**POLICY BRIEF**
**FALL 2023**

Mary E. Walsh Center for Thriving Children
BOSTON COLLEGE

# STATE APPROACHES TO INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

## INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

As policymakers seek to better address the student mental health crisis, an uptick in school violence, and declines in math and reading scores, there is a search for evidence-based answers that allow local schools and districts to adapt proven approaches to their specific community contexts.

In response, at least 26 states are at some stage of policymaking to advance integrated student support. 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 order to help promote healthy child development and learning[1].

The National Guidelines for Integrated Student Support illuminate how policymakers can better support the implementation of approaches demonstrated to benefit students, teachers, schools, and taxpayers. Effective approaches to integrated student support are associated with:

- Increased attendance and reduced dropout rates[2].
- Improved academic achievement[3].
- Increased teacher retention and satisfaction[4].
- Improved cost-efficiency by using school and community resources more effectively in support of student wellbeing and readiness to learn[5].

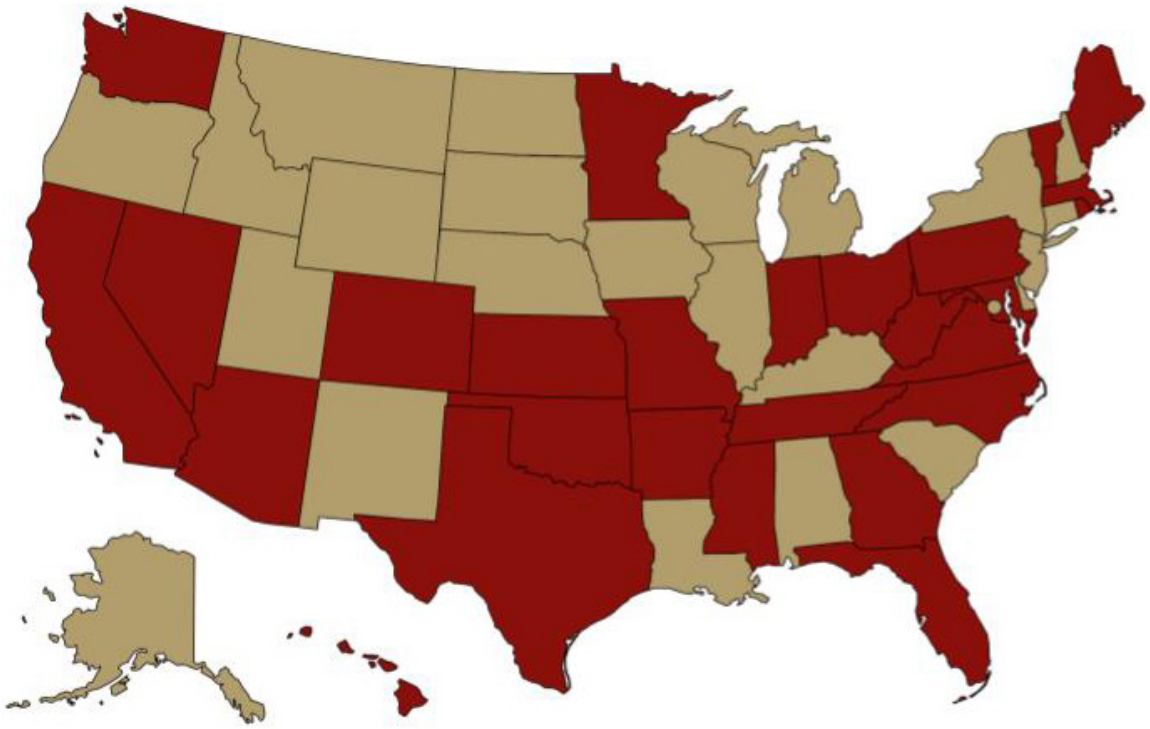
1 Boston College Mary E. Walsh Center for Thriving Children (2022). National Guidelines for Integrated Student Support. Retrieved from: integratedstudentsupport.org.

2 City Connects (2014). The impact of City Connects Progress report 2014. Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Thriving Children, Lynch School of Education, Boston College. www.bc.edu/content/dam/cityconnects/Publications/CityConnects_ProgressReport_2014.pdf
Bos, J.M., Graczewski, C., Dhillon, S., Auchstetter, A., Casasanto-Ferro, J., & Kitmitto, S. (2022). Building assets and reducing risks (BARR) I3 scale-up evaluation: Final report. AIR: American Institute for Research. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/BARR-Scale-up-Final-Report-508_June_28_2022.pdf.
Johnston, W. R., Engberg, J. Opper, I.M., Sontag-Padilla, L., & Xenakis, L. (2020). What is the impact of the New York City community schools initiative? RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/ pubs/ research_briefs/RB10107.html.
Somers, M., & Haider, Z. (2017). Using integrated student supports to keep kids in school a quasi-experimental evaluation of communities in schools. Mdrc: Building Knowledge to Improve Social Policy. https://www.mdrc.org/publication/using-integrated-student-supports-keep-kids-school.
Walsh, M.E., Lee-St. John, T., Raczek, A.E., Vuilleumier, C., Foley, C., & Theodorakakis, M. (2017). Reducing high school dropout through elementary school student support: An analysis including important student subgroups. [Policy brief]. Center for Thriving Children.

3 Walsh, M. E., Madaus, G. F., Raczek, A. E., Dearing, E., Foley, C., An, C. Lee-St. John, T. & Beaton, A. (2014). A new model for student support in high-poverty urban elementary schools: effects on elementary and middle school academic outcomes. American Educational Research Journal, 51(4), 704-737. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214541669
Moore, K. A., Lantos, H., Jones, R., Schindler, A., Belford, J., & Sacks, V. (2017). Making the grade: A progress report and next steps for Integrated Student Supports. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends. Retrieved from: https://www.childtrends.org/publications/making-grade-progress-report-next-steps-integrated-student-supports.

# POLICY TRENDS

States are advancing on three policy trajectories: advancing frameworks and best practices, incentivizing implementation of evidence-based models, or a hybrid approach which combines the two.



### Select States are promoting frameworks and best practices

States on the initial vanguard of integrated student support, from 2015-2018, primarily opted to advance best practices through legislation, frameworks, protocols, and professional development. For example, in 2016 the **Washington** State Legislature directed the education department to develop the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol within the state's Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports Framework.

### Select states are promoting evidence-based models

Policymaking shifted as recognition of the complexity of student needs grew, particularly with the pandemic, while evidence accumulated for specific models of integrated student support. Although states apply different standards when selecting "evidence-based" approaches, policymakers recognize that there are effective ways to integrate school- and community-based resources for students.  For example:

- **California** committed $4 billion over seven years to the California Community Schools Partnership Program to establish new, or expand existing, community schools. Community schools include integrated student support.
- **Indiana** is using a combination of state and federal funds to establish City Connects at Marian University in Indianapolis to provide technical assistance to local schools and districts. The Boston College Center for Thriving Children, which houses City Connects, is partnered with Marian University to build local capacity to support the implementation of City Connects statewide.

- **Minnesota** dedicated $5 million to allow 18 geographically distributed schools to implement the Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) program over three years.
- **Ohio** has invested more than $1.1 billion in Student Wellness and Success (FY20-23) and named City Connects and Communities In Schools as allowable uses of funds. The Ohio Department of Education also created an Office of Integrated Student Support within the agency.
- **Texas** allocated funds in FY21-23 from both general revenue and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for Communities In Schools.
- **West Virginia** committed $4.9 million in FY23 for Communities In Schools and continued this funding in FY24.

## Some states are taking a hybrid approach

A few states are both promoting best practices and catalyzing implementation of evidence-based approaches to integrated student support in local schools and districts. In **Massachusetts**, for example, integrated student support best practices are reflected in the state's Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and the education department sponsors a school and district learning academy tied to the National Guidelines for Integrated Student Support. At the same time, state education formula funding and grants are available to support comprehensive approaches to student support. More than 90 Massachusetts schools implement City Connects, and at least 8 implement BARR, both of which are evidence-based models of integrated student support.

## Conclusion

As federal stimulus funds recede and many states' revenues tighten, integrated student support can help policymakers and practitioners to more effectively and efficiently use existing investments in education, youth development, social services, and health and mental health to promote healthy child development and learning.

For more information about integrated student support policies, go here.

For guidance drafting research-informed legislation and frameworks, go here.

4 Boston College Mary E. Walsh Center for Thriving Children (2022). National Guidelines for Integrated Student Support. Retrieved from: integratedstudentsupport.org.
Heberle, A. E., Sheanáin, Ú. N., Walsh, M. E., Hamilton, A. N., Chung, A. H., & Eells Lutas, V. L. (2021). Experiences of practitioners implementing comprehensive student support in high-poverty schools. Improving Schools, 24(1), 76–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480220943761. City Connects (2022). The Impact of City Connects. Progress report 2022. Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Thriving Children, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.
Sibley, E., Theodorakakis, M., Walsh, M. E., Foley, C., Petrie, J., & Raczek, A. (2017). The impact of comprehensive student support on teachers: Knowledge of the whole child, classroom practice, and teacher support. Teaching and Teacher Education, 65, 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.02.012
City Connects (2020). City Connects Intervention and impact. Progress report 2020. Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Thriving Children, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.
5 Bowden A. B., Belfield C., Levin H. M., Shand R., Wang A., & Morales M. (2015). Comprehensive Student
Support: A Benefit-Cost Analysis of City Connects. Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education, Teacher's College, Columbia University. https://www.cbcse.org/publications/a-benefit-cost-analysis-of-city-connects
Bowden, A. B., Shand, R., Levin, H. M., Muroga, A., & Wang, A. (2020). An economic evaluation of the costs and benefits of providing comprehensive supports to students in elementary school. Prevention Science, 21(8), 1126–1135. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-020-01164-w
Bowden, A. B., Shand, R., Belfield, C. R., Wang, A., & Levin, H. M. (2017). Evaluating educational interventions that induce service receipt: A case study application of City Connects. American Journal of Evaluation, 38(3), 405–419. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214016664983 Moore, K. & Emig, C. (2014). Integrated Student Supports: A Summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers. Child Trends.
Sacks, V., Moore, K.A., McClay, A., & Piña, G. (2022). Integrated student supports in schools may boost lifetime incomes for students in families with low incomes. Child Trends. https://doi.org/10.56417/2754c1596w

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

centerforthrivingchildren.org

BOSTON COLLEGE
Lynch School of Education and Human Development

MARY E. WALSH CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN