

Financing Systems of Integrated Student Support

Budgets are tightening. Federal stimulus funds are receding and the pressures of inflation are impacting school budgets. Many schools and districts are looking carefully at which programs and partnerships to develop, maintain, and fund.

Recent years have seen rapid growth in the number of schools supporting students' well-being so that they are ready to learn and engage in school.¹ One area of significant [growth](#) is in evidence-based approaches to [integrated student support](#).

Systems of integrated support create efficiencies by building on existing capacity including current personnel, programs, processes, teams, data collection, technology systems, and school-community partnerships. When implemented consistent with best practices, they help to [improve](#) student engagement, learning, and life chances. Implementing and sustaining evidence-based systems of integrated student support can be a challenge for districts. Implementation may require funds for purposes such as hiring a school coordinator, repurposing and training current student support staff, accessing technology, or collecting and analyzing data.

This brief summarizes financing strategies currently used in districts and communities across the country as federal stimulus funds ebb and funding sources are shifting. Your community may have additional flexibility to use these and other sources of funding to sustain or advance systems of integrated student support.



FUNDS AVAILABLE TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

FEDERAL FUNDS FEDERAL FORMULA FUNDS

TITLE I

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I, Part A directs appropriated funds to be used to help disadvantaged students meet academic standards. Schools fall into one of two models, which dictate the ways in which Title I funds can be used: (1) "School-wide" in settings where 40 percent or more students are economically disadvantaged, funds can be used to support a comprehensive system devoted to helping the whole child, including "community school coordinators."² These schools can consolidate other federal education grants with Title I to gain spending flexibility.³ (2) "Targeted Assistance" in schools where funds can be used only to provide supplemental services to students identified as at risk. Schools may fund the capacity to offer health, nutrition, and other social services in partnership with community agencies if certain conditions are met.⁴



TITLE IV

The federal government has continued to increase Title IV funds in recent fiscal years, bringing new potential to the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEG) issued under Title IV, Part A. These funds can be used to address three broad areas: providing students with a well-rounded education, supporting safe and healthy students, and supporting the effective use of technology.⁵ Title IV funds can finance school coordinators who assist in one of these three core areas by helping to connect students to health, mental health, nutrition, and afterschool programs.

FEDERAL GRANTS

School districts may be able to capitalize on grants focused on school improvement strategies, student support, safe and supportive schools, school violence prevention, health,

behavioral health, student or family engagement, extended learning, or other programs designed to address the holistic needs of students so that they are ready to learn.

FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (FSCS)

Full-Service Community Schools grants have increased significantly in recent years, giving schools more opportunities to address a range of student and family needs by designing and implementing integrated student support.⁶ The US DOE has approved two types of applications: those that use an evidence-based approach to integrated student support to catalyze action in all four FSCS “pillars,” (integrated support, collaborative leadership, family engagement, and extended learning time), and those that rely on integrated student support as one part of a broader approach to implementation.

BIPARTISAN SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT (BSCA)

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act provides federal grant funding to state educational agencies.⁷ State education agencies award these funds, under various grant names, on a competitive basis to local education agencies. Focused on providing more opportunities for students to access vital health and mental health resources, these funds can be used to increase the number of school-based counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals.

EXAMPLE

As federal COVID relief funds come to an end, districts have been looking to sustainable methods of funding for student support. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in Washington state has established the Stronger Connections Grant program, awarding \$15 million from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to fund a range of supports including hiring mental health specialists, addressing chronic absenteeism, and professional development on resilience.⁸ In one district, these funds will be used to hire coordinators for each school who can implement Multi-Tiered System of Support action plans and create a system of support from community partners, integrating comprehensive supports.⁹ These funds will also be used to support existing school staff through professional development centered around students’ academic, social-emotional, mental health, and behavioral needs.



SCHOOL-BASED MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act also makes it easier for schools to obtain direct Medicaid reimbursement for services provided to students. States are creating regulations and applying for federal grants that will allow for schools to enhance their coordination of health, mental health, and social services resources for students. Direct services that may be reimbursable include mental health and behavioral health services, nursing, health screenings, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, dental assessments, preventative and rehabilitative services, applied behavioral analysis, and personal care.¹⁰ Local education agencies can receive direct reimbursement for services that are considered medically necessary. States are also providing technical assistance for local education agencies to help enhance the use of School-Based Medicaid reimbursement.



COMMUNITY MEDICAID FUNDS

There are two types of community Medicaid funds that may be available. First, for districts and states engaging under traditional Medicaid reimbursement rules, districts may continue to negotiate with the local city or town for funds sent by Medicaid to a city or town for services received by students who have an Individualized Education Plan, or other eligible community-based services, such as food assistance or mental health resources.¹¹ Second, nonprofit hospitals are required to conduct community health needs assessments and to invest in initiatives and develop strategies to address areas of need in their community.¹² Municipalities and school districts may be able to work with a local nonprofit hospital to secure these Community Benefit funds for integrated support programs and personnel to address students' health and well-being.



EXAMPLE:

Districts often employ a combination of strategies. Under the auspices of the mayor and the superintendent of schools, one small city undertook a community wide campaign to improve students' opportunities and achievement. The school district invited existing student support personnel such as existing school counselors, school adjustment counselors, and social workers to apply for (social worker) positions in the same bargaining unit and at the same contractual level that included a coordinating function, using funds from the general education budget. They elected to partner with an evidence-based integrated student support program to coach coordinators in each school and worked with the mayor and superintendent to negotiate with a local medical center for Community Benefit funds to support the program. The mayor shepherded approval of the allocation of Community Benefit funds through the City Council, and in subsequent years, included the evidence-based integrated student support program in its general budget.

ADVANCING WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE IN EDUCATION (AWARE)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is issuing grants to states, health facilities, and public or private non-profit entities developing a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services.¹³ Recipients are to build collaborative partnerships with key state agencies, local education agencies, community-based providers of behavioral health care services, school personnel, community organizations, families, and school-aged youth.¹⁴ The goal is for recipients to increase students' access to mental health awareness, prevention, intervention, and behavioral health services.



STATE FUNDS

STATE GRANTS

Although there is variability state to state, many states are providing funding for specific approaches to integrated student support. For example, California has invested \$4 billion over seven years in Community School Partnerships to establish new or expand upon existing community schools.¹⁵ In Virginia, the state allocated \$10 million for grants to support the development and implementation of initiatives with an integrated student support framework, with Communities in Schools being named as an eligible recipient. In Indiana, a combination of state and federal funds have been used to establish City Connects Midwest Technical Assistance Center at Marian University and support City Connects implementation in schools.¹⁶ Minnesota has dedicated \$5 million to implement the BARR model over 3 years, which will go to 18 schools. \$4.9 million in West Virginia has been committed to implement Communities In Schools and hire site coordinators.¹⁷



MUNICIPAL FUNDS

SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANTS

Social Services Block Grants from the federal government flow to states and territories to tailor programming to the needs of vulnerable groups in their communities. States distribute funds to local entities such as counties, cities, and towns. Local municipalities can use grants for child protection and case management,¹⁸ and this may include a school coordinator who works to connect children to necessary resources and services.¹⁹

LOCAL REVENUE

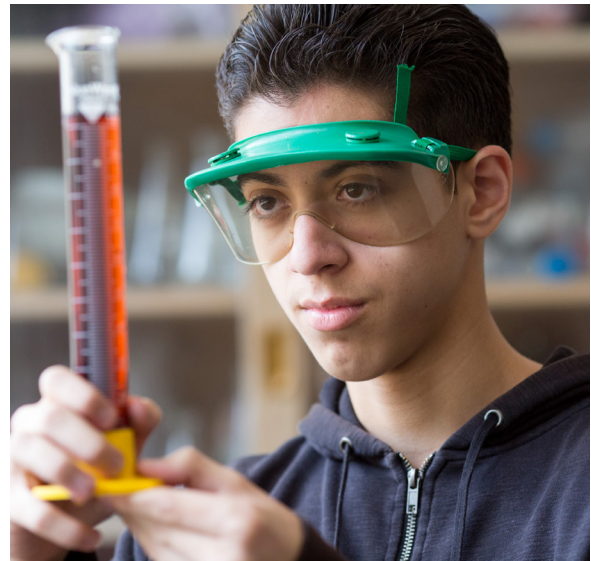
According to the Forum for Youth Investment, fourteen states have raised local revenue dedicated to improved services for children and youth.²⁰ Taking the form of income, prop-

erty, or sales taxes, or budget-set-asides, these funds can enhance community capacity to meet children’s comprehensive needs, particularly in an era when town and city budgets are impacted by Covid relief funds coming to an end.²¹

PHILANTHROPIC FUNDS

CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

Many local corporations invest in their communities and schools, particularly in support of children and families, and where a compelling business case for investment can be made. District and municipal leaders can work with local corporate funders to provide the financial backing needed to support school coordinators.



PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIC FUNDERS

Organizations like the United Way and private philanthropic foundations can be willing and effective partners in funding integrated student support programs and personnel.

CONCLUSION

Securing and sustaining funding is an ongoing task, but because integrated student support has compelling evidence of positive impacts, there is a strong case for investment and proven ability to generate support for implementation. High quality integrated student support is demonstrated to help produce:

- Higher academic achievement²²
- Improved attendance, effort, and engagement in school²³
- Reduced dropout rates later on in high school²⁴; and
- Better social-emotional outcomes.²⁵

For more on integrated student support, please go [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#),

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