THE WHOLE CHILD: BUILDING SYSTEMS OF INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT DURING AND AFTER COVID-19

AN ACTION GUIDE

BOSTON COLLEGE
Lynch School of Education
and Human Development

MARY E. WALSH CENTER
FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

Though the lives of students, families, and school staff have been upended by COVID-19 and its countless effects, the power of families, schools, and communities to support and cultivate the healthy development of our children and youth remains unchanged. The real question is how to best support students to grow and learn during a time of upheaval, when schooling may be in-person or online, and children and their families are dealing with new and ever-changing challenges.

The mission to more effectively and comprehensively support all students is more salient now than ever. There is urgency as more students face hunger, homelessness, depression, anxiety, job losses, and traumatic events, such as the death of a caregiver or abuse. There is urgency as the life of every student has been profoundly altered by the pandemic. This action guide honors the urgent and passionate drive to respond to the rapidly changing needs of students and families, and the ways that schools pivoted in the midst of closures to make food and technology resources available to students.

This guide also draws on the sciences of child development and learning, and field-tested, evidence-based approaches to "wrap-around" student support to offer practical steps to build a more resilient school community, and more resilient students, through development of a system of integrated student support.

Integrated student support is a "whole child" approach that addresses students' strengths and needs across all developmental domains, such as academics, social-emotional-behavioral, physical health, wellbeing and family. It leverages the resources available in schools and the surrounding community to connect the right set of resources, supports, and opportunities with the right student and family at the right time.[1]

This may include:
- Conducting universal student screening
- Taking a comprehensive "whole child" approach designed to support student learning
- Customizing sets of supports and opportunities for each student and their family
- Coordinating across school, family, and community
- Ensuring a system is integrated into the daily functioning of a school designed to understand and review student needs, identify resources, ensure delivery, enable ongoing responsiveness, and use data to inform follow up and improvement.

Here, at the Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development, we and our partners in schools and districts around the country developed an approach to integrated student support called City Connects. This model is the nation's most rigorously evaluated and effective approach to integrated student support, and demonstrates that when a system is well implemented, it can result in life-long benefits to students. Evidence shows that students make significant academic and social-emotional gains, transforming their access to opportunities and life-long trajectories.[2]
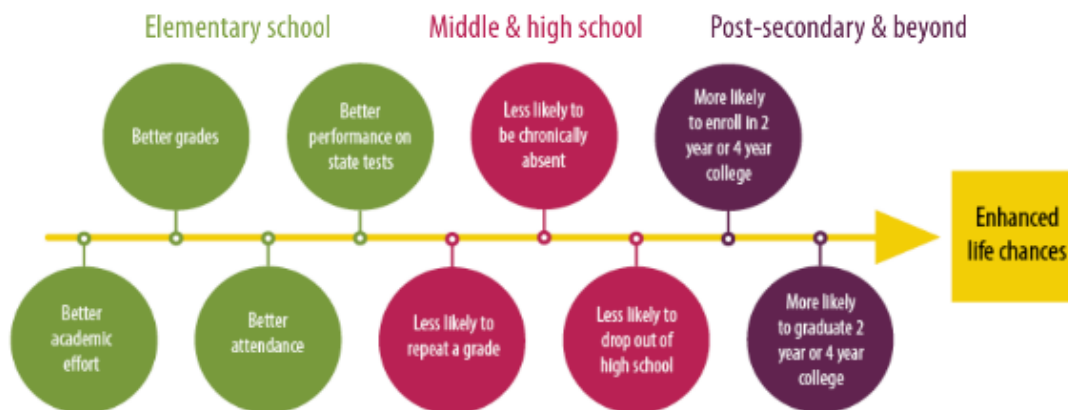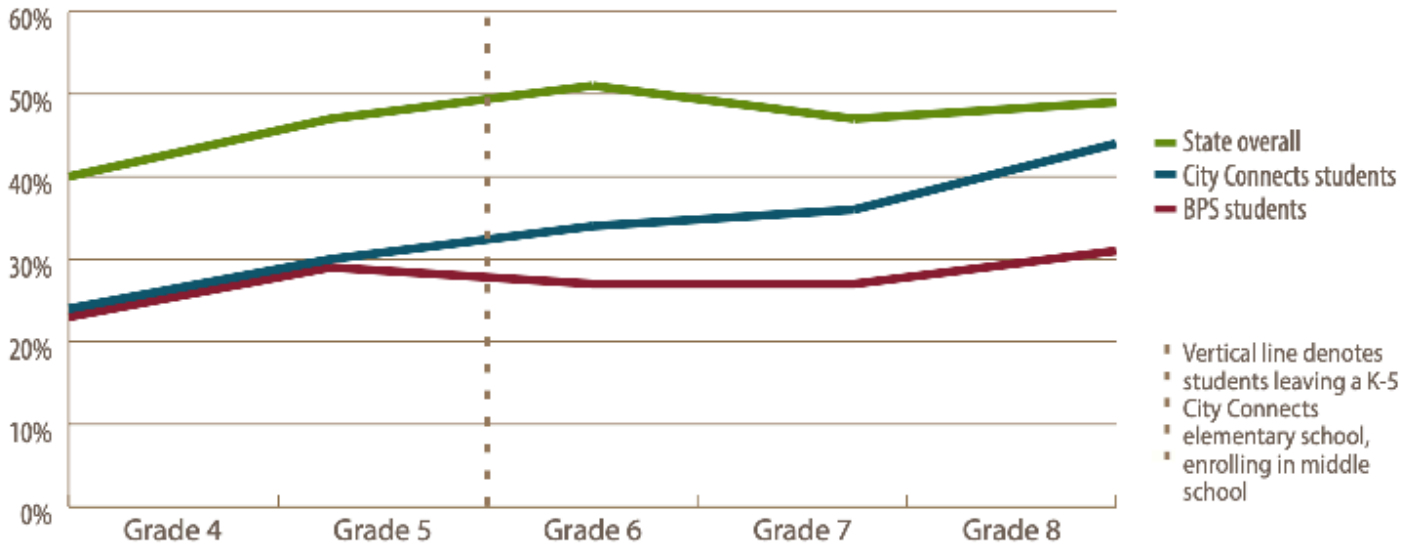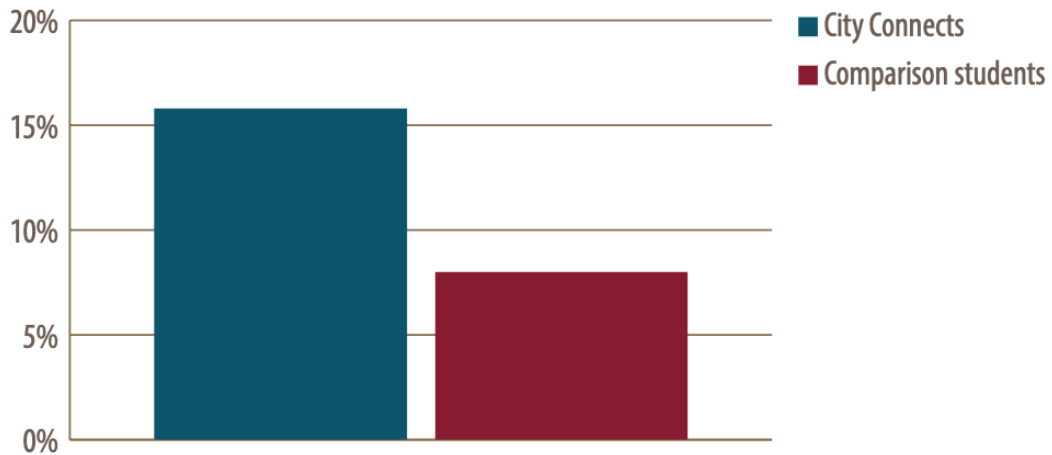

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Percentage of students at or above proficiency, Massachusetts statewide test, math

Legend:
- State overall
- City Connects students
- BPS students

Vertical line denotes students leaving a K-5 City Connects elementary school, enrolling in middle school

X-axis: Grade 4, Grade 5, Grade 6, Grade 7, Grade 8
Y-axis: 0% to 60%

Percentage of students who dropout from high school

Legend:
- City Connects
- Comparison students

Proportions adjusted for demographic student characteristics. Comparison N=19,979, City Connects N=2,265

This action guide captures some of the practical "how to" insights garnered by City Connects, and others in the field, to inform practitioners interested in establishing a more comprehensive and systematic approach to supporting students. Although these materials are no substitute for an established, evidence-based model, they can guide practitioners towards a more effective approach that better meets the challenges of this moment. As schools shift between in-person and virtual learning, a system of integrated student support can enable resiliency during the Covid era by:

- Ensuring the school has a good understanding of each individual student's strengths and needs across multiple developmental domains
- Establishing positive and supportive relationships with each family
- Identifying available resources
- Knowing the service providers, both inside and outside of school, engaged in supporting each student
- Strengthening families' capacity to support their children's wellbeing and learning
- Creating a tracking system for coordination and follow up

We begin with a look at how schools are responding to student and family needs during Covid-related school closures, interim steps some are taking towards building a system of integrated student support, and a developmental self-assessment to map out progress towards best practices.
We then provide sections offering information and guidance on:

Setting the stage for a system of support:
- Introducing systems of integrated student support
- The impact of integrated student support on outcomes
- The return on investment of City Connects

Structures and staffing:
- Defining a school coordinator
- Financing systems of integrated student support
- Selecting technology for systems of integrated student support

Processes:
- Reviewing every student

Community agency-based resources:
- Analyzing the resource landscape
- Working with community partners

Record keeping:
- Using data to inform practice

TABLE OF CONTENTS

When schools were suddenly closed due to the pandemic, they rushed to adapt and innovate in order to continue to serve students and families. Administrators cut through the bureaucratic red tape in order to help staff distribute meals, creating grab-and-go pick up sites, sending buses into neighborhoods for localized distribution, helping families with special circumstances obtain food delivery, and expanding eligibility to any family with a child, whether or not they were previously enrolled in a free or reduced meal program. They pivoted to distribute technology devices and hot spots to students in need, corral corporate and philanthropic donations, negotiate access to wifi, and supply prepaid cellphones to students without other means to access instruction. They focused on re-establishing social connections between students, peers, and staff.

Just as COVID revealed the myriad ways that schools support students so that they can be ready to learn, in many cases, it also revealed the challenges of conducting student support in the absence of a systematic and comprehensive approach. Like never before, COVID highlighted the role of family context and its relationship to learning, and the vulnerability of every student to disruptions like job loss, food insecurity, and evictions which can have profound effects on engagement in school.

This Action Guide is intended to inform the development of a more systematic and comprehensive approach to student support, with the goal of intentionally transforming existing structures, processes, staff, and data collection into a more effective and sustainable system of integrated support.

Ultimately, a system of integrated student support should reflect the following principles of effective practice.

• Customized: tailored to individual strengths and needs of each student;
• Comprehensive: account for multiple developmental domains and offer support at varying levels of intensity;
• Coordinated: organized and aligned across all contexts (e.g., home, school, and community);
• Continuous: plans are adapted based on new information and evolving needs; and
• Data-informed: centralizing data collection to inform implementation and evaluation.

There are many ways in which schools, supported by districts, can move towards effective practices. Recognizing this trajectory, we include a self-assessment tool to help guide implementation and set a course for improvement over time. This tool is in use in the field, but not yet validated; we anticipate that we will improve and revise it. For now, the contents of this Action Guide can help to answer some of your questions along the way.

The following school self-assessment tool is a resource to identify school-level strengths and needs for the purpose of implementing an effective system of Integrated Student Support (ISS).

Use this self-assessment tool to:
1. **Inform**: Your team will determine your school's areas of strength in delivering integrated student supports, as well as areas for targeted improvement;
2. **Guide action:** Your team will identify specific sub-standards (or discrete actions) aligned with evidence-based practices* developed and/or improved to advance an ISS system;
3. **Continuously improve:** Your team will regularly examine its ISS system to better understand where progress has been made, to what extent, and how it can be sustained.

Instructions for completion:
1. **Complete this self-assessment section-by-section:** The tool is designed to guide you through the process of developing an ISS system from start to finish. Certain standards (like "1: Setting the Stage") are best addressed early in the process and foundational to others (like "3: Processes").
2. **Read each aim statement carefully:** Each section begins with an aim statement that summarizes what "excelling" in that standard looks like. Use this to guide how you rate your school across each sub-standard and determine goals and actions.
3. **Indicate your school's performance on each sub-standard:** Each sub-standard is assessed along the following four-item scale, although definitions may take on different meanings based on unique contexts and goals:
    1. *Exploring*: The sub-standard has been considered and discussed, but no action has been taken to move work forward, *OR* the sub-standard has not yet been considered;
    2. *Emerging*: The sub-standard has been discussed and sporadic action has occurred, but actions are not universal or part of a larger strategy to develop an ISS system;
    3. *Embedded*: The sub-standard is included as part of a larger plan or effort to develop an ISS system, and key stakeholders understand and take action on it consistently;
    4. *Excelling*: The sub-standard is fully integrated into a schoolwide ISS plan, meaning it is universally understood, communicated to key stakeholders, supported through professional development, and monitored for progress.
4. **Use the Glossary:** Many of the terms used in this self-assessment require additional explanation and clarity. Any terms with an asterisk are defined in the Glossary at the end of the document.

Finally, although this self-assessment is structured in a step-by-step fashion, please remember that developing an ISS system is rarely a linear process. Action to address specific sub-standards is often iterative and ongoing. It will likely be necessary to revisit areas for improvement or helpful to jump to specific areas of strength where progress can be more easily made in implementing your ISS plan.

Standard 1: Setting the Stage

Aim: An integrated and holistic approach* to student support is established and communicated.

Sub-standards		Exploring	Emerging	Embedded	Excelling
1.1	Consensus has been built among the faculty, staff, and school-wide community regarding the importance of an integrated and holistic approach to support for students.				
1.2	Consensus has been built among the faculty, staff, and school-wide community that support will address ALL students and target multiple developmental domains.				
1.3	The approach to student support is explicitly aligned with the school's equity goals.				
1.4	Following consensus-building (standards 1.1 and 1.2), the approach to student support has been communicated to all staff, families/caregivers, and community partners.				

Standard 2: Structure & Staffing

Aim: The school establishes a new--or repositions a current--team structure* for convening a group of appropriate staff members to implement an integrated and holistic approach to student support.

Sub-standards		Exploring	Emerging	Embedded	Excelling
2.1	The school has built on an existing team structure to align and fully integrate student support with effective school-level practices.				
2.2	Team members (both permanent and ad hoc) have been identified, including a team lead/coordinator. Roles and responsibilities have been explicitly defined.				
2.3	Meeting agenda/objectives, location, and schedule have been established.				
2.4	School leadership has ensured team members' schedules and job responsibilities align with integrated student support activities.				
2.5	The school has identified multiple developmental domains relevant to its students for review during integrated student support meetings.				
2.6	The team reviews data on ALL students and multiple developmental domains, ensuring a comprehensive and holistic approach to student support.				

Standard 3: Processes

Aim: Using the defined team structure and a formalized system*, the school (1) gathers data relevant to the identified developmental domains; (2) has a defined protocol for conducting integrated support meetings to identify student strengths and areas of need across domains, resulting in an individualized student support plan; and (3) develops a process for following up on the implementation of identified student supports.

Sub-standards		Exploring	Emerging	Embedded	Excelling
3.1	The school uses formalized tools* and systems for **gathering data and information**:				
3.11	• To identify all students' strengths and needs across identified developmental domains				
3.12	• To analyze data and engage multiple perspectives in order to determine the root causes* of needs				
3.13	• To distinguish the level of risk* experienced by each student across identified developmental domains				
3.2	The school uses a formalized system for **conducting integrated student support meetings**:				
3.21	• To identify the strengths and address the differing levels of needs* of all individual students across identified developmental domains				
3.22	• To develop an individualized student support plan* to bolster strengths and address needs for each and every student				
3.23	• To ensure that the individualized plan connects students to appropriate enrichment, prevention, intervention, and intensive services across identified developmental domains				
3.24	• To ensure that the individualized plan is communicated to appropriate school-based staff and students' families/caregivers				

3.3	The school uses a formalized system for **following up on plan implementation**:				
3.31	• To ensure that service delivery is implemented				
3.32	• To evaluate whether the individual plans result in the desired improvement(s) in identified developmental domains				
3.33	• To respond to developmental and circumstantial changes for each student over time and modify plans, as needed				
3.34	• To share information with teachers, relevant staff, and families/caretakers				
3.4	School leaders/administrators have a formalized system for monitoring the objectives of the team responsible for implementing integrated student support.				
3.5	The school provides professional development for all relevant school personnel in order to improve the quality of integrated student support implementation over time, in conjunction with regular supervision and training.				

Standard 4: School- & Community Agency-Based Resources

Aim: The school has a formalized system for identifying and engaging with school- and community agency-based resources that support individual student strengths and needs across identified developmental domains. The school develops and maintains a centralized and accessible list of resources.

Sub-standards		Exploring	Emerging	Embedded	Excelling
4.1	The school has identified and categorized enrichment, prevention, intervention, and intensive services* in identified developmental domains available in the school.				
4.2	The school has identified and categorized enrichment, prevention, intervention, and intensive services in identified developmental domains available in the community and/or online.				
4.3	The school has established a referral process to connect students with appropriate school- and community-based services.				
4.4	The school has established a clear and permanent point of contact to collaborate and coordinate with service providers in the school and in the community.				

Standard 5: Record Keeping

Aim: The school establishes processes and identifies tools for tracking service referrals and delivery on an agreed-upon schedule, with specific tasks assigned to relevant school personnel.

Sub-standards		Exploring	Emerging	Embedded	Excelling
5.1	The school uses a formalized tool for organizing available services.				
5.2	The school uses a formalized system and tool for assigning and tracking service referrals.				
5.3	The school uses a formalized system and tool for tracking service delivery.				
5.4	The school uses a formalized system and tool for following up on service delivery.				

Appendix/Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition/Explanation
Developmental domains	Specific aspects of growth and change that students experience, including (but not limited to): academic; social-emotional; behavioral; physical health; well-being; college and career readiness; family.[1]
Evidence-based practice	Practice grounded in scientific discoveries that has been evaluated using a rigorous design with demonstrated outcomes.
Formalized system	A defined set of steps and procedures to follow, with assigned roles and responsibilities, used to ensure uniformity in the completion of a specified task. For example, a protocol/list of steps and requirements for collecting data, or an agenda/protocol for analyzing student data and progressing through an ISS meeting. These approaches are used to inform system-building throughout the school.
Formalized tool	Means by which to organize information that allows for efficient storage of, access to, sharing and use of information that ensures uniformity in the ways in which information and data are collected and stored—and integrated student support is executed. These tools may include agreed-upon databases, lists, storage systems (e.g., pencil and paper, Excel spreadsheet, database, contracted a third party) that are located in a specific place.
Individualized student support plan	A plan for each student based on enhancing individual strengths and addressing individual needs. The plan tailors resources to the student's unique strengths and needs, and identifies timeframes and benchmarks for follow-up at specific intervals, using specific procedures.[2]
Integrated and holistic approach to integrated student support	An "integrated" approach refers to a set of structures and processes inside schools designed to address the out-of-school factors that affect students' ability to learn and thrive in school .[3] A "holistic," or

[1] Ford & Lerner, 1992; Lerner, 2005; Rutter, 2007; Sameroff, 2009; Walsh et al., 2014
[2] Adapted from the City Connects Practice Manual.
[3] Brabeck & Walsh, 2003; Moore & Emig, 2014; Walsh & Backe, 2013; Walsh & DePaul, 2008

An asterisk (*) indicates a term that is defined in the Glossary, at the end of this document.
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	comprehensive, approach to student support is aimed at promoting academic success by meeting the needs of the *whole child* .[4]
Integrated student support	A set of structures and processes inside schools designed to address the out-of-school factors that affect students' ability to learn and thrive in school.[1] Integrated student support is systemic when this set of structures and processes are clearly defined, communicated, and continuously evaluated and improved upon based on need.
Levels of risk/need (of a given student)	Children experience risks and strengths along a continuum of intensity, requiring varying levels of support.[5] District teams/schools should define the levels of risk or "tiers" that best meet the district or school's goals for student support. The following[6] is a suggested continuum of risk—and therefore need—for an individual student: • *Minimal risk:* Student demonstrates strengths in any developmental domain and little or no risk in any developmental domain • *Mild risk:* Student demonstrates strengths in any developmental domain and mild risk in one or more developmental domains • *Moderate risk:* Student demonstrates strengths in any developmental domain and moderate risk in one or more developmental domains • *Severe risk:* Student demonstrates strengths in any developmental domain and severe risk in one or more developmental domains or severe risk in one or more developmental domains
Prevention, enrichment, intervention, and intensive services	District teams/schools should define service intensity levels that best meet the district or school's current practices, as well as students 'identified strengths and needs. The following[7] is a suggested continuum: • *Prevention & Enrichment*: Supports intended to promote strengths and/or prevent challenges to healthy development ○ E.g., art/music/drama; sports/physical activity; before- & after-school; summer programs; health & wellness

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[4] Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Centers for Disease Control, 2016; National Research Council, 2002
[5] Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000; Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013
[6] Adapted from the City Connects Practice Manual.
[7] Adapted from the City Connects Practice Manual.

	• *Intervention*: Supports for intervening to address moderate challenges soon after onset
	  ○ E.g., mentoring; tutoring; small social skills groups; behavior plan; family outreach (support and assistance); health assessments
	• *Intensive*: Supports that assist with chronic and/or severe challenges
	  ○ E.g., medical/health services; counseling; violence intervention; special education or other evaluation; family stabilization

Professional learning community of educators	A group of educators who share common challenges and goals, and who come together to study and learn from the field and one another.
Root causes	Most critical developmental factors underlying and contributing to an observed behavior/need. Identifying root causes is grounded in uncovering *why* a student has an apparent need and appropriately addressing it.
Student Support Team (SST)	A team of professionals inside a school who convene to address the needs of students experiencing significant risk and who advance practices in the school to support students' holistic development.
Team structure	A team within a school with consistent membership and roles, that meets or confers regularly (e.g., Student Support Team (SST)*, grade level teams, academic intervention team, instructional leadership team, etc.).

To educate every student to their potential, a system of integrated student support engages teachers, families, school staff and communities to provide a network of support for each child.

WHAT IS INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT?

Integrated student support is a school-based approach to "promoting students' academic success by developing or securing and coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement."[1] They support student learning and thriving by addressing the changes that students experience inside and outside of school.

WHY INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT?

1. STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL IMPACT THEIR READINESS TO LEARN AND ENGAGE IN SCHOOL.

Poverty, adversity, trauma, anxiety, homelessness, health and mental health needs can interfere with a child's ability to concentrate, remember information, organize school work, exercise self-control, build positive relationships with peers or adults, or develop the skills needed to demonstrate academic and social-emotional progress.[2] In short, these "non-academic" factors have a big influence on student learning.

Decades of research demonstrate that out-of-school factors can explain two-thirds of the variation in student achievement.[3] Building a system of integrated student support allows schools to address the out-of-school factors so that students are ready to learn and engage in school.

2. PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT IMPROVES STUDENTS' ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

Over the last 20 years, scientists and educators have been testing out approaches to addressing students' comprehensive needs, and learning what works. Child Trends conducted a review of integrated student support approaches across the country. Compiling results from nineteen evaluation studies, they found that when implemented with quality, there were positive results in attendance, grades, test scores, graduation, and GPAs.[4] The strongest evidence is from models demonstrating that when children get supports that are (1) customized, (2) comprehensive, (3) coordinated and (4) continuous, they can thrive and learn at high standards. Findings include decreasing the dropout rate, reducing chronic absenteeism, enhancing academic performance, and narrowing achievement gaps.[5]

HOW DOES INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT WORK?

Each student has their own unique set of strengths and needs that may help or hinder their learning. Integrated student support strives to gain comprehensive understandings of each individual student's strengths and needs across all developmental domains such as academic, social-emotional, health, and family, and evaluate the level of support each student needs. Multiple sources of inputs, including teachers, caregivers, community providers, and students facilitate developing comprehensive understandings of each student's strengths and needs, and determining the type and level of supports that may be helpful for each individual student. Based on a comprehensive review of each student, a coordinator or a student support team connects each student to an individualized set of resources. The coordinator or the team follows up to ensure students and families are accessing school- or community-based services. In integrated student support, this process is part of the functioning of the school, allowing the school to monitor each student's progress, respond to changes for each child over time, and periodically evaluate implementation and impact. During school closures related to Covid-19, these processes can be conducted remotely by combining formal information gathering, like surveys, with a systematic way for teachers and others to convey concerns and observations for collaborative decision making about how best to support a student and their family.

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INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS ARE "A SCHOOL-BASED APPROACH TO PROMOTING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS BY DEVELOPING OR SECURING AND COORDINATING SUPPORTS THAT TARGET ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC BARRIERS TO ACHIEVEMENT."[1] EMERGING EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SELECT APPROACHES TO INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT AND BENEFICIAL STUDENT OUTCOMES.[2]

HIGHER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- Students who received effective integrated student support during elementary school demonstrate improved academic achievement, measured by report card grades and standardized test scores. [3] [4]
- Students experiencing effective integrated student support in elementary school demonstrate long term benefits. By the 8th grade students closed half of the achievement gap in English and two-thirds of the achievement gap in Math relative to the Massachusetts state average, an internationally competitive standard. Ninth grade students in a comprehensive, strength-based, individualized intervention approach demonstrated significantly higher reading and math skills, compared to students in the control group. [5]
- First generation immigrant students and students learning English experiencing effective integrated student support performed better in both English and Math relative to their peers. [6]
- A national research review found that integrated student support can contribute to increases in math achievement, reading and English Language Arts achievement, and overall GPA. [7] [8]
- Approaches that tailor supports and enrichments to meet the needs of individual students are most strongly correlated with positive academic outcomes. [9]
- Ninth grade students in an effective integrated student support approach earned significantly more total core credits, and were more likely to pass all of their core courses. The impacts were especially strong for students of color, male students, and students from low-income families. [10]

REDUCED DROPOUT RATES

- Students who received effective integrated student support during elementary school were almost half as likely to dropout during high school than their peers who did not. [11] [12]
- Among students receiving individualized, intensive services, 99% remained in school and 93% were promoted or graduated. [13]

IMPROVED ATTENDANCE, EFFORT, ENGAGEMENT

- Rates of chronic absenteeism for students who received effective integrated student support during elementary school were significantly lower during middle- and high-school. [14]
- Students who participated in elementary school integrated student support had significantly fewer school absences in grades 4-12 (except grade 7). [15]
- Elementary school students receiving effective student support achieved higher teacher ratings of academic effort than students who did not. [16]
- Comprehensive and integrated supports are shown to diminish stressors and address non-academic barriers to achievement. [17]
- Emerging evidence from multiple integrated student support studies shows that integrated supports are associated with improved attendance, greater credit completion, and lower high school dropout rates. [18]
- Students who received a comprehensive, strength-based, individualized intervention demonstrate better engagement in classrooms, compared to students in the control group. [19]

INCREASED SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

- Teachers report having a better understanding of students' out-of-school lives when integrated student support is implemented in a school. [20]
- Teachers feel more supported when integrated student support is in place. [21]

BETTER SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

- Students who received integrated student support had more positive attitudes about school and better relationships with adults and peers. [22]
- Students in a comprehensive, strength-based, individualized intervention group perceived their teachers as more supportive, compared to students in the control group. [23]
- Students who received integrated student support were more likely to believe their teachers have high expectations for their performance, provide clear guidelines, and encourage them to be successful. [24]

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THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT OF CITY CONNECTS

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The Center for Benefit Cost Studies of Education at Columbia University's Teachers College has analyzed the return on investment of the City Connects system of integrated student support by comparing benefits to costs.

Including the cost of implementing City Connects and the costs of the comprehensive services to which children and families get connected - such as food, clothing, after school programs, medical care, mental health counseling, and family services - researchers found that it produces $3 in benefits for every $1 invested across all sectors. This means that if City Connects were widely implemented, existing investments in children and families could be producing triple the benefits.

CITY CONNECTS & COSTS OF SERVICES

$1
$3

● DOLLARS INVESTED
● DOLLARS RETURNED
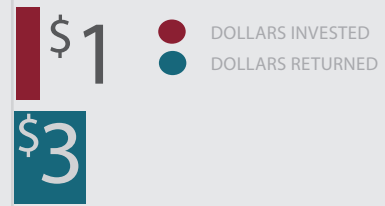
The same study found that comparing the cost of City Connects implementation alone to the benefits it generates, society accrues $11 for every $1 invested in City Connects.

CITY CONNECTS COSTS

$1
$11

● DOLLARS INVESTED
● DOLLARS RETURNED
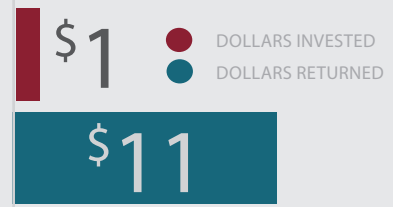
A follow up study sought to understand the relationship between what traditional schools spend on student support to produce current outcomes and how that compares to the cost and benefits of implementing City Connects' system of integrated student support. The small marginal cost of implementing City Connects yields approximately $24 in benefits for every additional dollar invested.

MARGINAL COST OF CITY CONNECTS

$1
$24

● DOLLARS INVESTED
● DOLLARS RETURNED
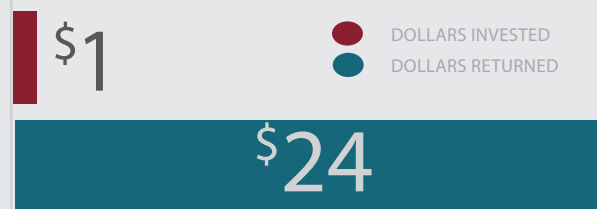
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DEFINING A SCHOOL COORDINATOR

BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

WHAT IS A SCHOOL COORDINATOR?

A student's experience and success in school is influenced by many factors beyond the school walls—such as nutrition, health, safety at home and in the neighborhood, and access to enriching experiences in the school and community. School coordinators are dedicated to addressing these factors as a core function of the school. They are typically responsible for facilitating the collaboration of schools, families, and community partners in support of students. Across the nation, formal and informal approaches to integrating comprehensive supports for students use coordinators; however their roles, credentials, and job functions can vary considerably.[1]

Research points to the importance of having a coordinator who is:

- based at the school;
- highly integrated into the functioning of the school; and
- credentialed as a licensed school counselor, social worker, or mental health counselor. [i]

These criteria are linked to improving the developmental context within which children are growing and learning; creating a functioning system of student support that honors student and family privacy; and allowing schools, in partnership with community organizations, to respond well to a range of student needs. [ii]

WHAT DOES A SCHOOL COORDINATOR DO?

A school coordinator functions similarly to a traditional school counselor or school social worker. Frequent collaboration with teachers, administrators, families, students, and community organizations is a core function. Research has identified the elements of student support that have positive impacts on student outcomes. These elements point to the importance of school coordinators:

- Creating personalized plans that tailor supports and opportunities to each individual student's needs; [2]
- Developing the plan in close consultation with teachers, families, and others who know the child well; [3]
- Establishing a systematic way to create plans that respond to students' changing needs and circumstances; [4]
- Using data to track service utilization, inform plan revisions, understand student outcomes, and catalyze or improve whole school programs focused on the non-instructional needs of students;
- In some cases, using data to help school and municipal leaders identify and respond to gaps in services.

What does a school coordinator not do?

In order to establish positive and trusting relationships with students and families, a school coordinator does not act as a disciplinarian or regular substitute teacher. To provide support for every child in a school, coordinators frequently focus less on individual counseling with students than on connecting students with appropriate mental and behavioral health providers. Among other services and enrichment opportunities.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

Structuring a coordinator role should account for the broader needs of the school and district, address union considerations, and seek alignment with the standards of professional organizations such as the American School Counselors' Association.

A typical job description for a school coordinator integrating comprehensive student supports includes the following core responsibilities:

- Support school personnel in assessing, understanding, and responding to students' social-emotional-behavioral developmental needs
- Serve as a member of any school-based team(s) addressing social-emotional learning, trauma response, school climate and culture.
- Establish and lead a Student Support team and process in the school that identifies and responds to the strengths and unique developmental needs and challenges of each and every child in the school.
- Provide direct services to students, e.g. social skills groups.
- Engage families and caregivers in understanding the ways in which academic outcomes are enhanced by serving the social / emotional and personal development needs of the child.
- Collaborate and coordinate with school and district leadership team(s) and teachers to review and monitor aggregate data on student academic performance as well as non-academic indicators, and work collaboratively to align needs with existing school programs and/or new interventions.
- Connect students to a range of prevention, early intervention, and intensive supports that address the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development of each student.
- Develop and enhance community partnerships with community agencies to meet the identified, and varying needs of students, families, and the school.
- Collect data on implementation of student support and the delivery of services.

Recommended Qualifications:

- Master's degree in School Counseling, Social Work, or Mental Health Counseling
- License in one of the following: School Counseling, Pupil Adjustment Counseling, Social Work, OR Mental Health Counseling
- Experience working in a school environment
- Ability to work collaboratively with a diverse staff, a diverse student body and families, as well as a team of professionals at the school
- Excellent oral and written communication and organization skills.
- Ability to perform and multi-task in a highly energized work environment.

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In many schools, developing a system of integrated student support is a process of building on existing capacity including current personnel, programs, processes, teams, data collection, technology systems, and school-community partnerships. Developing these strengths into a functioning system of support for students may also require funds from a limited budget for purposes such as hiring a school coordinator, repurposing and training current student support staff, implementing technology, or data collection and analysis.

Schools with effective systems of integrated student support are able to utilize school coordinators, or personnel in similar roles, as hubs for coordinating information, programs, and resources to meet students' "non-academic" needs so that they can be ready to learn and engage in school. Their efforts can be facilitated by technology and the use of data. Communities across the country are putting school coordinators and technology systems in place, and using various strategies to support them. This brief summarizes financing strategies in use in districts and communities across the country both during- and pre-Covid. Your state or locality may have additional flexibility to use these and other sources of funding to advance systems of integrated student support.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

GENERAL FUNDS

Districts may use existing staff currently supported by general funds. School coordinator functions are aligned with the standards of professional associations such as the American Association of School Counselors. Districts can, if union contracts permit, invite existing student support staff to apply for student support positions that include a coordinating function.

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) "Schoolwide" 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."[1] These schools can consolidate other federal education grants with Title I to gain spending flexibility.[2] (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.[3]

TITLE IV

The federal government tripled Title IV funds in FY18, bringing new possibilities 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.[4] 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.

STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS

School districts may be able to capitalize on grants focused on school improvement strategies, student support, safe and supportive schools, health, student or family engagement, or other programs designed to address the non-instructional needs of students so that they are ready to learn.

EXAMPLES:
Upon receiving $111 million in federal coronavirus relief aid for the state's school districts, Connecticut distributed $99.9 million to schools based on federal Title I grants allocated for low income students. The state's education department plans to expedite the approval process for districts' proposed uses of federal funding which can include efforts to expand access to technology and connectivity devices, professional development for teachers, hiring social workers to support students, and other student support measures.

In one large, high-poverty city, the superintendent initially used general education funds to add school coordinators to eight low-performing elementary schools. As school improvements were demonstrated, the superintendent incrementally added positions in new schools and recently secured $1 million in additional funding from a corporate foundation.

SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANTS

Social services block grants allow states and territories to tailor programming to the needs of vulnerable groups in their communities. Grants can be used for child protection and case management,[5] and could by extension be used to finance a school coordinator who works to connect children to necessary resources and services.[6]

COMMUNITY MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT

Medicaid reimbursements, typically reimbursing a city or town for services funded by the general education budget in support of students who have an Individualized Education Plan, may also be used to expand health-related services and to facilitate outreach and coordination of community-based services, such as food assistance or mental health resources.[7]

LOCAL HOSPITAL PARTNERSHIP

Through the Affordable Care Act, 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.[8] Municipalities and school districts may be able to work with a local nonprofit hospital to secure these Community Benefit funds in support of school coordinators, who help to address students' health and wellbeing.

LOCAL REVENUE

According to the Forum for Youth Investment, over 30 local communities in nine states have raised local revenue dedicated to improved services for children and youth. Taking the form of income, property, 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 closures.[9]

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 program to support school 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 is budgeting for and raising philanthropic funds for subsequent years.

PHILANTHROPY

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 other private philanthropic foundations can be a reliable and effective way to fund school coordinators. Integrated student supports have been shown to increase test scores, increase attendance, and decrease dropout rates.[10] Impressive results like these demonstrate to philanthropic partners that their money will have a positive impact on students in their community.

EXAMPLES:

The California Community Foundation launched the Covid-19 LA County Response Fund which directs funding in the region to support community needs. The funding priorities range from mitigating impacts of school closures, to helping housing providers respond to the needs of homeless residents, providing aid to hospitals and health clinics, supporting low-wage immigrant workers, and offering assistance to nonprofit partners to enable continued services.

One city's strategic operating plan made a commitment to address educational equity and achievement by improving student support in schools. Together, the city, the public schools, and local philanthropic foundations created a Partnership for Student Success to fulfill this commitment. The local philanthropies made a joint commitment to support the work of school-based coordinators to help students, schools, and families.

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Technology tools can play a vital role in an effective system of integrated student support. The right tools enable staff working with students to gather, organize, track, and share information. Since each community has distinct views about the use and sharing of data, as well as existing technology systems, the information below should be adapted to local context. Technology that is thoughtfully implemented will enable staff to craft plans that are responsive to individual students, efficiently leverage resources in schools and the community, ensure feedback and follow up, and allow for data-informed decision making. The right tools can help enable a customized and comprehensive approach to student support for each and every child. They can also provide school and community leaders with aggregate information that is useful for supporting students and families more broadly.

PURPOSES OF TECHNOLOGY FOR INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

Serving students and families:

While respecting district privacy policies and state and federal law, staff such as school-based coordinators can develop a more complete understanding of each student by centralizing information already collected by the school, in-cluding quantitative data such as test scores and attendance rates and qualitative data such as knowledge and insights that teachers, families, and others may have. Developing a comprehensive understanding of every student is a prereq-uisite to developing responsive, tailored plans to optimize each child's readiness to learn and engage in school. As discussed in more detail in Reviewing Every Student, plans should be:

- comprehensive and address all domains of development;
- designed to cultivate student strengths as well as address needs;
- reflective of the intensity of need or risk that the student may be experiencing in any domain.
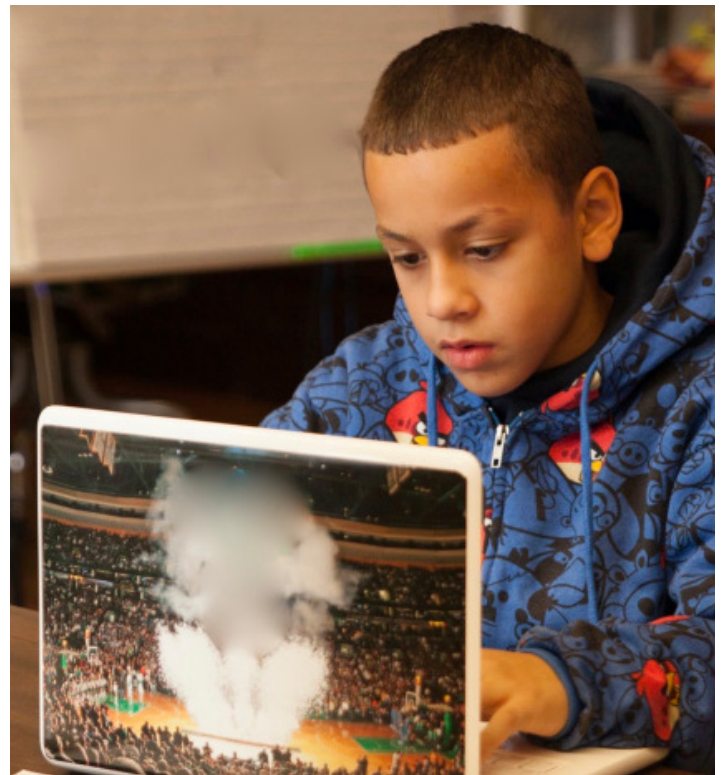
Technology to support an integrated and comprehensive approach to student support would:
- allow access to relevant child-level data already collected such as school records on academic performance and attendance;
- allow appropriate sharing of formal assessments, screeners, and qualitative and observational student-level information supporting a holistic review of students;
- provide a template for the creation of individualized student support plans;
- rapidly identify school-, community-, and web-based resources relevant to student and family needs;
- track service availability and utilization;
- provide for ongoing review to ensure that services are delivered and that plans change in response to students' needs over time; and
- accumulate data to inform school-based decision-making.

Informing school and community leaders:
In the aggregate, information about student strengths, needs, and services delivered or not delivered can be valu-able to school, district, and community leaders.

As a real-time source of information about students and families, aggregated data can be used to identify trends, resource gaps, and improve the distribution of resources and services in a manner that is aligned with demand. For example, school staff may notice that a large number of students would benefit from a drama club, and create one; or school coordinators may notice an increase in homelessness in a section of the district, spurring school leaders to seek partnerships with agencies serving homeless and housing-insecure families to respond.

Data can also be used to guide implementation and evaluate impacts. Incorporating process benchmarks that are designed to assess the quality of implementation allows for continuous progress and improvement. As noted in Using Data to Inform Practice, examples of process benchmarks include:
- percentage of individual students reviewed
- percentage of students with a personalized plan
- number of services referred and delivered
- number of services provided
- number of agency partners
- number of agency partners delivering individualized services
- level of satisfaction with implementation

Outcome benchmarks, designed to determine expected long-term changes across all domains of student and school development, may also be reviewed using appropriate data. Examples of outcome benchmarks include:
- attendance
- report card grades
- teacher rating of effort
- social emotional development metrics
- statewide test scores on reading and math
- Youth Risk Behavior indicators
- school climate indicators
- percent retained in grade
- dropout rates
- number and type of disciplinary incidents.

These data can assist school personnel in understanding opportunities to improve implementation of an approach to integrated student support, respond to current and changing student needs, more closely align decision-making with demand, serve as an accountability measure, and track outcomes for children, youth, and families over time. For more information see Using Data to Inform Practice.

A practical starting point:
Technology plays a valuable role in facilitating effective and efficient integrated student support practices. Here, discussion is limited to outlining components of a robust system and recommending a high-leverage, pragmatic starting point in the absence of a more ambitious technology infrastructure.

If development and utilization of a complete technology infrastructure is not possible in the near term, school leaders may choose to begin with two pragmatic and high-value targets for change: establishing a centralized way to create individualized student support plans and centralizing information about available resources.

Individualized support plans should be informed by both formal and informal sources of information. Formal sources might include student records, assessments, and health forms; informal sources might include observations by teachers and other adults in the school. Even simple and common technology tools can aid in bringing this information together for the purposes of helping staff to create individualized student support plans. For more, see Reviewing Every Student.

Contributing to the disconnect between children in need and resources and programs available, many schools lack easy access to relevant, updated information about community-based programs and services. In some cases, communities are creating local documents or databases for general use. This is especially true during the Covid era, when service providers and resources are shifting frequently.

School staff, like school-based coordinators, may capitalize on existing resources and databases, such as 211, to identify areas where there may be gaps. This can also ensure that schools in rural areas with less access to comprehensive supports identify and connect with all possible resources and services. For more on identifying resources, see Analyzing the Resource Landscape.

A MORE ROBUST SYSTEM

Many technologies currently in use in schools have add-on capabilities that can be capitalized on to create a more robust technology infrastructure for student support. Alternatively, new systems can be adopted or extended. Considerations when selecting technology to support implementation of a system of integrated student support include:

- Ease of use: How intuitive is the system and what are the "start-up" costs required for training users?
- Security and privacy: Does the system align with district and school data security policies?
- Collaboration: Who are the anticipated users of the technology system and does the system allow for collaboration? Can limitations on users be restricted to protect sensitive student information?
- Ability to update over time: Does the system allow a team of users to easily update and share information over time? What about across school years? Can it support transitions?

ADDRESSING STUDENT PRIVACY

Implicit in the development and use of technology tools to enable a system of integrated student support are questions related to student privacy. As with any technology related to education, the decisions regarding data collection and access must be made in the context of local governing laws, policies, and attitudes. For integrated student support, approaches range from intentionally hiring licensed social workers or school counselors as coordinators, in part because they are trained to responsibly manage confidential student and family information, to seeking parent or guardian permission to allow electronic information exchange about specific students between service providers inside and outside of schools.

When determining the nature of collection and sharing of student data, schools should consider:
- Leveled access to different data
- Who will have the ability to edit and add data
    - Teachers and staff who interact with the student
    - Administrators
    - Community partners
    - Parents and families
- FERPA, COPPA and district specific privacy policies

CONCLUSION

Technology that enables data collection, organization, and analysis in ways that are aligned with existing school technology, culture, and needs can help to support implementation of effective systems of integrated student support that benefit the whole child.

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The Center for Thriving Children advances science, implementation, and innovation to promote healthy child and youth development, learning, and thriving.

BOSTON COLLEGE
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MARY E. WALSH CENTER
FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

REVIEWING EVERY STUDENT

BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

Conducting a comprehensive review of every student in a school is an effective practice with a strong theoretical foundation. Evidence demonstrates that it is an important component of effective integrated student support, which includes "developing or securing and coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement."[1] Integrated student support builds on decades of scholarship from diverse fields that emphasize the importance of systemic, comprehensive approaches to student support aimed at meeting the needs of the "whole child."[2] The economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic mean greater numbers of families and students are experiencing new or magnified stressors, making comprehensive and universal review of each student even more critical. Across the nation, approaches to "wrap-around," "comprehensive services," "full service schools," "community schools," "Promise Neighborhoods," or "collective impact," are pursuing this aim.

This brief will describe the science, evidence, and best practices related to universal comprehensive review of students, and provide an example of one way a school or district might choose to organize information from these reviews.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCE

DEVELOPMENT OCCURS ACROSS DOMAINS. Child development takes place across multiple areas—including academic, social-emotional, health, and family, with each domain impacting all the others.[3]

STRENGTHS AND RISKS CO-ACT. There is a delicate dialogue between risks and strengths, where a child's protective resources such as positive relationships, talents, or interests may or may not help to mitigate the impacts of risk factors like deprivation, abuse, or anxiety. The presence of risk factors does not necessarily lead to a negative outcome because of the co-action of a child's protective factors.[4]

INTENSITY MATTERS. Children experience difficulties and strengths along a continuum of intensity, requiring varying levels of sup-

DEVELOPMENT OCCURS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS. Children develop in multiple places, including their home, school, and community. All contexts play an important role in their development.[6]

DEVELOPMENT OCCURS OVER TIME. Positive and negative childhood experiences affect a student's success and adjustment during the elementary school years, which, in turn, affect behavior and learning during middle school, high school, and beyond.[7]

EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE. As a function of differing genetic and environmental circumstances, no two children experience the same developmental trajectory.[8]

DEVELOPMENT CAN BE CHANGED. Exposure to chronic adversity and trauma can lead to toxic stress, which can adversely impact children's brain development and diminish academic outcomes. In spite of these challenges, developmental science also recognizes the phenomenon of brain plasticity and the malleability of development, which makes it possible to intervene in the course of development.[9]

Researchers theorize that comprehensive resources and opportunities tailored to the developmental needs of each child enhance the brain's protective factors and reduce risk factors—leading to improved readiness to learn and thrive.[10] Universal comprehensive reviews allow a school to develop a response to changes in each student's needs and experiences at a point in time. These responses aim to prevent adverse developmental outcomes and foster resilience.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

The evidence of impact from integrated student support interventions reinforces this theoretical understanding. Three national research reviews – two by Child Trends and one by Johns Hopkins University – have found that the largest impacts on student outcomes are produced by City Connects, whose core practice includes comprehensive reviews and a tailored plan of resources and opportunities for every child.[11]

An evaluation of over 7,900 students published in the prestigious American Education Research Journal found that students who attended K-5 elementary schools served by City Connects in Boston experienced significant long-term gains. City Connects students, 86 percent of whom were from low-income families, outperformed comparison-school peers on report card scores in elementary school. After leaving the intervention, they demonstrated significantly higher scores on statewide English Language Arts and mathematics tests than peers who never experienced City Connects in elementary school.[12]

When followed into 12th grade, their high school dropout rate is cut by almost 50 percent.[13] Separate analyses have also found that these positive effects are occurring for African-American and Latino boys, two groups at especially high risk of dropout.[14] Additional subgroup analyses of elementary school test scores show significant benefits for immigrant students and students learning English.[15]

A high school intervention model, Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR), also creates individualized student plans and has evidence of effectiveness according to studies by American Institutes for Research. Compared with students who were not assigned to the intervention, BARR students earned more credits, scored higher on math and reading standardized test, and demonstrated higher rates in passing all courses.[16]

The BARR model has been proven to be effective in narrowing academic gaps for students of color and students from low-income families. In one study, after three years of BARR implementation, the failure rate among students of Hispanic origin showed a 50 percent reduction. In the second and third year of implementation, the failure rates of Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students were no longer significantly different.[17]

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Recent scholarship finds that because of the dynamic influences that poverty and other out-of-school factors can have on child development and readiness to learn, effective approaches to intervention must tailor to differences across children and across time. In short, one size can never fit all, and reviews of individual students that account for the comprehensive and complex nature of child development are needed. The developmental sciences and the evidence base point to the importance of reviews that are both customized and comprehensive.[18]

CUSTOMIZED

Individualized: Optimize each student's healthy development and readiness to learn.

Universal: Assess each student in a school.

COMPREHENSIVE

Whole Child: Assess both strengths and needs across all developmental domains – academic, social-emotional, health, and family.

Multi-tiered: Evaluate the intensity of support required in each domain – from preventive to intensive – which may differ for each child in each domain.

All schools review students individually in some way, often regarding academics, attendance, and other domains for a subset of students. Since students' readiness to learn and thrive is also impacted by developmental domains such as social-emotional, health, and family, understanding and responding to students' strengths and needs across these domains is key to enhancing academic outcomes. To gain a comprehensive understanding of every student's strengths and needs, schools can build on and expand the existing student review structure.

Part of a comprehensive review of each student can include an assessment of a child's global educational risk, sometimes captured in "tiers of risk" through approaches like a multi-tiered system of student support. Based on an individual student's strengths and needs, teachers and coordinators can place a student within a tier that most accurately reflects their perception of student risk across all of the developmental domains. One approach is to categorize risk along a continuum of little or no risk to mild or moderate risk to intensive risk in one or more areas.

CITY CONNECTS

These insights from the developmental sciences were operationalized by City Connects during a two-year co-design process that engaged researchers from Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development, educators from the Boston Public Schools, families, and community agencies.[19] The core practice that was developed has since been successfully adapted to 100 schools in 13 cities and six states. The practice is primarily implemented in PreK-Grade 8 settings.

Each fall, every teacher in a City Connects school meets with a master's-level City Connects coordinator, usually a social worker or school counselor, to discuss every child in their class. Together, the coordinator and teacher assess global educational risk for each student as a way to think holistically about the class and begin a more in-depth discussion of each student. Using questions and prompts informed by developmental science, the coordinator taps into the teacher's knowledge and observations regarding each student's strengths and needs across multiple domains of development (academic, social-emotional, health, and family).

Based on the profile of the child that emerges from the teacher's feedback and observations, and in consultation as needed with the family and school staff, every child then receives an individualized support plan detailing the tailored services, resources, and opportunities needed to optimize the child's readiness to learn. The coordinator is responsible for ensuring that each plan is implemented. To meet children's needs, City Connects establishes partnerships with community providers in order to access resources outside of the school. These partnerships collectively provide a range of prevention, early intervention, crisis intervention, and enrichment services.

THE BARR CENTER

Embodying these same scientific principles, the BARR Center provides schools with a comprehensive approach to meeting every student's needs across developmental domains, including academic, social, emotional, and physical development. The BARR model has been successfully implemented in more than 80 schools across 13 states and the District of Columbia, serving 9th grade students.[20]

Applying the "whole student" approach, educators in the BARR model identify every student's assets and challenges across academic, emotional, social, and physical domains. Ninth grade students are divided into cohorts with shared teaching teams for core subjects. Cohort teacher teams and BARR coordinators hold weekly meetings to discuss every student's assets, challenges, and academic progress. Using real-time student data, the cohort teacher teams agree upon interventions that individual students may need. The interventions' effectiveness is monitored in subsequent meetings. Students who constantly exhibit academic, attendance, or behavioral problems are referred to risk review teams, which include coordinators, school administrators, and other student support staff. The risk review teams identify additional supports for students at higher risks, and monitor their progress on an ongoing basis.[21]

Identify a comprehensive set of domains important to you. This may include domains such as academic-cognitive; social-emotional; peer relationships; social functioning; behavioral; physical health; wellbeing; college and career; and family. Identify individual student data that you are already generating, and which may be accessed to assist in conducting a comprehensive review of each student.

Create a process for conducting comprehensive reviews of every student that will build upon existing data and structures, and allow for a more complete picture of student strengths and needs to be understood and become actionable.

Below is an example of how a school could capture some pertinent information about an individual student's strengths and needs.

Name:	
Teachers:	
Grade:	

Academic	**Domain 2**
Strengths:	Strengths:
Needs:	Needs:
Support ideas:	Support ideas:
Domain 3	**Domain 4**
Strengths:	Strengths:
Needs:	Needs:
Support ideas:	Support ideas:
Domain 5	**Domain 6**
Strengths:	Strengths:
Needs:	Needs:
Support ideas:	Support ideas:

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Scholarship from diverse fields emphasizes the importance of systemic, comprehensive approaches to student support aimed at meeting the needs of the "whole child."[1] To be effective in helping every student learn and thrive, systems of support should match each student with resources and opportunities that meet their individual strengths and needs across developmental domains.[2] To better meet the diverse needs of students and provide opportunities, schools can develop partnerships with community-based organizations. Findings from the worlds of research and practice provide guidance on how best to analyze the resource landscape.

I. DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCE

Insights from developmental science help us better understand how schools can organize the available school and community resources that students need. These insights include:

DEVELOPMENT OCCURS ACROSS DOMAINS

Child development takes place across multiple domains – including academics, social-emotional well-being, health, family, career readiness, and many others. Each domain impacts all other domains.[3]

INTENSITY MATTERS
Children experience risks and strengths along a continuum of intensity, requiring varying levels of support.[4]

DEVELOPMENT IS DYNAMIC
As children grow over time, features of their world also change. The influence of contextual factors on development is dynamic, and continuous care that responds to these changes is important.[5]

II. THE ROLE OF RESOURCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Evidence-based integrated student support practices apply knowledge of these categories of domain and intensity to mapping the local resource ecosystem. Since child development takes place across multiple domains, school and community resources that support student development can be categorized based on the particular areas of strength and need they address. Though scholars and tools may define the developmental domains differently, effective student support practices will identify resources according to the domain they address.

In addition, because children experience difficulties and strengths along a continuum of intensity, the degree of support provided can be tailored to meet the intensity level of strengths and needs. Resources in both school and community settings provide different intensities of supports for students, such as enrichment, early intervention, and intensive intervention.

III. IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

Schools and districts vary widely in how well they are able to identify and organize information about resources available to address the needs of students and families. Moreover, many non-profits and service providers have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, making it difficult to keep track of closures and changes in service availability. Starting points for identifying programs and services include:

- Asking the district central office, school offices, city or town hall for lists of local resources they may have;
- Asking student support staff, and others, for lists or contacts they keep;
- 211.org, a state by state compilation of resources by type and geography created by local United Ways;
- Other local databases accessible to the public, such those maintained by cities, hospitals, large nonprofits; and
- On-line resources that can augment local services, such as on-line mentoring, tutoring, tele-health or mental health, or delivery of basic needs such as clothing, shoes, or toiletries.

IV. ORGANIZING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Schools and communities can organize information about resources available to students along several dimensions. These may be informed by science and/or practical considerations:

- Developmental domains: for example, academic, social-emotional-behavioral, peer-relations, health and wellbeing, family, and career readiness;
- Levels of student needs: such as enrichment/prevention, early intervention, and intensive or crisis intervention;
- Ages served: age range of children and youth best served by the program;
- Service provision location: whether they are school-, community-, or web-based programs and services;
- Provider location: the location of the provider and neighborhoods served;
- Transportation options: whether transportation is offered by the provider;
- Language resources: languages spoken by providers;
- Enrollment guidelines: whether there are open enrollment periods, waitlists, or other considerations;
- Eligibility and cost: whether services are covered by insurance, subsidized, and if so, for which eligible populations.

V. EXPANDING AND UTILIZING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Organizing information about school- and community-based resources in this manner sets the stage for the efficient and effective tailoring of supports and opportunities that are best designed to address students' strengths and needs at the appropriate intensity of intervention.

It also facilitates the identification of critical gaps, and allows for strategic outreach. To fill gaps in resources, school co-ordinators can help colleagues think creatively about existing school resources, establish new partnerships with community agencies, or find relevant resources online, such as virtual mentoring programs or non-profits that will ship for free needed clothing or school supplies. By using this type of resource analysis structure, schools create a strategic, balanced, thorough set of partners that can be leveraged to support students' healthy development and learning.

VI. ACTION STEPS

Identifying, organizing, and updating resource information can become time consuming tasks. Begin by asking some strategic questions, such as:

- Are there existing databases or lists maintained by other organizations that we can rely upon?
- Do we want to assume responsibility for creating and maintaining resource information at the district-level, school-level, or in collaboration with a third-party?
- What are the developmental domains and categories of service that matter most to our community?
- Who is best tasked with identifying and organizing resource information so that we are better able to meet the comprehensive needs of students so that they are ready to learn and engage in school?
- How will the information be stored? For example, will you use paper, an Excel spreadsheet, add a tab to your student information system, create a database, or contract with a third-party?

For more information about organizing resources and data see Selecting Technology for Systems of Integrated Student Support.

VERSION 1 – is useful to understand the extent to which the resources you know about are aligned with students' comprehensive needs. Consider whether two resources or service providers can be assigned to each box in this grid:

		Academics	Domain 1	Domain 2
School-based Programs	Prevention/Enrichment			
	Early Intervention			
	Intensive or Crisis			
Community-based Programs	Prevention/Enrichment			
	Early Intervention			
	Intensive or Crisis			

VERSION 2 – Create an Excel Spreadsheet that captures relevant domains, intensities of need, and organizational categories of interest. For example:

SERVICE PROVIDER	MAIN ADDRESS	SERVICES PROVIDED	SERVICE DELIVERY TYPE	SERVICE DELIVERY LOCATION	DOMAIN	LEVEL STUDENT NEED	TRANSPORTATION	LANGUAGES
Children's Place	456 Main Street, Anywhere, USA							
		Individual Counseling	Community-Based	123 Broad Street	Social-Emotional-Behavioral	Intensive Intervention	No	English; Spanish
		Social Skills Group	Community-Based	456 Main Street	Social-Emotional-Behavioral	Early Intervention	Yes	English
		In-Home Therapy	Community-Based	Various locations	Social-Emotional-Behavioral	Intensive Intervention	No	English; Spanish
XYZ Community Center	1234 South Street							
		Parenting Group	Community-Based	1234 South Street	Family	Early Intervention	Yes	English; Spanish; Chinese
		After School Program	Community-Based	1234 South Street	Academic	Enrichment/Prevention	Yes	English
		Basketball Club	Community-Based	100 Home Street	Health	Enrichment/Prevention	Yes	English
		Financial Counseling	Community-Based	1234 South Street	Family	Early Intervention	No	English; Spanish; Chinese
ABC University	100 Washington Road							
		Academic Tutoring	School-Based	789 Broad Street	Academic	Early Intervention	No	English
		Mentoring	School-Based	789 Broad Street	Social-Emotional-Behavioral	Early Intervention	No	English
		Wellness Group	School-Based	789 Broad Street	Health	Enrichment/Prevention	No	English

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WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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WHY WORK WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS?

The academic achievement gap in the United States persists. Up to two-thirds of this disparity is attributed to larger social structures, most notably poverty.[1] Principles of developmental science tell us that to enter school ready to access curriculum and instruction, children require holistic supports. However, access to resources to support "the whole child" is challenging for many schools, families, and urban, suburban, and rural communities.[2] The effects of resource disparities have drawn attention during the Covid-19 closures, as schools transitioned to online instruction requiring access to technology devices, internet services, and conditions conducive to online learning.

Creating partnerships with agencies and organizations in the surrounding community is one way that schools and districts can more comprehensively support students. These school-community partnerships provide a comprehensive array of supports and enrichment opportunities that can be tapped through a systematic approach to addressing out-of-school barriers that interfere with academic success and healthy development.[5] For instance, integrated student support has emerged as a systematic approach for matching students with a tailored student support plan, often through leveraging resources in the community.[6]

Although many schools already partner with community institutions in some capacity, most do not implement standardized practices for organizing and managing these partnerships. To support this critical work in the school context, practices schools can integrate into their existing infrastructure are offered below.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
Grounded in tenets of child development and practical knowledge from one evidence-based intervention, City Connects, six effective practices for referring students to community partner-provided services are presented below:

1. How to recognize student needs
2. How to collaborate with families/guardians
3. How to identify community partners
4. How to establish relationships
5. How to anticipate logistical barriers
6. How to appropriately follow-up on referrals

1. HOW TO RECOGNIZE STUDENT NEEDS

It is important to assess a student's holistic set of strengths and needs. One way schools can gather this information is to consult with multiple sources.
- Student. Student reports and behaviors can raise "red flags" and spark further investigation into student circumstances through consultation with other sources.
- Family. Family reports on difficulties their child is having at home often relate to their performance in school which may not be directly observable or that are not currently being addressed.
- Teachers. Teachers are a critical source of knowledge given their often consistent contact with parents regarding school and home concerns.
- Principal/school officials. School officials have important information about student crises that occur during the school day or during non-classroom times (e.g., lunch, hallways). They are also often aware of school-specific and broader trends that call attention to particular needs.
- School counselors. School counselors may be aware of needs for students who frequently check-in throughout the school day/week or take part in group or individual counseling. Further, through classroom observations or a guidance curriculum, school counselors may observe students struggling in class.
- Community partners. Community Partners working with students in or outside the school may notice student difficulties or strengths that could be further attended to.

For more information about recognizing student needs see Reviewing Every Student.

2. HOW TO COLLABORATE WITH FAMILIES/GUARDIANS

Family buy-in is essential for successful service provision, particularly for supports received outside of the school building.

- Build early relationships. Be proactive and discuss student strengths with families prior to reaching out with concerns.
- Consider an appropriate contact person. Is there a particular school staff member that should contact a family? This person may have an already-existing relationship and can cultivate an open, trustful line of communication between the school and family (e.g., teacher assistant, school nurse, school counselor or principal).
- Consider language barriers. Prior to reaching out to a family, consider potential communication barriers as well as methods for ensuring clear collaboration. The student should not act as the translator between the school official and family, and the communicator should be a trusted person. Does a school staff member speak the same language as this family? If the school does not have a person to provide language translation, an outside translator would be appropriate. This person should purely serve to translate what the trusted person is communicating. Further, does the family require written information in their spoken language?
- Be culturally aware. Listen carefully for a family's attitudes and cultural beliefs regarding services for their child or family and approach these discussions with an open and curious perspective.
- Be persistent and patient. Make multiple attempts to connect with families and consider innovative methods such as sending a letter home with the student or looking for parents at school drop-off and pick-up times, sending a text, or setting up a video call. One call home is not enough. Approach this process with empathy. Many families work intensive or multiple jobs at non-standard times of the day and therefore may be less available for communicating. Be persistent so that as little time as possible passes between the recognition of a student need and the provision of services to address this need.

For more information about working with families, see Connecting Children and Families to Resources.

3. HOW TO IDENTIFY COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Do your homework prior to referring students to services and supports provided by community partners. After analyzing your school's resource landscape and developing an organized approach to categorizing services (see Analyzing the Resource Landscape), it is important to keep in mind the following characteristics of the agencies and organizations in your community to ensure a high quality match.

- Proximity. How will the family get to services outside of the school? What is their mode of transportation (e.g., car, bus/train, by foot)? How far away is the agency from the school? Can providers travel to your school instead? Is the provider offering online services, or alternative means of access due to social distancing? If so, is the family able to connect?
- Health insurance and cost. Does the provider accept the student's health insurance or can the family afford the referred service? Keep in mind that many providers available to come into the school are not licensed so it is important to confirm whether the student's insurance will cover these services.
- Language. How will the provider and family communicate? Parents may not speak the same language as their child, and the child often should not act as translator.
- Cultural competency. The provider must be culturally considerate with respect to race, ethnicity, culture, and other identities to facilitate the development of a trusting relationship between the provider and family. Some districts may not have access to agencies that prioritize cultural considerations. It is therefore important to approach consultation with all community partners through a culturally aware lens, advocating for the needs of your students and their families. This may require engaging in difficult conversations with service providers surrounding your concerns in an open and empathetic manner.

- Treatment type. Although many community partner services are provided in the school, a student may require more
- intensive services outside of the school building. It may be important to consider a balance of the child's needs and the family's cultural views.
- Time of day. What will a student miss in order to receive supports? Scheduling services during times that work best with student needs is essential. For example, if the student is struggling with math, scheduling a service during this class will not benefit the student. Further, if a student requires a service but does not have access to services outside of the school building, invite providers into the school during the day. And if the student is engaged in distance learning, consider the students' schedule and environment when establishing telehealth or other virtual service delivery.

EXAMPLE

Your school recently experienced an increase in the Haitian student population. Although you have a strong and already existing partnership with a community mental health center, consider seeking alternate mental health providers who have an understanding of cultural and linguistic considerations for this specific population. To support your search, contact a mental health referral service for insight into providers. Further, a school counselor can establish a school-based counseling group - either in person or virtually - to support a subset of students waiting for individual outpatient treatment. This approach can lead to a more tailored, effective match for the student and his or her family.

4. HOW TO ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS

A positive school-community partnership impacts the quality of services provided to the student and lays the groundwork for future collaboration.

- Shared information. How collaborative is the provider? Do they keep information regarding the student to themselves, or do they offer updates to school-based counselors, teachers and school officials? The best approach to supporting student needs is a collaborative one.
- Consider legal requirements. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the confidentiality of student education records. Therefore, parents/guardians need to give written permission for educational information (e.g., IEP/504 plans) to be shared with other systems, including community partners. Similarly, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protects the confidentiality of healthcare information. As such, community health-based institutions require release forms from parents to share health information with the school. Understanding these laws that protect health information privacy is important for legal and timely collaboration across systems.
- Create a shared culture. Finding ways to integrate community partners into the school culture is essential. Many providers are not salaried workers, and therefore get paid per session/program. This creates an issue surrounding their ability to extend services to other students in a school or work within the school's schedule. The school can establish meetings with community partners to discuss the school environment and their goals, while at the same time, listen to community partner goals and requirements. Direct communication of each institution's needs will support a collaborative relationship.

EXAMPLE

A student in your school had an IEP meeting today. A community partner working closely with this student in an after-school tutoring program asked for a copy of the IEP and education evaluation to support their tutoring. Proactive communication with the student's parent at the IEP meeting allows you to get a signed release form right away so you can provide the partner with this information in a timely manner. This approach supports alignment across the student's academic services, while it additionally builds a collaborative and reliable relationship between the school and partner.

5. HOW TO ANTICIPATE LOGISTICAL BARRIERS

Proactively consider common logistical factors that may delay or interrupt services provided by community partners.

- Space. It is important to assess where community partners have space to work within the school. Work to agree upon a consistent location as soon as possible. Notifying other school officials of this blocked time will eliminate potential "double-booking" of space, as well as wasted service time trying to find a second option.
- Connectivity. If a community partner is providing students with virtual services or enrichment opportunities, consider whether the student has access to any needed technology, internet access, and the time and space to engage with the service provider.
- Thresholds. Many agencies require a minimum number of students in order to visit the school that day. For instance, if a provider requires 7 slots and only 5 students are available, the provider may not come. This is a significant concern, as those 5 students will miss out on services they need. Mindfully scheduling sessions and being aware of numbers can be the difference between children receiving or not receiving services.
- Waitlists. Many agencies have waitlists for new students depending on the number of available community agencies in close vicinity to the school. It is important to not only consider this issue when identifying potential community partners, but to be proactive about referrals and have a back-up plan for students during the waitlist period.
- High employee turnover. Community-based agencies often have high turnover rates which can lead to inconsistent service delivery and communication. For instance, a student may meet with a counselor or mentor in the beginning of the year, and this individual may leave the agency within a few months. Identify potential negative consequences of this transition on the student and create a plan to ease these impacts.
- One size does not fit all. Community agencies differ in their processes, such as requiring different forms from parents/guardians and accepting different health insurance types. Do not assume that systematic processes exist across agencies, and ask questions from the start regarding this process to ensure the school and parent/guardian complete information necessary for services to begin.
- New school year requirements. Community agencies often require updated paperwork at the beginning of each school year, regardless of whether the student received the same service in the previous school year. This can cause confusion with parents/guardians and create a lengthy delay in initiating services.

EXAMPLE

Multiple students in your school have a visiting social worker they meet with once/week for individual counseling as their families do not have access to this service outside of the school day. Prior to beginning this service, consider the days and times the social worker can come to the school and find an available, confidential space (e.g., small room in the library, education specialist room, etc.). Consider finding a space that is available on the same days and times each week. To facilitate clear communication with school staff, hang a calendar on the door that blocks off the room for the social worker's time with the students and update this calendar each month. Alternatively, if counseling is now being provided as a telehealth service, work with both the student and the provider to identify a time and space for comfortable communication, if possible.

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6. HOW TO APPROPRIATELY FOLLOW UP ON REFERRALS

Remember, the partnership continues after a referral is made.

- Check student-service match. Does the student or family have any issues with the provider? Does the provider report a productive relationship with the student? If the student and their family is experiencing a barrier to obtaining the referred service, can you help to address this difficulty?
- Take a collaborative approach. When working in a school setting, communication across all members who interact with a student is essential. Check-in with teachers, teacher aides, the school nurse, etc. to see whether student performance or behavior has changed since beginning a service. It is important to also regularly communicate this feedback to the partner providing a service.
- Monitor progress. The most effective way to assess improvement is to measure student gains. In anticipation of limited in-person observations and interactions with the student during distance learning, it is important to think about means of measuring progress proactively and creatively. This can be done through the use of quantitative data, such as questionnaires or in-class observations, as well as qualitative data, such as check-ins with the student's family or teacher.
- Consider future plans. Is the service intended to be short- or long-term? If it is short-term, does the student need to be re-evaluated or receive a step-down service? If it is long-term, are goals updated along the way? Are these timelines and goals clearly communicated between the school and community partner? How will the intervention or service be affected as schools close for the pandemic or for the summer? How will the intervention or service be affected by a return to in-person learning?

CONCLUSION

Schools work hard to support the holistic needs of their students. However, they often lack the resources necessary to accomplish this goal alone. This reality requires the integration of community partnerships into a school's comprehensive student support plan in order to provide students with holistic academic and non-academic services and opportunities that support their academic success and wellbeing. For schools or districts, applying effective practices can help create a structured, organized approach to working with community partners as part of a broader system of integrated student support.

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High quality intervention models use data to inform and evaluate every phase of implementation. For systems of integrated student support to be effective, they must respond to the specific strengths and needs of individual students and to school and community contexts. Both qualitative and quantitative data assist in ensuring a responsive, improving, and effective system of support. This brief outlines planning processes for data collection, organization, analysis, and use.

PLANNING

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE AND CONTEXT FOR DATA UTILIZATION

Every district and school may have varied orientations towards data collection, sharing, and use. To understand the culture and context within which you will be generating and using data for a system of integrated student support, it may be helpful to answer the following questions:

CULTURE
- How would you describe attitudes towards collecting and using student data?
- What are the existing requirements for sharing and using data?
- Is there a champion or leader for data use in the school or district?
- Is there a topic that a specific site wants data on? How will implementation be organized around that topic?

EXISTING DATA
- What data do you already have?
- What sources do these data come from?
- Where are the data stored?

STAFFING
- District Level: Who is responsible for student support? What is the organization of responsibility? Is there an individual administrator or director?
- School Level: What is the administrative structure and distribution of responsibility for student support services?
- Besides teachers, who is responsible for addressing the whole child as your site defines it? Is there a school nurse, social worker, counselor, etc., and how are they operationalizing their responsibilities?
- What is the school culture? Is there a willingness to reframe the structure and distribution of student support responsibilities?
- If the assessment data says the school is doing fine, how are professionals going to help the school further student progress?
- Discuss the needs and strengths of the current student support structure.
- How are the following stakeholders involved in supporting all students?
    - Teachers and all staff who interact with students
    - Administrators
    - Families
    - Pre-identified community partners
    - If grades 7+, students themselves

DATA ALIGNMENT

Most schools are already collecting substantial data on their students. To align data with effective practices for integrated student support, school and district leaders may consider:

- Whether currently available child-level data permit an understanding of the child across all domains of development. For example, schools may have data on academic achievement and attendance, but what about student health?
- What additional data may be needed and how might it be collected and stored?
- How might existing systems be used to enable a system of integrated student support?
- How to avoid duplication in data collection?
- How to refine or establish a system for organizing data so that it permits an understanding of how individual students or groups of students are doing across multiple developmental domains, such as academics, social-emotional-behavioral, physical health and wellbeing, and family?

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Identify or establish an implementation team that includes staff that understands the principles of effective practice, is qualified to analyze the data, and positioned to inform system structure.

- How might existing school structures be used or modified?
- What evidence-based approaches might inform system building in your school or district?
- What resources or flexibilities might implementation team members need in order to engage in this work?

ESTABLISHING INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The implementation team can help to define the set of process and outcome benchmarks that your school or district may use to determine how to improve your systemic approach to integrated student support, and how to determine whether or not it is having an impact on student outcomes. Select evidence-based models have used the following indicators to determine whether implementation quality and outcome indicators are on track.

PROCESS BENCHMARKS

Process benchmarks are designed to assess the quality of implementation and allow for continuous progress and improvement. Examples of process benchmarks include:

- Percentage of individual students reviewed
- Percentage of students with a personalized plan
- Number of services referred and delivered
- Number of services provided
- Number of agency partners
- Number of agency partners delivering individualized services
- Satisfaction surveys

OUTCOME BENCHMARKS

Outcome benchmarks are designed to determine expected long-term changes across all domains of student and school development. Examples of outcome benchmarks include:

- Attendance
- Report card grades
- Teacher rating of effort
- Social emotional development metrics
- State-wide achievement test scores
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- School Climate Survey
- Percent retained in grade
- Number of and types of disciplinary incidents.

Extensive research on effective systems of integrated student support provides insight into a timeline for improving both process and outcome benchmark indicators. Certain indicators, including those related to implementation quality, can improve rapidly. Other indicators, such as those demonstrating improvements in healthy child development and learning, can take longer to see. However, even on student outcomes we can look for early indicators that implementation is on the right track and is likely to have a positive impact on students over the long-term.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Process Benchmarks	Students are being reviewed and receiving personalized plans. Agency partners are delivering broad and individualized services. Satisfaction surveys are administered.	More students are being reviewed and receiving personalized plans. More agency partners are available and more services (broad and individualized) are being delivered to students. Students and families report feeling more supported and connected.	All students are being reviewed. Supports are fully coordinated across in and out of school contexts. Staff report satisfaction with agency partners. Teachers are changing their practices to meet student needs.
Outcome Benchmarks	Improved student effort.	Improved social-emotional behavior. Improved report card grades. Improved school climate. Decrease in frequency and volume of disciplinary incidences.	Improved attendance. Decreased grade retention. Improved state-wide achievement tests scores. **On Track for Long-Term Positive Outcomes** Reduced chronic absenteeism Reduced grade retention Increased graduation rates

CONCLUSION

When well implemented, systems of integrated student support can transform students' developmental trajectories and demonstrate significant gains in academics and social-emotional outcomes. Data collection, organization, analysis, and use are vital to ensuring high-quality implementation, data-informed decision making, and an understanding of whether your efforts are on track to make a difference for students.

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At a time when school leaders are faced with difficult choices, investing in strategies designed to support each student's healthy social-emotional development and readiness to learn can provide both short- and long-term benefits. For additional information about building systems of integrated student support, and opportunities for continuing education, visit us at our website.

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