co-PD, EE
<i>Phase B: Pilot Study Milestones (August 2025–April 2026)</i>		
Recruit for the pilot study, obtain consent/assent	8/25-9/25	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, SD, EE, RA
Implement the pilot study (N=70)	8/25-2/26	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, AG
Collect pilot study data	8/25-2/26	KP 2-3, EE, RA
Conduct individual program staff interviews (N=4)	1/26-2/26	PD, Co-PD, EE, RA
Prepare data files/clean data	2/26	EE
Analyze data	3/26	EE
Hold monthly planning meetings	8/25-3/26	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, RA, EE

Attend annual Program Directors meeting	TBD	PD, Co-PD, EE, KP 1
Prepare EIR annual report (APR1)	TBD	PD, Co-PD, EE
<i>Phase C: Randomized Controlled Trial Milestones (April 2026–December 2029)</i>		
Finalize program training and refine database	4/26-5/26	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, AB, RA
Finalize measures	4/26-5/26	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, AB, EE
Prepare and submit IRB materials	6/26	PD, Co-PD, EE
Conduct program training	7/26-8/26	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, AG
Obtain participant consent/assent (N=554)	9/26-12/28	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, EE, SD, RA
Conduct the randomized controlled trial	9/26-5/29	PD, Co-PD, KP 2-3, SD
Collect data (outcomes/fidelity/validity)	9/26-5/29	EE, SD
Prepare data files/clean data	6/29-8/29	EE
Analyze data	9/29-10/29	EE
Hold monthly team meetings	4/26-12/29	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, RA, EE
Engage in dissemination efforts	1/26-12/29	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3, EE, RA
Hold Urban League meetings for sustainability	9/29-11/29	PD, Co-PD, KP 1-3; SD, AG
Prepare EIR final report (APR3, APR4, Final)	TBD	PD, Co-PD, EE, RA
Attend annual Program Directors meeting	TBD	PD, Co-PD, EE, KP 1

Note. PD = Program Director; Co-PD = Co-Program Director; KP = Key Personnel; SD = School District; AG = Agency; EE = External Evaluator; DC = Data Collectors; RA = Research Assistant; Oregon Research Institute project personnel include [REDACTED], PD; [REDACTED], Co-PD, RA(1) – TBD; Urban League of Nebraska project personnel include: [REDACTED] (KP1), [REDACTED] (KP2), [REDACTED] (KP3); Database developer via contract with UL Solutions (KP4), Marketing person (KP5), Abt Global personnel include [REDACTED], statistician (EE); [REDACTED] (EE), statistician, [REDACTED] (EE), methodologist, Data Collector (DC).

Section E: Evaluation Plan

E.1 Producing Evidence that Meets *WWC* Standards Without Reservations

Abt Global will conduct an independent, rigorous evaluation of the refined Youth Attendance Navigators program through a multi-site randomized controlled trial with student-level assignment, designed to meet *WWC* version 5.0 Group Design Standards without reservations. The evaluation consists of three iterative phases with evaluation activities designed to inform each subsequent phase (see Table 11). It begins with a development phase (Phase A) in which Abt Global, in collaboration with Oregon Research Institute, will analyze focus group data for component modification and finalize the design plan; recruitment, randomization, and data collection procedures; and fidelity measures. Phase B consists of a pilot study to test refinements, implementation procedures, and evaluate outcome data. Phase C involves an impact and implementation study with students randomly assigned to either treatment or business-as-usual conditions. These phases will be followed by reporting and dissemination activities.

Table 11. *Evaluation Phases*

<i>Project Phase</i>	<i>Evaluation Activities</i>	<i>Evaluation Activity Goals</i>
Phase A (January 2025–July 2025): Development	Analyze focus group data; develop study design plan; finalize randomization procedures, fidelity measures, and data-collection procedures.	Prepare for evaluation.
Phase B (August 2025–July 2026): Pilot study	Recruit pilot study participants and collect data.	-Conduct pilot study and evaluate, refinements and implementation and outcome measures. -Identify and improve any data quality or collection issues prior to Phase C.
Phase C (August 2026–June 2029): Randomized controlled trial	-Conduct randomized controlled trial. -Conduct study of implementation fidelity.	-Understand effects of the program on student outcomes. -Contextualize impacts using implementation fidelity data.
Reporting and Dissemination (July 2029–December 2029)	Complete analyses and reporting.	-Produce final report detailing study findings and lessons learned for replication and expansion.

Randomized Controlled Trial. To address research questions for the proposed randomized controlled trial (Table 12), Abt Global will collect baseline, outcome, and implementation data. We will measure confirmatory impacts at 6 and 12 months after randomization. For students randomly assigned in 2026–2027 and 2027–2028, we will also collect outcome data at 18 months after randomization and conduct an exploratory analysis to document whether impacts in the confirmatory analysis persist at 18 months. Data will be collected yearly to address impact and implementation questions (see Appendix J, Table 7).

Table 12. *Research Questions for the Randomized Controlled Trial*

<i>Research Questions about Program Impact</i>
1. <u>Confirmatory</u> : What are the impacts of the Youth Attendance Navigators program on attendance, academic performance, school connectedness, and social–emotional development after 6 months for treatment students relative to students receiving business-as-usual school support?
2. <u>Confirmatory</u> : What are the impacts of the Youth Attendance Navigators program on attendance, academic performance, school connectedness, and social–emotional development after 12 months for treatment students relative to students receiving business-as-usual school support?
3. <u>Exploratory</u> : What are the impacts of the Youth Attendance Navigators program on academic performance, school connectedness, and social–emotional development after 18 months for treatment students relative to students receiving business-as-usual school support?

Research Questions about Program Implementation

4. What is the level of fidelity of implementation of the Youth Attendance Navigators program in each year of the study? Does implementation fidelity vary by mentor, school, or district?
5. What are the strengths or challenges that mentors experience when implementing the program?

Research Question about the Relationship between Program Implementation and Impact

6. To what extent is fidelity of Youth Attendance Navigators program implementation and mentorship alliance related to student outcomes?

Sample, Consent, and Data-Collection Methods. Seven schools currently have a Youth Attendance Navigators program in place. They will be trained to continue participating during the randomized controlled trial. Additionally, we will recruit one new school and expand in three of the existing schools, resulting in a total of 11 mentors across eight buildings. This study is designed to avoid disrupting any student–mentor relationships already established in the existing seven schools. Considering these commitments and the capacity constraints of each mentor (limited to a caseload of 35 students), we expect to randomly assign 14 students (7 treatment; 7 business-as-usual) in the first year of the study at each of the existing four schools without an expansion of Youth Attendance Navigators. We also expect to randomly assign 70 students (35 treatment, 35 business-as-usual) at the new school, as well as 84 students (42 treatment, 42 business-as-usual) at each of the three expansion schools resulting in a total of 378 students randomly assigned in the first year of the study during 2026–2027 (see Appendix J, Table 8).

Once assigned a mentor, students are expected to stay in the program for at least one school year but may continue in the program for as long as they like, or until they graduate from high school. Considering these expectations and the turnover rate experienced in the current program, we expect 4 available spots, on average, in the program per mentor per year for the second and third years of the study with at least twice as many eligible students. Therefore, we expect to randomly assign at least 8 new students per school with 1 mentor (4 treatment, 4 business-as-usual) and at least 16 new students per school with 2 mentors (8 treatment, 8 business-as-usual) in each of the 2027–2028 and 2028–2029 school years for an additional 176 students in the trial. In total, we expect at least 554 student participants in this study.

Each outcome measure will be collected at baseline prior to random assignment, then at 6, 12, and 18 months (for the first and second cohorts) after random assignment for students assigned to treatment or business-as-usual conditions. Baseline data on student attendance and academic achievement will be collected for the quarter prior to random assignment. Outcome data for school measures will be collected for the quarter closest to each 6-, 12-, and 18-month time point. Additional data will be collected via surveys sent to participants directly through secure individual links. Although there is no requirement to establish baseline equivalence of samples in a randomized controlled trial with low attrition, Abt Global will collect baseline measures to ensure that the study meets *WWC* standards with reservations even if high attrition occurs, and for use in modeling to increase the precision of estimates. Abt Global also will collect student demographic data at baseline to include in statistical models.

Statistical Power. The study will recruit three cohorts of students at each school (in 2026–2027, 2027–2028, and 2028–2029) for a total sample of at least 554 students. With this sample size, and the 24 school-cohort blocks, the expected minimum detectable effect size (MDES) for the outcomes analysis is 0.196¹ (see Appendix J, Table 9).

Minimizing Attrition. Attrition can threaten the validity of findings from a randomized controlled trial. We expect attrition related to missing data to be low for the variables supplied by schools, and data availability should not be impacted by a student’s treatment condition. In addition, because we will collect outcome data for our primary analysis within 1 school year for each cohort of students, we expect low attrition related to student dropout. However, Abt Global and Oregon Research Institute will use strategies to minimize attrition. First, during recruitment, Oregon Research Institute and Urban League project staff will clearly communicate the data-collection requirements and the importance of continued participation. Additionally, students and mentors will receive a small incentive for sharing personal data not provided by schools.

¹ MDES calculations used *PowerUp!* (Dong & Maynard, 2013).

Outcome Measures Meet WWC Standards. Outcome measures were chosen to meet *WWC* standards and align with *WWC*-identified outcome domains. Key outcome measures are student attendance, academic achievement, school connectedness, and social–emotional development. Our first outcome, student attendance, is hypothesized to be a mediator of Youth Attendance Navigators program effects, influencing short- and medium-term outcomes (academic achievement and school connectedness) as well as the longer-term outcome of social–emotional development. Table 13 summarizes the study outcome measures, the baseline measure and timing of measurement, and the *WWC* outcome domain with which each outcome is aligned.

Table 13. *Outcome Measures*

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Baseline Measure</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>WWC Outcome Domain</i>
Attendance: Proportion of school days in attendance	Same as outcome measure	6, 12, and 18 months* after random assignment	School Attendance
Academic Achievement: GPA; Course failure	Same as outcome measure	6, 12, and 18 months* after random assignment	Course Performance—Secondary
School Connectedness: School Connectedness Scale	Same as outcome measure	6, 12, and 18 months* after random assignment	Academic Dispositions
Social-Emotional Development: BASC-3 subscales	Same as outcome measure	6, 12, and 18 months* after random assignment	Student Behavior

Note. *Only for the first and second cohorts.

Analytic Approach Meets WWC Standards. We will conduct an intent-to-treat analysis on key student outcomes to compare the refined Youth Attendance Navigators program to a business-as-usual comparison condition. We will specify a separate linear regression model for each outcome. Randomization should account for all observed and unobserved differences between the study groups. However, we will adjust the regression models for the following variables to improve precision of model estimates: (a) random assignment block based on students’ cohort and school, (b) baseline value, and (c) student demographic characteristics. Once we have estimated impacts of the program on student outcomes, we will take a two-step approach to assess the degree to which fidelity is related to outcomes (see Appendix J.10).

E.2 Performance Feedback for Periodic Assessment of Progress

Abt Global will meet monthly across all phases with project leadership and provide regular performance feedback regarding evaluation activities, documenting progress toward achieving intended outcomes and supporting program improvement. Starting with Phase A, Abt Global will provide formative feedback based on focus group and survey data on effectively implementing and evaluating the Youth Attendance Navigators program. In Phase B, Abt Global will provide formative feedback based on pilot study data and recommend final program refinements prior to Phase C. During the Phase C evaluation, Abt Global will monitor and provide feedback on implementation fidelity for all treatment schools annually to ensure consistent program delivery. Additionally, Abt Global will track mentorship alliance through the youth and mentor *Strength of Relationship Scales* every 6 months during implementation to document progress towards relationship development, which is hypothesized to drive intended outcomes. These data will identify mentor challenges and areas for training. Regular meetings and reports will advise project stakeholders of any need to adjust project activities or staff functioning based on unintended outcomes.

E.3 Key Project Components, Mediator, and Outcomes, and Implementation Thresholds

The evaluation design is based on the key components, mediator, and outcomes outlined in the Logic Model and detailed above. The Youth Attendance Navigators program includes trainings, action plans, and a database for tracking and monitoring. Fidelity data will primarily come from the *Youth Attendance Navigators Program Fidelity Instrument*, filled out by supervisors throughout the year. Additional fidelity data, such as mentor training and daily activities, will be tracked through the *Engagement and Implementation Database*. Implementation fidelity will be assessed using quantitative indicators from the Logic Model to generate an overall score. Prior to data collection, Abt Global will collaborate with Oregon Research Institute to finalize the fidelity rubric and establish measurable thresholds for acceptable program implementation for all components included in the Logic Model.