

New app helps students self-monitor behavior, stay on task

September 24 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Many students face challenges staying focused and on task in the classroom. Now that the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed many homes into classrooms, those struggles have become even more challenging for parents, students and teachers. University of Kansas researchers have developed a web-based, self-monitoring system that has proven to help students stay on task, reduce disruptive behavior, boost

academic achievement. It is fully adaptable to home and remote learning.

I-Connect, a customizable system that helps students set goals, tracks their progress, stores data and shares with teachers, mentors and parents, is free and available for all users on Apple and Android smartphones and tablets. It will also be available soon for use on most laptops. The app, developed by researchers in Juniper Gardens, part of the Life Span Institute at KU, is a modern update on a longtime intervention.

"Self-monitoring has a long, evidence-based history in education. I like to point out that Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, has a chapter about self-monitoring," said Howard Wills, I-Connect lead developer and associate research professor of educational psychology. "It's not new, but I-Connect is a new way of helping students and educators support students to monitor behavior and stay on task."

In the past, self-monitoring was recorded on paper. That method could draw attention to students and required cumbersome storing of paperwork and graphing so that data could be used for decision-making. I-Connect provides a customizable method in which students who need assistance in areas such as engagement with teachers or class materials, appropriate behaviors, help-seeking behaviors or staying on task can set goals, store data and track progress. Users can download the app, set up an account and begin working with students. The app will send students a reminder at a set interval and ask if they are on task or meeting other set goals. The [student](#) answers yes or no throughout the course of a school day. That data is stored and can generate progress reports shared with personnel the users select such as teachers, counselors, mentors or parents.

The system is available for free download in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. Instructions, tutorials, videos, support and guidelines

on how to customize the app for individual students, including use for home and remote education, are available at iconnect.ku.edu. Peer-reviewed research showing the effectiveness of self-monitoring and use of I-Connect, including decreased inappropriate behaviors and increased productivity and academic achievement, are available at the site as well.

"Feedback has been very solid. Generally, we're finding that people see it's very intuitive and easy to use," Wills said. "Especially for upper elementary, middle and [high school students](#), this provides a level of intervention and support they don't often get."

The app's development and scaling up for broad use have been supported by grant funding from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs. Special education teachers and those who lead special education within school districts have reported benefits of the program as well, Wills said, pointing out that students with Individual Education Plans, or IEPs, can use I-Connect to monitor progress toward goals set in the plans. Research findings have also shown the self-monitoring technology to be beneficial to a range of students including those with learning and attention support needs and those with autism spectrum disorder. I-Connect has also been tested and shown effective in general education, community and workplace settings. Ongoing research is testing the method's effectiveness as a Tier-2 multi-tiered systems of support intervention.

Within the first year of its availability, I-Connect has been used by more than 850 educators, parents and service providers in schools across the United States.

The app's availability during a pandemic in which parents have become teachers, students are learning from home or attending a mix of virtual and in-person schooling is timely, Wills said. I-Connect's abilities to be customized to each individual student's needs and determination of who

will be part of a student's intervention are valuable as well.

"I think for parents working to keep their students on task, and for teachers engaging students in classroom settings, this can be a very helpful, nonintrusive tool for keeping them on task," Wills said. "In schools that have used it, the I-Connect self-monitoring application offers a powerful, evidence-based intervention and support for students."

Provided by University of Kansas

Citation: New app helps students self-monitor behavior, stay on task (2020, September 24) retrieved 22 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-09-app-students-self-monitor-behavior-task.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.