Join the Dots: schools, universities and student transitions

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The Brilliant Club works with schools and universities across the UK. We mobilise the PhD community to support students who are less advantaged to access the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there.

- **800 Schools**
- **40 Partner universities**
- **15,000 Pupils across the UK**
The Brilliant Club

- Family of supporters
- Parent Power
- Join the Dots
- Shared transitions
- University learning experience
- The Scholars Programme
- Make Your Mark
- Boosting attainment
Why JTD

Right now, students from the least advantaged backgrounds have a 1 in 50 chance of accessing the most competitive universities, compared to 1 in 4 of the most advantaged.

This disadvantage doesn’t disappear when they enter university.

This affects an individual beyond their time at university and impacts society as a whole.

Disadvantaged students are therefore 18 times more likely to miss out on life-changing higher education.

Disadvantaged students are 3 times more likely to miss out on a 1st or 2:1 grade at university.

Graduates from the most competitive universities are more likely to access professional careers and have higher rates of life satisfaction. On average, they will earn £10,000 more than their peers.

We believe it is fundamentally unfair that a young person should miss out on these opportunities simply because of their background.
Co-creation and student voice

Student Voice: The Experience
Experts Panel

- Importance of support with study skills
- Need to normalise feelings of imposter syndrome through relatable mentors
Building on the evidence base

• We reviewed the research literature on the most important factors for student success (=university retention and degree outcomes)

• Academic self-efficacy (confidence in ability to succeed academically) consistently emerges as top predictor of attainment and retention in HE

• Use of effective study strategies is important for attainment and students told us they would like support with this

• Sense of belonging in HE is important for attainment and retention and can be improved through intervention
Join the Dots - Theory of Change

Mission
The Brilliant Club’s Join the Dots programme supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds during the transition from school to university.

Inputs
- Connection between school and university
- Community of first-year students
- Coaching from trained PhD researcher

Activities
- Study strategy sessions
  - Students develop key academic study strategies
  - Coaches provide feedback and support for first university assignments
- Peer group and one-to-one coaching
  - Students set personal and academic goals for their first term at university
  - Opportunity to connect with other students from similar backgrounds at their university

Outputs
- Students build networks with peers
- Students are supported to independently reflect on academic progress

Outcomes
- Academic outcomes: Improvements in:
  - University self-efficacy
  - Using academic study strategies
- Social outcomes: Improved sense of belonging in higher education

Impact
- Continuation into second year of university
- Improved attainment
Pilot overview

- Connections
- Communities
- Coaching

- July
  - School 1:1
- Results Day
- September
  - School university check-in
  - Launch event
- October
  - Peer group
  - 1:1 coaching
- November
  - Peer group
- December
  - School university check-in
- January
  - Peer group
Evaluation approach

Intermediate outcomes
- Sense of belonging
- Academic self-efficacy
- Study strategy use

Long-term outcomes
- Second year continuation
- Degree completion
- Degree outcomes

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<tr>
<th>October 2022</th>
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A statistically significant increase in academic self-efficacy and increase in study strategy use and sense of belonging.
Consistently positive qualitative feedback

- “The programme has helped me understand what it means to be an independent learner and my coach has given great assistance and feedback to my coursework” – **KCL student**

- “It’s great to have a mentor to widen your support system” – **Royal Holloway student**

- “Join the Dots have been very helpful when I got started at Kings because when I am in doubt they have always replied back to my emails and their sessions have also been useful” – **KCL student**

- “Since joining the programme, I have gotten a lot of support from my tutor, and I have improved in terms of preparing for my assessments” – **Southampton student**

- “The support I have received from my coach has been quite helpful, they have helped me with the layout of how I am supposed to write a uni assignment.” – **Kingston student**
Lessons learnt

• Student communication and attrition
• Teacher capacity
• What is 'success' and messaging to coaches
• Focus group feedback:
  • Students wanted clarity on which elements were compulsory
  • Different students valued different aspects – e.g. 1:1 or group sessions
• Thinking about what is success, e.g. attendance v student decisions
Year 2

Feb-April
- Confirming Participation
- Uni prep
- Study skills sessions
- In-school /college resources

May-July
- Student-teacher 1:1

Results Day
- Student-PhD coach intro session

September
- Launch event

October
- University peer group session

November
- University coach-teacher check-in

December
- Student-PhD coach-teacher check-in

January
- University peer group session

Student-PhD Coach 1:1
Thank you
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