



NATIONAL GUIDELINES

for Integrated
Student Support

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INTRODUCTION

In a time of challenge and division, we have come together to provide an actionable roadmap for hope and opportunity for America's children and youth.

Our children are continuing to experience the crises unleashed and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, compounding existing inequities long tied to income and race. As America's schools close the third academic year impacted by the pandemic, parents and educators have seen first hand the importance of cultivating strengths and addressing the needs of children, youth, and families as a prerequisite to healthy development and learning.

Access to comprehensive supports—like after school activities, food, clothing, health and mental health care, housing, and supportive relationships—promote student wellbeing and learning.¹ Providing access to these resources in a way that is effective, beneficial, realistic, and cost-efficient is a problem that schools, communities, and families try to address every day.

This report brings together the insights and practical know-how of experts in the effective integration of comprehensive supports for students. Under the auspices of the Boston College Mary E. Walsh Center for Thriving Children, a working group was formed of leading experts in research and evaluation and outstanding practitioners from four of the nation's most rigorously evaluated approaches to providing integrated student support. Together, we looked across interventions and studies to identify the practices that matter most so that more schools and communities can address students' needs more effectively. These guidelines endeavor, for the first time, to define high quality implementation of a system of integrated student support.

Our hope is that, in your hands, this knowledge will raise the standards of care and opportunity provided to our nation's children and youth.

A Moment for Action

Students' learning and wellbeing are increasingly impacted by the complex challenges of our time. In the course of COVID-19, parents in low-income families lost jobs in staggering numbers,² and as a result, students faced hunger and food insecurity amidst the public health crisis and school closures.³ While our students and their families continue to experience the effects of the pandemic, government assistance, such as the eviction moratorium and the fully-refundable Child Tax Credit, has now expired.⁴ Many of our students are experiencing mental health challenges. A CDC survey found that more than a third of high school students in the United States experienced poor mental health at least most of the time during the pandemic.⁵ In 2020, the proportion of suicides committed by adolescents increased by 10 percent.⁶ Eating disorders⁷ and anxiety⁸ in teenagers have skyrocketed. In the fall of 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association declared a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.⁹ The pandemic has exacerbated long standing inequalities and barriers to opportunity that leave the American Dream too far out of reach for too many.

More than a third of high school students in the United States experienced poor mental health at least most of the time during the pandemic.

And yet, children and youth are resilient and there is growing understanding about how to more effectively support healthy child development and learning. Children also have interests, curiosity, ingenuity, positive relationships at home, in school, and in their communities. These can serve as protective factors in the face of

challenges and are strengths to build upon as people and as learners. The National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development distilled insights from research on child development and learning in its report, *A Nation At Hope*.¹⁰

"Researchers have found that social, emotional, and cognitive development is especially important for children and youth who have experienced trauma or adversity. These external influences can place our bodies and minds in a constant state of stress or high alert that interferes with learning and growth. Teaching students the skills and providing settings that build their efficacy and self-control, providing them with supportive adult relationships, and directly addressing their physical, emotional, and mental health needs can buffer against the negative effects of stress. It also gives young people a set of tools that provide on-ramps to learning," explained Dr. Pamela Cantor.¹¹



"Integrated student support" is an evidence-based approach for schools to provide student support by intentionally and systematically leveraging and coordinating the resources and relationships available in the school and in the surrounding community to address the comprehensive strengths and needs of each and every student in a school in order to help promote healthy child development and learning.

Building on this understanding, the Learning Policy Institute developed **design principles** to guide the transformation of K-12 schools into environments that support the "whole child."¹² LPI's five component framework includes: integrated support systems; positive developmental relationships; environments filled with safety and belonging; rich learning experiences and knowledge development; and the development of skills, habits, and mindsets.¹³

These guidelines for integrated student support build on research insights and design principles to describe *how* schools can modify their approaches to student support to better promote students' healthy child development and academic learning.

Policymakers are doing more to enable schools to address students' comprehensive wellbeing, including by creating conditions for systems of integrated student support. In answer to the COVID-19 crisis, the nation and many states invested on an unprecedented scale in education, social services, health, and mental health. This includes the availability of \$190 billion in federal stimulus funds for education which can be used to address the “comprehensive needs of students” and to respond to “students’ social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs.”¹⁴ Both stimulus funds and federal Every Student Succeeds Act funds can be used, in part, for systems of “integrated student supports” which are school-based approaches to promoting achievement by coordinating community- and school-based supports and services that address in-school and out-of-school barriers to learning.¹⁵ The U.S. Department of Education dedicated \$75 million to advancing Full-Service Community Schools, of which integrated student support is a part.¹⁶ At least twenty-four states—red and blue—are at some stage of policymaking to advance the same.

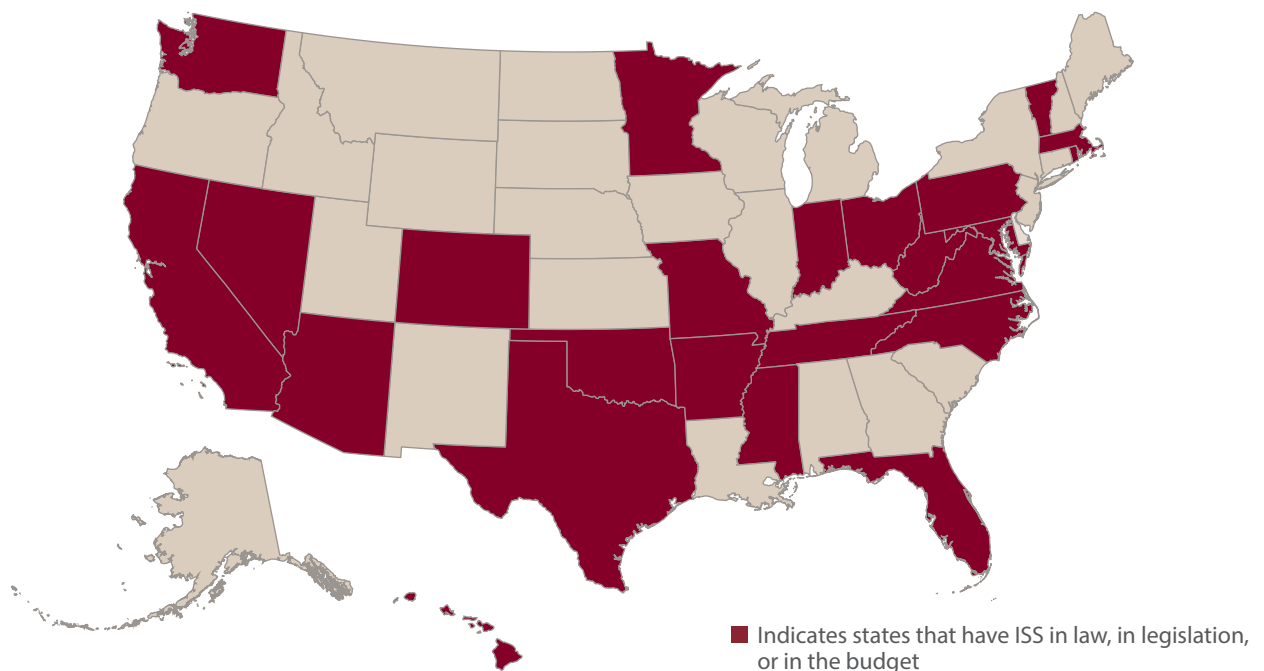
Schools are more open to innovation and change, including by implementing approaches to better address the complexity of student needs and interests. The

stress-tests that COVID-19 and its sequelae imposed on schools forced innovation and accelerated changes to longstanding practices.¹⁷ This catalytic moment coincides with longstanding recognition that changes, particularly in the realm of student support, are urgent and necessary.

Students are expressing the need for more effective and intentional approaches to student support. Seventy percent of public schools report an increase in children seeking mental health services since the start of the pandemic, according to a survey conducted by the Institute for Education Sciences.¹⁸ Teachers and school administrators note that many students are more easily frustrated, having emotional outbursts, or becoming withdrawn.¹⁹ Fights in schools are up, as are school shootings, including those resulting in deaths of children and teachers.²⁰

Many schools, in recent years, hired new social workers, school counselors, crisis intervention personnel, and family outreach workers. They adopted new frameworks, programs, and approaches responsive to needs they identified among students. Yet, the addition of more personnel, programs, and approaches on top of existing

STATES ADVANCING INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT



services also added to the complexity of schooling, and the complexity of effectively supporting student development and learning.

Systems of integrated student support can address this complexity by creating an infrastructure that allows for a coherent and systematic approach to supporting students, bringing alignment to vision, frameworks, programs, operational structures, communications, technology, and internal processes.

[T]he effective integration of comprehensive services is not a new function, program, or purpose, but an improved process for accelerating student learning and wellbeing by capitalizing on what schools are already doing.

Now with decades of implementation experience, and mounting evaluations of effectiveness, there is more understanding of how schools can create a system of integrated student support. Implementing a universal, systematic approach to comprehensively support student wellbeing can help to prevent crises in schools, mitigate or prevent trauma outside of school, and improve learning outcomes.²¹

Evidence-based approaches to integrated student support, which build upon the traditional student support function of schools, provide a roadmap for action. Schools are already providing student support. Importantly, the effective integration of comprehensive services is not a new function, program, or purpose, but an improved process for accelerating student learning and wellbeing by capitalizing on what schools are already doing. Evidence-based models that include the integration of comprehensive services demonstrate how

student support can be done even more effectively, with benefits to students, teachers, schools, and communities.

Students who received effective integrated student support during elementary school demonstrate:

- higher academic achievement²²
- improved attendance, effort, and engagement in school²³
- reduced drop out rates and²⁴
- better social emotional outcomes.²⁵



Early research points to reduced teacher turnover in schools that have a system of integrated student support in place, and multiple studies affirm that there are benefits to taxpayers when both school and community resources are used more efficiently and effectively to support student wellbeing and academic progress.²⁶

These guidelines distill insights from four of the nation's most rigorously evaluated models that include a system of integrated student support: Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) Center, City Connects, Communities In Schools, and The New York City Department of Education's Community Schools.²⁷ The purpose is to share widely, with those already integrating student support and those considering it, how to implement most effectively so that all students, in all communities, can receive the resources and opportunities they need and deserve.

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How These Guidelines Were Developed

This is a consensus document that defines national guidelines for integrated student support. It is a first effort to encapsulate evidence-based best practices and define what high quality implementation looks like in the day-to-day functioning of schools. Over time, as learnings from both research and practice continue to accumulate, we hope to refine and build on the guidelines.

Organizations contributing to this first iteration of the guidelines include: AIR, the Boston College Center for Thriving Children, Child Trends, the Harvard University Education ReDesign Lab, the Learning Policy Institute, the University of Pennsylvania Center for Benefit Cost Studies in Education, the University of California Los Angeles Center for Mental Health in Schools, BARR Center, City Connects, Communities In Schools, the New York City Community Schools, and the National Center for Community Schools.

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LESSONS LEARNED



LESSON 1

Integration and coordination of comprehensive services is key both at the level of each student and the level of the school.

Evidence-based approaches to integrating comprehensive services for students impact both students and the school around them. Developmental systems theory²⁹ helps us to understand that strengthening each student's developmental contexts—at home, in the school, and in the surrounding community—creates improved conditions for each student's healthy development, learning, and thriving. If we know that stress, deprivation, and trauma can disrupt healthy development and learning, then the solution is to provide care, resources, and opportunities that address the needs and interests of each child, create a more supportive school environment, and connect and strengthen the family and communities that nurture student growth and learning.

By better understanding what each individual student needs in order to be ready to engage in learning and develop their potential, in the aggregate, the information can inform school-level decision making. Schools can better understand, identify, and respond to trends, needs, and student interests. For example, a school might decide to put on a student theatrical production, implement a program to encourage girls in math, improve communications with families, change the approach to discipline, partner with a local food pantry, bring in artists representing students' cultures, launch an afterschool group for new immigrant students, or take another step specifically designed to support the growth and learning of students in their school.

“Significantly improving student and learning supports requires not only a vision for good schooling, but a way to get there from here. The mechanisms that constitute the operational infrastructures are critical drivers for effective implementation and systems change.”²⁸

Howard Adelman, UCLA



LESSON 2

Relationships are central to an effective system of integrated student support.

The core components outlined below create conditions for the intentional development of relationships that matter: between families and school staff, between teachers and colleagues, between teachers and students, between students and students, between community organizations and children and families. When implemented, the core components weave relationships and resources into a network of support and opportunity around each student.

In schools, teachers are the primary conduit of learning and relationships for students. When teachers know that they can turn to a colleague—whether for consultation about how to better support a student in class, or to share a concern about a student knowing that there will be appropriate follow up—teachers feel more supported in their jobs.³⁰ Preliminary research shows that teachers are also more likely to stay in a school with a system of integrated student support in place.³¹



LESSON 3

Different evidence-based approaches use varied mechanisms to achieve many of the same core functions inside of a school. These core functions include:

- Getting to know every student holistically and comprehensively as an individual;
- Building relationships between teachers and students, students and students, teachers and staff, families and schools, community organizations and schools, community organizations and students and their families;
- Better engaging and supporting teachers;
- Bringing together observational information and student data to inform planning;
- Having practices, structures, and processes in place to proactively identify, understand, and coordinate responses to student needs and strengths;
- Ensuring follow up and adjustments as student circumstances and developmental needs change;
- Using gathered information to inform school- and district-level decision making.



LESSON 4

When well-implemented, these practices, processes, and structures become the drivers of systems improvements because they:

- Improve the developmental and learning contexts of the student;
- Improve the responsiveness of classroom and school climate;
- Improve the stability of the learning environment; and
- Improve the coordination between home, school, and community.

Together, these have the effect of breaking down known barriers to learning in favor of creating a potent system of opportunity, engagement, social mobility, and hope.



NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

There are six core components in a system of integrated student support. Together, they form a coherent and efficient way to get the right resources to the right student at the right time.



Like many other school-wide efforts, these components emphasize the importance of teaming, resource mapping, and data systems. Schools and districts may find that they are already doing important pieces of the work described below. In the course of identifying a foundation on which to build, it is our hope that school and district leaders may also see opportunities to better integrate within and across school structures, processes, and programs, and to combine structures and frameworks with a practice capable of providing comprehensive, integrated support to each and every student. Here is a roadmap for action.

SETTING THE STAGE

▶ Conduct a review of assets and needs in the school and community.

The goals of this process are to identify strengths and resources, better understand needs and gaps, garner perspectives from diverse stakeholders, and begin to build authentic engagement and buy-in for more comprehensively supporting student wellbeing and readiness to learn. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Creating a leadership and planning team to spearhead the review.
- ▷ Compiling existing data on a school or district's student population.
- ▷ Soliciting input from key stakeholders—including students, families, teachers, staff, and community partners—via surveys or small group discussions.
- ▷ Creating and organizing an inventory of existing school-based programs, resources, and services.
- ▷ Creating and organizing an inventory of existing community-based programs, resources, and services.
- ▷ Organizing and analyzing collected information to succinctly identify needs, strengths, and strategic opportunities to fill gaps.

▶ Conduct a review of existing school and district structures for student support.

All schools and districts provide student support and have structures and personnel to build upon. The purpose of this review is to understand existing structures and personnel, what is working, and what can be improved in order to create a more comprehensive and integrated approach to student support. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Identifying existing team structures at the district and school level that address out-of-school factors that affect success in school.
- ▷ Identifying existing personnel involved in addressing the strengths and needs of the “whole child.”
- ▷ Analyzing which structures and roles work well and which could work better, including whether there are opportunities to streamline or improve efficiencies.



Define what it means to support the “whole child.” This may include academic, physical, social-emotional, cultural, family, and college and career supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity to learn and engage in school.

▶ Build consensus and support mindset shifts.

The goal of this process is to create a context conducive to making positive changes for students over time. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Convening meetings, or leveraging existing meetings, to meaningfully engage with students, teachers, school counselors and other support staff, families, and community partners.
- ▷ Sharing information from the assessment of assets and needs.
- ▷ Building consensus around why to implement a system of integrated student support.
- ▷ Sharing research about how developing a comprehensive and integrated system of student support can positively impact students, teachers, families, community partners, and taxpayers.
- ▷ Identifying individuals who want to champion the development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student support.

- ▷ Developing a common vision statement, including that support will (a) address all students; (b) focus on multiple developmental domains such as academic, social-emotional-behavioral, health, and family in order to support the “whole child,” and (c) create an aligned system of integrated student support.
- ▷ Defining what it means to support the “whole child.” This may include academic, physical, social-emotional, cultural, family, and college and career supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity to learn and engage in school.
- ▷ Connecting and aligning the integration of comprehensive services for students with equity and learning goals in the school improvement plan.
- ▷ Communicating the relationship between integrating comprehensive supports for students and school/community values, such as enhancing equity of opportunity, supporting each student, building on individual and community strengths, removing barriers to services and opportunities, or reducing systemic barriers that disproportionately affect students who are from low-income families, of color, learning English as an additional language, or experiencing learning disabilities or differences.
- ▷ Discussing the relationship between integrated student support and classroom learning. For example, following up on teacher concerns that a student may need eyeglasses, would benefit from opportunities to develop positive peer relationships, may not have adequate access to food leading to disengagement from learning, or behavioral challenges that can be addressed with both in-school and out-of-school resources.
- ▷ If a framework such as Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF), and/or Community Schools has been adopted by the school, articulating how integrating comprehensive supports and opportunities will bring components of schooling together within the context of the framework.
- ▷ Continuing efforts to develop and enhance stakeholder buy-in as implementation gets underway.



Many schools use frameworks designed to target support to students. These commonly include a three-tiered approach to providing preventive supports to all students, targeted supports to some students, and intensive supports to a few students. A system of integrated student support can extend this tiered approach to each student and to all developmental domains. Importantly, integrated student support also provides a way—outlined in these guidelines—to ensure that the right supports and opportunities are reaching the right student at the right time.

READINESS

A system of integrated student support becomes part of a school’s operational infrastructure: the systems, structures, processes, practices, and partnerships that allow the school to function day-to-day. Schools may be at different points of readiness, depending upon the status of their existing operational infrastructure. Many approaches to integrated student support engage in a school readiness assessment. For example, a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education learning network for schools and districts, known as the Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy, starts by engaging applicants in a screening process. A close, collaborative review of schools’ internal capacity is conducted by school leaders in consultation with experts from The Boston College Center for Thriving Children and The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. Schools are placed in a cohort tailored to whether they are “pre-ready,” “ready,” or “advanced” towards building a system of integrated student support. Schools that want an evidence-based model, or may benefit from implementing an evidence-based approach, are referred to City Connects.

Partner with families and students.

The goals of this process include to build trust and communication between school personnel, community service providers, and students and families; to strengthen collaboration between school and families to benefit students; and to benefit from questions, concerns, priorities, and ideas that students and families may contribute. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Empowering school staff to develop caring, respectful, culturally responsive relationships with students and families.
- ▷ Building on existing, or establishing new, ways for families to communicate with the school.
- ▷ Listening for areas of concern expressed by students and families, and taking concrete steps to address those concerns.
- ▷ Building an approach to integrated student support that centers the dignity, priorities, knowledge, privacy, consent, promise, and strengths of students and their families.



Determine a budget for implementation.

The goal of this process is to make pragmatic choices that allow for adequate resources and sustainability of high quality implementation. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Determining costs associated with engaging new or redeploying existing personnel to serve as “coordinators.” (See Structures and staffing).
- ▷ Deciding whether the school and/or district has capacity to build its own approach to integrated student support, or may elect to partner with an evidence-based provider of integrated student support.
- ▷ Assessing costs associated with professional development, coaching, and technology to support effective implementation, whether in partnership with a provider or developed internally.
- ▷ Analyzing the needs and assets review to determine whether it is likely that sufficient resources exist in the school, and in the community, to support student needs and enrichments, or whether targeted development and funding of comprehensive services may be needed.
- ▷ Developing a multi-year budget that anticipates growth in implementation and/or funding over time.



GETTING STARTED

One way to think about building a system of integrated student support is to identify whether your school community is in the pre-ready, ready, or advanced phase:

PRE-READY: Your school community is in the pre-ready phase if you are interested in creating a system of integrated student support but are unsure where and how to begin. Start with a review of existing school and district structures and resources for student support to help you to determine what you have to build upon as you develop your approach to integrated student support.

READY: Your school community is in the ready phase once it has set the stage. If your school has a shared vision, an understanding of existing school and district structures, and is partnered with multiple stakeholders, you can focus on defining school-level roles and responsibilities, determining staffing capacity and role clarity, and streamlining approaches to student support. Identify a group of students for whom you would like to start creating and delivering on personalized plans designed to cultivate strengths and address needs across all domains. Start with a specific grade or class. Fine tune your student review process to ensure that each student is known and supported.

ADVANCED: Your school community is in the advanced stage if it has set the stage, determined structures and staffing, and begun implementing a process for student review, plan development, and follow through. Identify areas for improvement and expand these processes to another grade or class until every student in the school receives the supports and opportunities they need to engage and learn in school.

STRUCTURES AND STAFFING

► Clarify district- and school-level roles and responsibilities.

Governance, discretion over budgets, and capacity within schools and districts vary considerably. As such, there is not one prescribed way to structure roles and responsibilities between schools and districts. What is critical is that the core components, and their associated functions within a system of integrated student support, are implemented with quality. Focus on:

- ▷ Designing an intentional approach suited to the school and/or district's unique contexts, while ensuring that core components and their associated functions are achieved.
- ▷ Promoting clear and consistent communication to all stakeholders.

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► Design a district-level strategy, which may include:

- ▷ Forming a leadership team that takes responsibility for creating a comprehensive system of student support that is integrated in school- and district-functioning. This multi-disciplinary team includes representation mirroring the "whole child" approach and takes responsibility for supporting the implementation of a school-level system of integrated student support, as well as providing oversight and conditions for continuous improvement. The team has decision making authority and may include members who hold responsibility for curriculum and instruction, student support, family engagement, nursing, professional learning, and finance.
- ▷ Empowering the leadership team, in consultation with stakeholders, to: (a) define what it means to support the "whole child;" (b) define the domains of development that will be supported; (c) create a tool or template to facilitate universal student review; (d) identify, organize, and analyze existing school- and community-resources relative to the identified domains, and intensity of risk within each domain; and (e) build community partnerships to address gaps and fulfill identified needs and interests of students and families.
- ▷ Allowing the district's technology team to develop or purchase a supporting technology system that is integrated with, or compatible with, the systems already in use in district schools. According to parameters developed by the leadership team, ensure that the technology solution includes the capacity to create individual student plans, access resource information, protect student plans, and enable data analysis.

DISTRICT ROLES

Districts with high capacity may assume responsibility for development of tools like those for universal student review and technology integration; professional development content and delivery; community partnerships and resource development responsive to the needs of students and families; community convenings; budgeting; and alignment with existing frameworks, curricula, and programs. Districts with lower capacity, or a different philosophical orientation towards their schools, may empower schools to develop these core capacities internally or in partnership with external providers.

- ▷ Integrating comprehensive student support into: (a) Professional development such as by creating, or acquiring through partnership, capacity to provide relevant professional development, coaching, and technical assistance to create the conditions for effective school-level implementation; (b) Building upon existing frameworks such as MTSS, PBIS, ISF and/or Community Schools to integrate comprehensive supports for all students and bring coherence across frameworks, programs, and services; and (c) Aligning the integration of comprehensive supports with any academic or social-emotional curricula, and supports related to those curricula.
- ▷ Budgeting for implementation and sustainability year-to-year. (See [Determine a budget](#)).
- ▷ Supporting the hiring of any new personnel, such as coordinators, through activities such as developing a job description, posting the job description, performing initial screening of applicants, and recommending qualified candidates to principals and their school-level teams.
- ▷ Creating working groups as needed, to use data to monitor implementation quality, inform professional development and coaching supports, inform strategic development of services and partnerships, inform district priorities to better support students and their families, ensure continuous improvement of implementation and continued engagement and commitment from the district.

▶ **Design a parallel and coordinated school-level strategy.**

The goals of this strategy are to assume responsibility for any of the components outlined above that the district does not provide, or which must be implemented within the school consistent with the district's engagement and direction. (See [Design a district-level strategy](#)).



► Design or re-design school-level structures and processes for coordinating and integrating comprehensive supports.

The goals are to ensure that: there is universal review of each student’s strengths and needs in multiple developmental domains; each student receives a comprehensive plan of supports and opportunities; the plan components are enacted; and there is strong integration between student support and effective school-level practices and programs in order to create a unified and comprehensive approach to learning and development. Core functions include:

- ▷ Designing a process that allows for the comprehensive review of each student’s strengths and needs across domains of development either in consultation with or by the student’s teacher(s).
- ▷ Developing a personalized plan that leverages resources available in the school and/or the surrounding community to bolster student strengths and address needs.
- ▷ Following up on a regular schedule to ensure delivery of the services and opportunities in each student’s plan.
- ▷ Adjusting plans as needed.
- ▷ Reviewing aggregate data to identify trends, unmet needs, and opportunities for strategically engaging partners, programs, practices, enrichments, or services to better support student wellbeing and learning and to inform selection of programs and interventions tailored to the strengths and needs of students in the school. (See [Develop or enhance a student review process](#)).

► Define school-level roles and responsibilities.

The goals of defining roles and responsibilities are to ensure there is capacity to develop and deliver on the coordinating infrastructure, clarity as to individual and team roles, and that responsibilities are intentionally defined to actualize a functioning system that integrates comprehensive supports for all students. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Determining whether the school will hire new, or invite existing, student support personnel to serve as a full-time “coordinator.”
- ▷ Reviewing the existing team structures in the school to determine how teachers are currently communicating about students, and whether there is a cross-disciplinary team that can review students and follow up to ensure plans are delivered (See [Conduct a review of existing school and district structures](#)). Members of a cross disciplinary team may include: (a) an administrative leader; (b) the “coordinator;” (c) a school psychologist; (d) a school counselor and/or social worker; (e) a school nurse; (f) a behavioral specialist; (g) a general education teacher; (h) a special education teacher; (i) community agencies, if appropriate; (j) families, if appropriate, (k) students, if appropriate.



REVIEWING EVERY STUDENT

In the BARR Center model, for high schools and middle schools, cohort-level teacher teams meet regularly to review every student across all domains, develop and test out strategies to better support each student, and coordinate across school, home, and community in partnership with the school’s student support staff.

In the City Connects model, when implemented in pre-k, elementary, and middle schools, the school counselor or social worker who serves as the City Connects coordinator engages in an annual “whole class review.” During the whole class review process, the coordinator meets with every teacher to discuss the strengths and needs of each and every student across all developmental domains: academic, social-emotional-behavioral, physical health and wellbeing, and family.

These processes are aimed at understanding the root cause of a student’s challenges and opportunities to build confidence, connection, and a sense of possibility by cultivating student interests and strengths.

- ▷ Deciding which people and/or teams within the school will execute the functions of a coordinating infrastructure.
- ▷ Creating a written staffing model and role descriptions.
 - Designate a full-time coordinator who is a credentialed school social worker or school counselor. Determine core competencies that all individuals in the role may be supported to develop. Have this person lead, or at a minimum be a member of, the interdisciplinary team, below.
 - Define roles and responsibilities of school coordinator, other student support personnel, teachers, school administrators, families, and community partners.
- ▷ Developing or strengthening a team structure. Modify or build an interdisciplinary school-based team that can:
 - Review students' strengths and needs, identify and coordinate comprehensive supports and opportunities, and provide accountability for follow up.
 - Review aggregate data to identify trends, unmet needs, and opportunities for strategically engaging partners, programs, practices, or services to better support student wellbeing and learning.
 - Align and help to develop a full continuum of supports ranging from preventive to intensive, in all domains, consistent with any framework that the school is using to organize its academic and/or social-emotional-behavioral supports such as MTSS, PBIS, ISF, or Community Schools Frameworks.
 - Consider consolidating meetings across siloed student support programs and initiatives to streamline a team structure focused on supporting the "whole child."

COORDINATOR ROLE

A coordinator should have a demonstrated ability to work with children and families, knowledge about how and why to connect students and families with resources that match their strengths and needs, ability to protect student and family confidential information, strong organizational and problem solving skills, and the capacity to disaggregate, understand, use, and explain data. [Read more on the coordinator role.](#)

Support staff to effectively engage in their roles to integrate comprehensive services for students.

Strategies include:

- ▷ Providing introductory materials and opportunities for conversation about roles, responsibilities, and why to integrate comprehensive services for students.
- ▷ Protecting staff and team time to fulfill described roles.
- ▷ Providing ongoing professional development and coaching tailored to the strengths and needs of coordinators in order to support best practices, use of qualitative and quantitative data for continuous improvement, and problem solving.
- ▷ Providing a practical system for record keeping consistent with [Record keeping and uses of data](#).



In some communities, it may not be possible to hire full-time staff with formal credentials. Think carefully about the skills and experiences of the person(s) who can take responsibility for leading from a "whole child" perspective. What core competencies do they have? What core competencies may need to be developed? How might they be supported to develop needed core competencies?

Centering students and families, what is the best role for this coordinator to play within the school? Can coordinators without clinical experience and training be supported by someone who has a clinical background, such as a licensed school counselor or school social worker?



PROCESSES

► Design processes for relationship-building.

Relationships are vital to healthy child development and learning. Processes can help to promote relationships by ensuring that students and families are at the center; that every student becomes known; that adults who care about the student are communicating and coordinating with one another to provide positive relationships, opportunities to cultivate interests and strengths, and services to address student and family needs.

► Define the comprehensive set of “whole child” developmental domains the school will support.

The purpose of this exercise is to tie research about how to create conditions for healthy child development and learning to the day-to-day functioning of the school, and to articulate the developmental domains consistent with the culture and values of the school. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Ensuring that the identified developmental domains are comprehensive and consistent with the vision statement and the literature on child and/or youth development. Examples of developmental domains include, but are not limited to: academic, social-emotional-behavioral, health, culture, family, and college and career readiness. (See *Developing a common vision statement*).
- ▷ Engaging multiple stakeholders in defining the developmental domains, consistent with the vision statement. (See *Developing a common vision statement* and *Design a district-level strategy*).
- ▷ Expressing the domains in a way that is understandable and meaningful to administrators, teachers, families, and students.
- ▷ Ensuring that the domains as defined are actionable.

For more information on positive relationships, see *The Developmental Relationships Framework* by The Search Institute.

Develop or enhance a student review process and create or acquire tools to support it.

The purpose of the student review process is to ensure that each and every student in a school is known and supported to promote their healthy development and learning.

- ▷ Reviewing each and every student. This may include:
 - Regular consultation with teachers and other adults who know the student.
 - Guiding questions for review.
 - Student surveys and conversations.
 - Family surveys and conversations.
 - Use of data such as academic assessments, grades, attendance records, disciplinary records.
 - Use of observational information.
- ▷ Developing guiding questions or a form to guide review that will allow for identification of student strengths and needs in all domains, and the student's level of risk within each domain.
- ▷ Creating a template for a personalized plan for each student. This may include:
 - Strengths and needs within each developmental domain.
 - Intensity of risk within each domain.
 - Identified school-based services and opportunities that align with strengths and needs.
 - Identified community-based services and opportunities that align with strengths and needs.
- ▷ Creating agendas and processes for the team meetings.
- ▷ Ensuring clarity on who is responsible to follow up on each student's plan, engage families, coordinate with community-based organizations, secure any needed data sharing agreements, and ensure delivery of all components of the plan.
- ▷ Establishing a process for regular feedback and follow up so that plans can be revised in response to changing circumstances or ongoing needs.
- ▷ Gathering and analyzing data to inform continuous improvement of the approach to integrating comprehensive services for students; allow for the identification of patterns and trends; and inform school-level planning.



In the Communities In Schools (CIS) model, school leadership and the student support team work together to continually improve their approach to integrated student support. At each of the CIS schools, the principal's key activities include integrating and aligning CIS with existing student support programs and approaches; establishing the CIS school support team by either expanding role of existing team or establishing new team; and meeting regularly with the CIS site coordinator to review data and assess progress toward school-wide goals.

Once established, the site coordinator is the facilitator of the school support team. The school support team works to ensure integration of student supports on campus, engage with the CIS school needs assessment and school support planning process, and meets regularly to monitor individual student and CIS school support plan progress. The CIS site coordinator provides direct support to a caseload of students and the team collects, monitors, and uses program data to improve student support and provide reports on progress to school leadership.

For more information on how evidence-based models of integrated student support review every student, read [the Reviewing Every Child practice brief](#).

Select school-wide programs, strategies, and interventions tailored to the strengths and needs of students in the school.

The purpose is to ensure that the actual needs and interests of students in the school are addressed and cultivated by the programs, services, enrichments, and opportunities available in the school. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Empowering the interdisciplinary team to propose and develop ways to respond to student needs and interests.
- ▷ Using qualitative and quantitative aggregate data to identify school-wide needs and trends, and needs and trends among student subgroups.
- ▷ Analyzing these needs and trends within a framework such as MTSS, PBIS, ISF, and/or Community Schools to determine whether any programs should be brought into the school to address gaps in available comprehensive services and opportunities responsive to student needs and interests.
- ▷ Determining which additional strategic partnerships with community-based organizations can help to address identified student needs and interests.
- ▷ Ensuring follow up and delivery of identified programs, services, or opportunities.

“Schools can align integrated student support implementation with other existing frameworks and practices they are implementing.”

National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Reflect on and improve these processes.

This focus on continuous improvement is to ensure fulfillment of the roles of all stakeholders and to ensure that the school is using a research-informed integrated and systemic approach to providing comprehensive support for students. Strategies consistent with *Use data to monitor*, include:

- ▷ Surveying and conversing with teachers, administrators, students, families, and community partners.
- ▷ Analyzing implementation of the processes to ensure intentional and adequate engagement and partnership with teachers, administrators, families, and students.
- ▷ Assessing the extent to which provision of comprehensive supports and opportunities is systematic and integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school and its approach to student support and learning.
- ▷ Using feedback to inform practice, professional development and coaching, and continuous process improvements.
- ▷ Using rapid cycle evaluation to test the impact of these processes on student outcomes, and making adjustments as needed.



Although the focus is on supporting students, a secondary benefit of a system of integrated student support is its impact on teachers. Across models, examples attest to teachers feeling more supported in their jobs, valuing the opportunity to consult with a colleague on how to better support a student, share concerns, and have peace of mind that there will be follow up when they have concerns about their students' readiness to learn and wellbeing. Preliminary research suggests that teachers are less likely to leave their jobs when their school has a system of integrated student support in place.³²



SCHOOL- AND COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES

► Create a structure for organizing school- and community-based resource information.

The purpose of this step is to create a uniform way of organizing information so that it can facilitate coordinators to make quality matches between resources and students, allow for identification of gaps in services and opportunities, and reflect the domains and frameworks relevant to the school. This step also creates a process conducive to building knowledge of community resources and developing key relationships. The structure serves to organize information so that it is actionable. To achieve these aims, consider:

- ▷ Including the developmental domains identified above.
- ▷ Including within each developmental domain levels of intensity of intervention such as preventive/enrichment; intervention; and intensive/crisis intervention. If a framework such as MTSS or PBIS is in use, apply Tiers I-III to each of the identified domains.
- ▷ Including at a minimum room for information on the types of services or supports provided, organization name, location, geography served, contact person, and contact information.

Identify services and enrichment opportunities that address student needs and cultivate student strengths.

Developmental science tells us that strengths and needs co-act. For example, a student who builds confidence on the sports field or on the theatrical stage may see themselves as capable of mastering academic challenges as well. Learning about students' interests and strengths can also be built upon in the classroom. Information that goes into the structure for organizing resources, *above*, can reflect this by:

- ▷ Including both services and enrichment opportunities in each domain identified *above*. Services may include access to academic support, food, clothing, school supplies, housing, transportation, health care, and more. Enrichments may include opportunities to build positive developmental relationships with peers and adults, arts, athletics, cultural experiences, opportunities for extended learning, and more.
- ▷ Including a range of services and enrichments to address the full continuum of risk within each domain, so that interventions and supports can correspond with the identified level of student need.



The NYC Community Schools build knowledge of community resources by partnering with a lead Community Based Organization (CBO) at each school. The CBO provides a Community Schools Director who collaborates with the principal and the School Leadership Team to identify and access critical programs and services like health care, mentoring, expanded learning programs, adult education, and other services that support the whole child, engage families, and strengthen the entire community.

Identify school-based services and enrichment opportunities.

Schools provide a range of services and programs, as well as opportunities for student growth and relationship building. Positive relationships are key to creating safe environments conducive to student learning and healthy development. Defining the assets of a school broadly can help to identify services and opportunities already in place, as well as areas that can readily be strengthened to better support students. Begin filling in the structure by:

- ▷ Reviewing the programs, services, and opportunities available in the school to understand the range of resources available within all of the domains identified *above*, and intensity of risk each of those resources is designed to support. These may include academic, social-emotional-behavioral, health and mental health, and family resources available within the school.
- ▷ Identifying opportunities to develop relationships between and among students, peers, families, and teachers. These may include project-based learning, peer-mentoring, collaborative arts, physical education, health and wellness, student government, social-emotional learning, teacher planning time, team structures, conferences, community meetings or events, and more.

Identify community-based services and enrichment opportunities.

Every community has services, resources, relationships, and opportunities that can contribute to student learning and healthy development. Continue filling in the structure by:

- ▷ Defining the geographic area relevant to students and families;
- ▷ Gathering information about available community resources. Strategies may include:
 - Securing lists from schools or city or town hall.

- Identifying existing online databases or tools available locally or at the state level, such as United Way's 211 system.
 - Talking to people with local knowledge.
 - Contacting local organizations to better understand the range of services and resources available.
 - Paying attention to accessibility of services such as the availability of transportation, virtual meetings, and flexible hours.
- ▷ Organizing the programs, services, and opportunities available in the community to understand the range of resources within all of the domains identified **above**. These may include academic, social-emotional-behavioral, health and mental health, and family resources available within the community. In addition to services addressing basic needs, consider after school programs, sports programs, arts programs, mentoring programs, libraries, museums, social services agencies, public service organizations, religious organizations, employers, and more.

► **Determine how resource information will be used and by whom.**

The purposes of this step are (a) to ensure that the individual(s) designing the personalized plans for each student have ready access to up-to-date information about the full range of services, supports, and opportunities available in the school and the community; and (b) that the individual(s) coordinating among school, family, and community organizations have contact information on hand. Considerations include:

- ▷ Establishing or revising a referral process to connect students with appropriate school- and community-based services and enrichment opportunities consistent with the universal student review process and development of personalized plans created in **Structures and staffing** and **Processes**.
- ▷ Making resource information available to coordinators.
- ▷ Whether and why to make all or some information available to teachers, staff, families, and/or others.

► **Develop and maintain up-to-date and accessible information on school- and community-based resources.**

The goal is to make it as easy as possible for coordinators to connect students and families to a personalized set of services and enrichment opportunities that leverage the resources available in the school and the community.

Considerations include:

- ▷ Whether technology can be used to facilitate the organization, maintenance, and use of school- and community-based services and supports information.
- ▷ If so, what technology is already in use in the school and/or district, and how that technology can be extended or augmented for this purpose.
- ▷ Whether to use technology to enable coordinators in one school to update resource information for the benefit of coordinators in multiple schools.
- ▷ Whether the district can support the creation, sharing, and updating of resource information in order to create efficiencies for school and/or to look community-wide to identify trends or needs and opportunities for partnership.

RECORD KEEPING AND USES OF DATA

► Understand record keeping and technology currently in use in the school and/or district.

The purpose of this section is to develop a record keeping solution that builds upon, or is in alignment with, existing tools and practices already in use so that a record keeping system is practical and easy to implement. Strategies to understand the current state may include:

- ▷ Consulting with administrators to understand existing sources of data and where data are stored.
- ▷ Consulting with district and/or school-level information technology specialists.
- ▷ Consulting with administrators, teachers, student support staff, and families to understand current practices and culture, questions, and concerns.
- ▷ Reviewing existing tools and practices.

► Define the core functions of record keeping to enable a system of integrated student support.

Record keeping is an important part of supporting effective implementation of comprehensive student supports and opportunities. Consider consulting with coordinators and/or members of the interdisciplinary team created in Structures and staffing and Processes for input on core functions which include, but are not limited to:



- ▷ Documenting personalized plans, assigned supports and opportunities, delivered supports and opportunities, and follow up.
- ▷ Providing contextual information such as student formative and summative data, attendance, discipline, surveys, and observations to allow for monitoring of implementation and adjusting for continuous improvement.
- ▷ Aggregating information to inform classroom-, school-, district-, and community-level decisionmaking about how to use existing and new resources to be most responsive to student and family needs and interests.

▶ **Design a solution consistent with core functions, existing technologies, privacy laws, and budget.**

While considerations underlying decisions about record keeping are complex, schools and districts implement a wide range of practical solutions that comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other privacy laws and support the integration of comprehensive services for students.

▶ **Design a solution consistent with school and community culture that honors student privacy and dignity.**

In addition to legal and technical requirements, think about how values and norms can be expressed through the practices of integrated student support. Considerations may include:

- ▷ How and whether sensitive information will be communicated, recorded, or retained.
- ▷ How to ensure information is shared on a limited and purposeful basis.
- ▷ How to ensure appropriate consultation with, permissions from, and support of families.
- ▷ How to appropriately treat different types of information, such as:
 - administrative data regularly collected by the school.
 - special data collections such as student and family surveys.
 - observational and anecdotal information.
 - practice data generated through the integration of comprehensive services (see [Use data to monitor below](#)).
 - longitudinal data to monitor impact (see [Use data to evaluate outcomes](#)).



Record keeping goes beyond compliance. It is foundational to being able to better support students in the near term and in the future. It can help coordinators to connect students and families to a tailored set of resources and opportunities responsive to their specific strengths and needs. School, district, and community decision makers also use aggregated data about student needs and interests to inform programming decisions, partnerships, and budgets.

▶ **Use data to monitor and improve implementation.**

Aggregate data can be used to inform implementation of a system of integrated student support and decision making at the classroom-, school-, district, and community-levels. For example, student interests or experience may inform teachers' instructional choices, a recognized need in Grade 5 may lead to a new program or curriculum, identified interest in theater may lead to a new community partnership or in-school drama program, identifying increasing rates of food insecurity may mobilize a proactive community response. Consider metrics such as:

- ▷ Number and percentage of students reviewed.

- ▷ Number and percentage of students with a personalized plan.
- ▷ Number and percentage of students experiencing different levels of risk.
- ▷ Number and percentage of students with types of strengths and interests.
- ▷ Number and percentage of students requiring services in each domain.
- ▷ Number and types of community partners.
- ▷ Number of community partners delivering supports and opportunities.
- ▷ Duration of delivered supports and opportunities.
- ▷ Number and percentage of services and opportunities within each domain assigned, delivered, and assigned but not delivered.
- ▷ Number and percentage of services and opportunities within each domain assigned, delivered, and assigned but not delivered by student subgroups such as race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status.

▶ Use data to evaluate outcomes.

Studies of evidence-based models integrating comprehensive services for students have found a range of positive outcomes for students, teachers, schools, and communities. Consider the outcomes important to the school, district, and community, and how to measure them. For example, consider looking at:

- ▷ Student, family, and teacher satisfaction.
- ▷ Family engagement.
- ▷ Student attendance.
- ▷ Student rates of chronic absenteeism.
- ▷ Student grades.
- ▷ Student test scores.
- ▷ Student rates of being retained in grade.
- ▷ Student credit accumulation.
- ▷ Student graduation rates.
- ▷ Student mobility rates.
- ▷ Student social-emotional development measures.
- ▷ Student surveys of behavior.
- ▷ School climate measures.



SUSTAINABILITY

► Design for operational sustainability.

The core components above describe a system of integrated student support designed to address student needs and cultivate student strengths so they can be ready to learn and engage in school. No longer conceived of as “wrap-around” or a separate program, this way of doing student support creates a unified, comprehensive “whole child” approach to students’ growth across all domains of development and learning. When fully implemented, it simply becomes the way that schools operate day-to-day. This embedded approach, which builds upon existing personnel, structures, practices, and programs within a school can help to ensure operational sustainability.

► Design for adaptability.

When integrated student support is implemented over time, the systematic approach allows for ongoing feedback and follow up that permits responsiveness as students’ developmental needs and circumstances change. This includes adaptability to changing economic, social, and public health conditions.

When fully implemented,
it simply becomes the
way that schools operate
day-to-day.



► Take steps to promote political and policy sustainability.

Building broad understanding and support for an integrated and comprehensive approach can help to create sustained political momentum and a policy context supportive of ongoing implementation. Consider how communications and engagement of all stakeholders, including teachers, principals, district staff, school board members, families, and students can be built from inception through implementation. Strategies may include:

- ▷ Sharing school and community needs assessment information.
- ▷ Sharing information about the approach to supporting the strengths and needs of all students.
- ▷ Sharing anonymized feedback from teachers, students, and families.
- ▷ Sharing process data about implementation.
- ▷ Sharing outcomes data.
- ▷ Inviting local leaders to visit schools.
- ▷ Highlighting comprehensive student support to the media.
- ▷ Framing and communicating information in a manner responsive to recognized challenges or matters being deliberated.

► Plan for financial sustainability.

Identifying long-term funding sources is key to sustained implementation of a system of integrated student support. Consistent with the initial budget developed [above](#), consider federal, state, local, public, and private sources of funding such as:

- ▷ The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act's Titles I, II, III, and IVA.
- ▷ Federal grants such as those related to Full Service Community Schools, Rural Education, Promise Neighborhoods, Health and Mental Health.
- ▷ Federal stimulus funds for education such as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER).
- ▷ Federal funds to local municipalities like Community Services Block Grants and Social Services Block Grants.
- ▷ Community Medicaid Reimbursement Funds.
- ▷ Direct Medicaid reimbursement, where possible.
- ▷ Local hospital partnerships, Community Action Program agency partnerships, and other community-based organizations that may be able to provide funding.
- ▷ State education funds which may be available to provide student support and address students' comprehensive needs.
- ▷ State grants in support of partnerships between districts and evidence-based providers of integrated student support.
- ▷ State grants or professional development opportunities for schools and districts in support of best practices for integrating comprehensive school and community resources for students.
- ▷ Local sources of revenue.
- ▷ Philanthropic support.

Additional information and resources are available at:

Boston College Center for Thriving Children

Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) Center

City Connects

Coalition for Community Schools

Communities In Schools

Harvard University Graduate School of Education, EdRedesign Lab

Learning Policy Institute

Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium

National Center for Community Schools

National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development

New York City Department of Education, Community Schools

Sciences of Learning and Development Alliance

Search Institute

United States Department of Education, Best Practices Clearinghouse

University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) National Center for Mental Health in Schools

University of Pennsylvania Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education

APPENDIX A

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