



EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Measuring and Fostering Non-Cognitive Skills in Adolescence:

Evidence from Chicago Public Schools
and the OneGoal Program

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INTRODUCTION

A rigorous evaluation completed by researchers at the University of Chicago demonstrates that **OneGoal has a statistically significant impact on students’ life and postsecondary outcomes, increasing college enrollment and persistence rates by 10-20 percentage points.** Of the interventions targeting adolescents that have undergone rigorous evaluation, **OneGoal is one of the few that has resulted in statistically significant positive impact.**

This quasi-experimental evaluation, *Measuring and Fostering Non-Cognitive Skills in Adolescence: Evidence from Chicago Public Schools and the OneGoal Program* was conducted by Tim Kautz of The University of Chicago’s Center for Economics of Human Development, directed by Nobel laureate James Heckman, and Wladimir Zanolini of Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Only 9 percent of students from low-income communities graduate from college— and our global ranking is a disappointing 14th when comparing the percent of 25-34 year-olds who have completed higher education (42%), behind countries such as Korea, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Russia (OECD, 2012).

Public and private sector leaders have made it clear that our nation’s ability to compete on a global scale is at risk. In response, billions of dollars have been invested and hundreds of thousands of people have committed their careers to increasing college graduation rates and

economic viability for our country – yet we remain far behind other countries. Furthermore, the percentage of low income students that go on to earn a bachelor's degree has increased only from 5 percent to 9 percent in nearly 20 years - which will continue to hold our country back if we do not expand scalable, proven solutions (Bailey and Dynarski, 2012).

Many previous national research and policies aimed at increasing degree attainment have focused on cognitive skills, as measured by test scores. However, non-cognitive skills such as persistence, grit, curiosity, self-control, and sociability are powerful predictors of students' future life outcomes. Additionally, non-cognitive factors remain malleable throughout adolescence, leaving room for interventions at later ages (Heckman and Kautz, 2014; Kautz et al., 2014).

Kautz and Zanoni evaluated the impact of OneGoal, a national college success organization that leverages students' non-cognitive skill development as preparation for postsecondary and life success. Their research reveals that OneGoal has a statistically significant positive impact and effect on students' life outcomes.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Kautz and Zanoni's evaluation studied more than 2,300 OneGoal Fellows who entered the program from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2013. Using existing data (ACT scores, GPA, attendance records, discipline records, high school attended, gender, neighborhood, and more) for incoming OneGoal Fellows, a counterfactual group of non-OneGoal students was identified. After accounting for pre-OneGoal characteristics that contributed to students' success (i.e. baseline academic preparation or cognitive ability), the outcomes of students enrolled in and not enrolled in OneGoal were evaluated. Kautz and Zanoni's report produced several key findings.

1. OneGoal increases college enrollment and college persistence rates

OneGoal was found to improve postsecondary outcomes across the board, with the strongest effect on four-year college enrollment and persistence. OneGoal increases college enrollment and persistence 10-20 percentage points, with the highest impact observed for students with low incoming cognitive skills and male students.

2. OneGoal improves academic indicators during high school

OneGoal was found to have statistically significant impact on ACT scores, absences, number of credits accumulated, and GPA.

3. Growth in non-cognitive skill development is a factor in the positive college outcomes for OneGoal Fellows

OneGoal's impact on college enrollment and persistence rates was statistically significant even in instances when Fellows' test scores did not improve but non-cognitive related measures did improve. This demonstrates that OneGoal works in part by improving non-cognitive skills throughout the duration of the program.

4. Non-cognitive skills can be measured using school administrative data

The study validates one measurement of non-cognitive skills; Kautz and Zanoni analyzed data that is commonly collected by schools but that is rarely used to measure non-cognitive skills, including grade point averages (GPAs) and attendance rates. This approach is based on evidence from psychology, which has shown that academic indicators like grades depend heavily on non-cognitive skills like self-control (Duckworth, Quinn, Tsukayama, 2012). This measure rivals, and often outperforms, test scores as a predictor of high school graduation, college enrollment, college graduation, and even arrest rates.

“One Goal’s results testify to the idea that all students – regardless of the zip code of their birth – have the potential to succeed in college and life. **One Goal’s impact on academic outcomes and non-cognitive skill development points the way for how our nation can change the life trajectories** of the next generation of our children.”

Norman Atkins

Co-Founder & President, Relay Graduate School of Education and Founder, Uncommon Schools

WHY THIS MATTERS

The evaluation's authors note three implications for their analysis:

“This evaluation contributes to the knowledge of adolescent interventions in three ways. First, when compared to evaluations of other programs, it has a relatively long follow-up and considers a broader set of outcomes. Second, of the adolescent interventions that are well studied, OneGoal is one of the few that is successful. Third, we dig deeper than most evaluations of adolescent program by demonstrating that the improvements in outcomes are linked to improvements in skills.”

“I'm thrilled by this study of OneGoal for two reasons. First, this sort of **rigorous evaluation** is practically unprecedented — and it provides a **stellar model for the evaluation of other programs** aimed at improving youth outcomes. Second, the **results are tremendously encouraging** and suggest the power of innovative programs and committed individuals in the community to change lives.”

Angela Duckworth

Associate Professor at University of Pennsylvania and MacArthur Fellow

Furthermore, there are additional implications for work nation-wide to increase college enrollment, persistence and graduation rates – and therefore the ability for the U.S. to be competitive in the global marketplace. This evidence of OneGoal's impact demonstrates:

- 1. It is possible to change the life trajectory of students with a relatively short, late-adolescent intervention that is both high-impact and low-cost.**

Much attention has been given to early childhood interventions and to adolescent interventions that are either wide-reaching and affordable but low impact, or show impact but are too expensive to expand. OneGoal reaches students at a sustainable cost per student, and this evaluation demonstrates that our approach is working for the students we serve.

2. Students benefit significantly from the opportunity to build their non-cognitive skills – academic behaviors, skills, and mindsets – along with time to reflect and assess their individual progress.

Emerging research demonstrates the need to develop non-cognitive skills in students and that these skills can have implications on students' course grades, a strong predictor of college success (Farrington et al., 2012). Nevertheless, teachers are feeling pressured to focus class time on raising test scores due to increased accountability for test score growth. The results from this evaluation of OneGoal, a program delivered in a daily class during the school day for the initial 2 years, indicate that when time is set aside for developing academic behaviors, skills, and mindsets, students' non-cognitive skill level increases, resulting in a statistically significant impact on life outcomes.

3. Students currently underrepresented on college campuses – students from urban districts; students from low-income communities; students of color; students who are middle- and low-performing in high school – can succeed with the right supports.

This evaluation demonstrates that OneGoal's approach to preparing underrepresented students for college has a statistically significant impact on their enrollment and persistence rates.

They are capable of earning a degree but need better information about their college options, more comprehensive college success preparation, and greater access to personalized supports once in college to establish the academic, financial and social-emotional roots they need on their path to graduation – all core components of the OneGoal model. And working with underrepresented students can be the game-changer: not only would their sheer numbers help to shift the tide and increase our country's college graduation rate, which significantly lags behind our OECD peers, but the lessons learned in supporting them to graduation could be distilled, shared and scaled widely for the benefit of **all** students in our nation.

This is the first release of Kautz and Zannoni's evaluation; it will soon be submitted for peer review and publication.

ABOUT ONEGOAL

Our Model

OneGoal targets historically underperforming high school students in low-income communities and empowers them to reach their full potential and graduate from college. We recruit and select a region's high-performing teachers – those already working in high schools in low-income communities – and provide them with the training and support to become OneGoal Program Directors and implement our three-year college success model with a cohort of Fellows, beginning in junior year of high school and continuing through the first day of sophomore year of college. In Year One and Year Two, the OneGoal course is taught in a daily, credit-bearing high school class. OneGoal Program Directors guide Fellows to:

1. **Increase their GPAs and standardized test scores in order to access more selective and supportive colleges**
2. **Take all the tactical steps to apply to, enroll in, and gain financial aid to attend a match college**
3. **Develop the non-cognitive skills, academic behaviors, and mindsets of successful college students.**

In Year Three, teachers continue to support their cohort of students via intensive, remote coaching to ensure that students demonstrate the academic, financial and social indicators of success in the critical first year of college, while identifying the resources and developing the networks that will support them through to college graduation.

Our Results

To date, 87 percent of OneGoal's high school graduates have enrolled in college.
Of the OneGoal students who enroll,

83 percent are persisting in college or have graduated with a college degree.

Our Reach

In the upcoming 2014-2015 academic year, OneGoal will be serving nearly 4,000 Fellows in more than 70 schools across Chicago, Houston and early partnerships in New York. Our reach will double by the 2016-2017 academic year, when we plan to serve nearly 8,000 Fellows in approximately 130 schools across Chicago, Houston, New York, and two additional regions (yet to be determined).

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