



Making Sense of the Evidence: A Review of Dropout Prevention Strategies

Shanan L. Chappell, Ph.D., Old Dominion University

DARDEN COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION
THE CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL
PARTNERSHIPS

Extensive research has focused on the dropout crisis over the past few decades.

- Dropout rates vary by source, however:
 - Many researchers agree rate = 30%
 - U.S. Secretary of Education declares rate = 20%
 - Reported rates are averages, with many districts having much higher rates
- Overall, about one-third of students do not graduate on time

The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropout report (2006) expanded on what we already knew about the dropout crisis.

- About 1 million kids drop out each year
- Nearly half of all African American, Hispanic, and Native Americans do not graduate
- Reported spectrum of reasons why students dropout and strategies for keeping kids in school
- Reported implications for dropping out

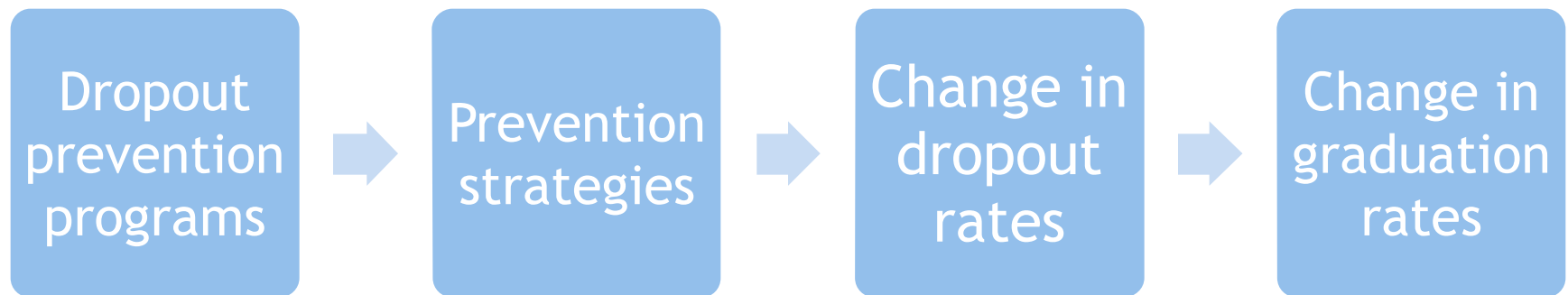
The meta-analytic technique allows us to compile results from existing studies to compare and contrast findings and identify patterns of results.

- Technique originated in medical field
- Adopted by social sciences in 1970's

How is what we're doing different?

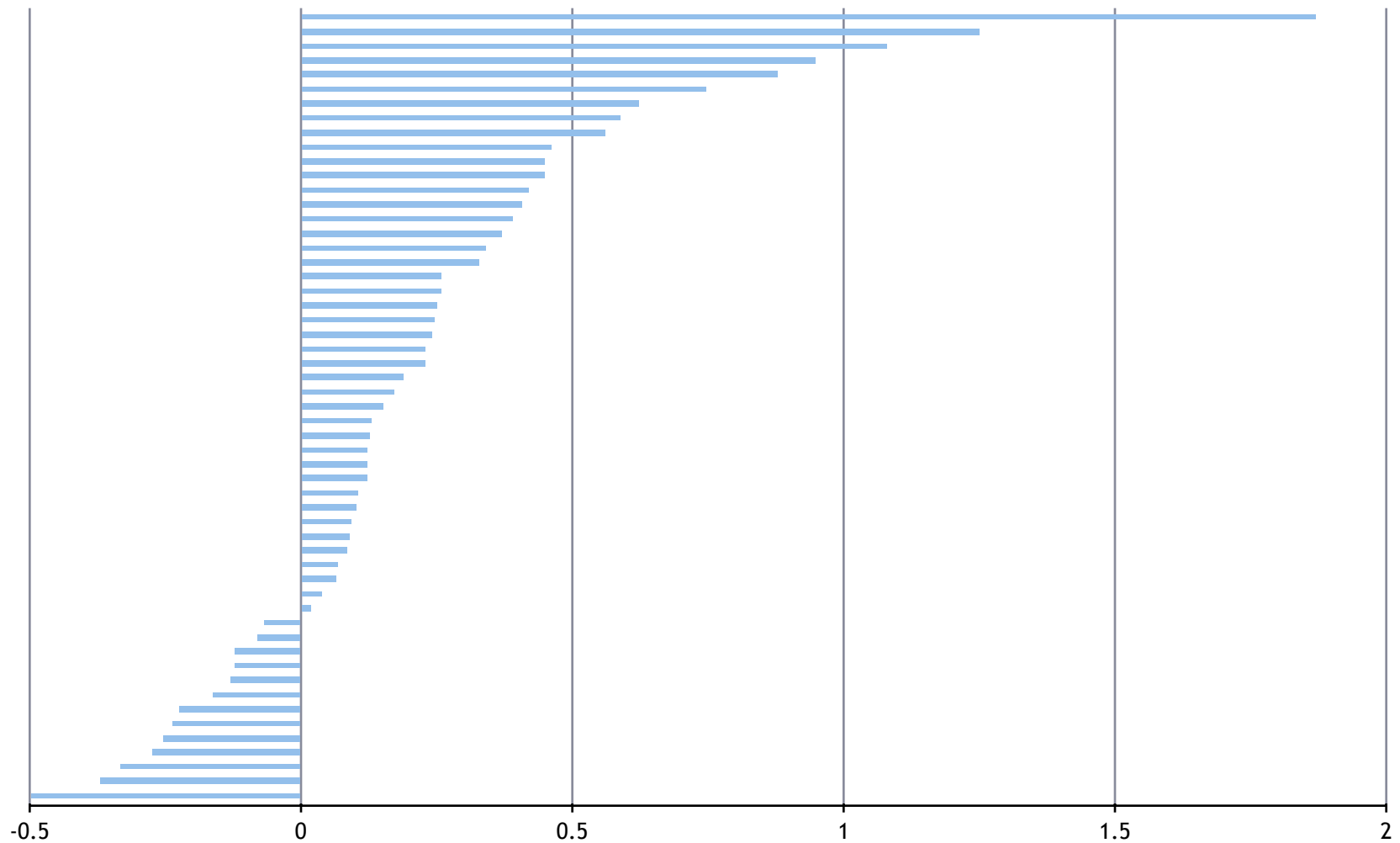
- Some meta-analyses or systematic reviews do exist
- Overall effect on dropout rates, graduation rates, *and* prevention strategies

Our purpose was to examine the impact of programs overall and of particular prevention strategies.

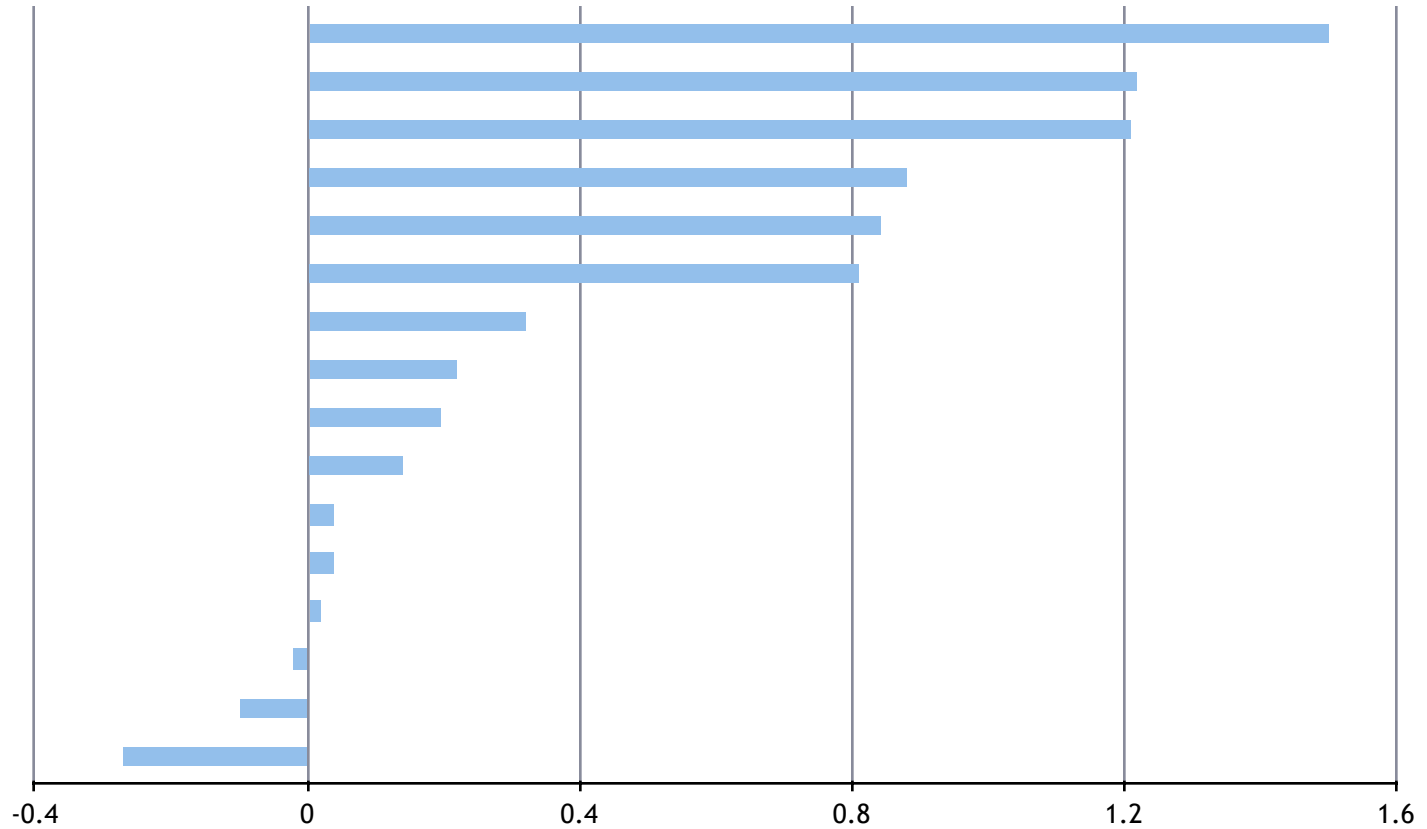


Meta-analyses report results in a standardized measure called an effect size.

- Standardized mean difference
- Negative or positive
- Interpretation varies widely



Effect sizes of the 55 studies included in dropout rate analysis, reported largest to smallest in magnitude.



Effect sizes of the 16 studies included in graduation rate analysis, reported largest to smallest in magnitude.

Overall effects of the included programs on dropout and graduation rates were positive and statistically significant.

- ***Dropout Rate***

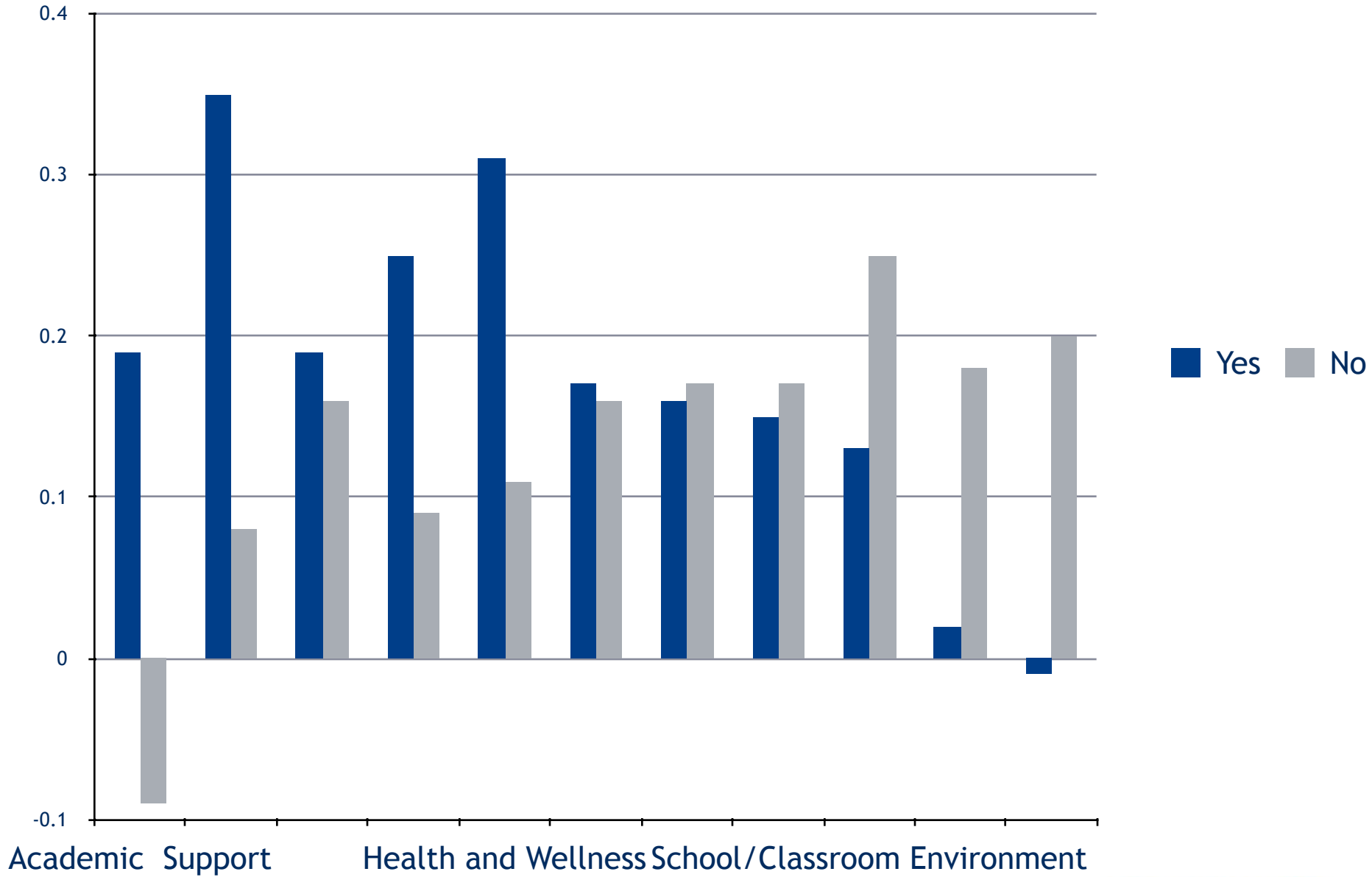
- Effect size = .16
- Sample size = 37,065
 - 20,142 treatment
 - 16,923 comparison

- ***Graduation Rate***

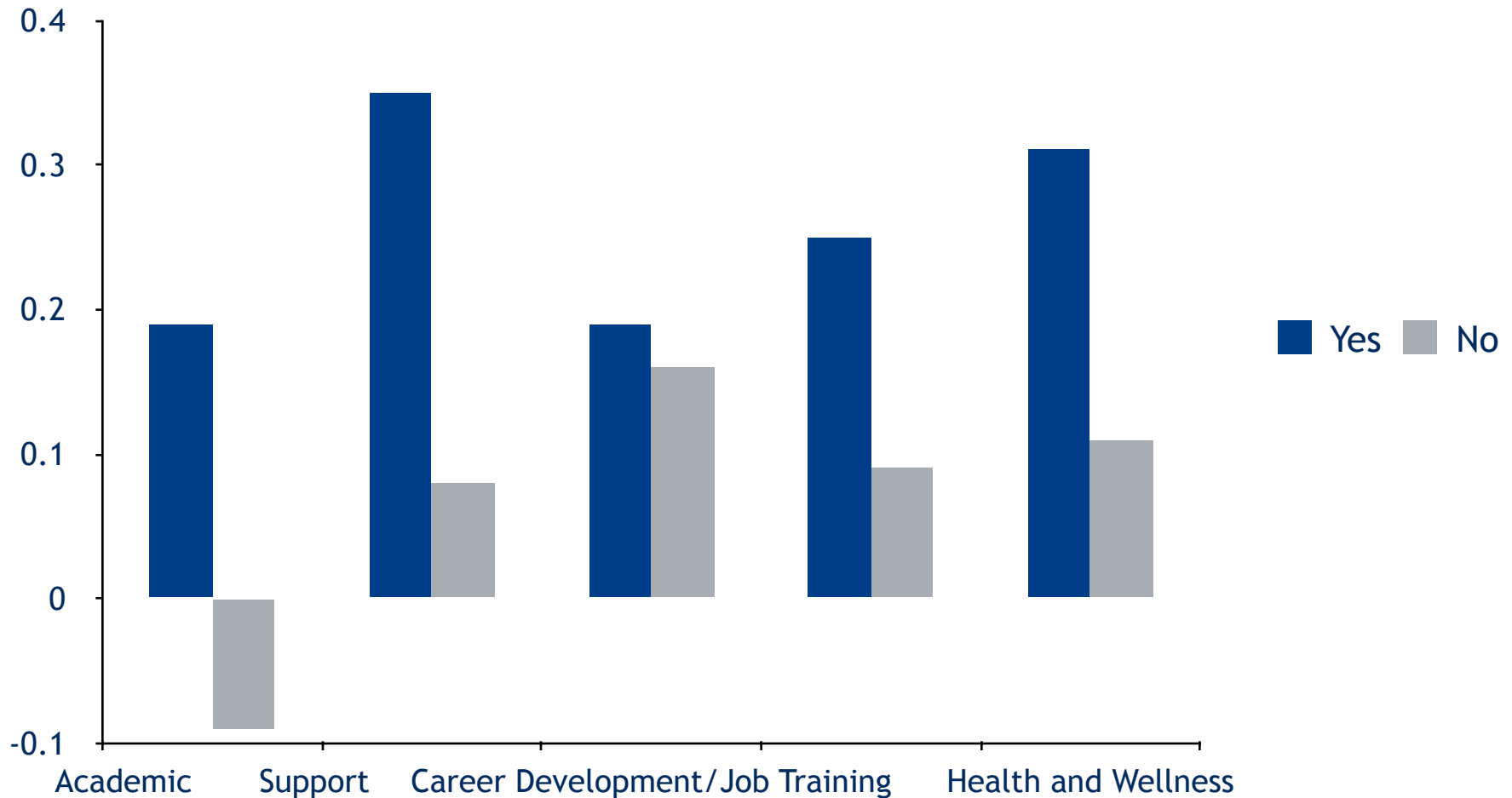
- Effect size = .43
- Sample size = 8,501
 - 5,765 treatment
 - 2,736 comparison

We included twelve prevention strategies in our analyses.

- Academic Support
- Afterschool
- Behavioral Intervention
- Career Development and Job Training
- Family Engagement
- Health and Wellness
- Life Skills Development
- Literacy Development
- Mentoring
- School/Classroom Environment
- Service-Learning
- Work-Based Learning



Five prevention strategies emerged as impactful on dropout rates.



In the context of high school reform efforts for at-risk populations, our findings indicate that excellent progress is being made.

- Progress is even more pronounced when particular strategies are employed within a program:
 - Behavioral interventions
 - Health and wellness
 - Family engagement
 - Academic support
 - Career development/job training

What is next for this project?

- Extending findings to schools to assist with practical, real-time solutions
- Providing evidence to decision-makers for those strategies that can effectively and feasibly improve student outcomes
- Assisting schools sustain the positive outcomes experienced but also expand those results on a large scale

Sources

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