

## PRACTICE BRIEF

# INTRODUCING SYSTEMS OF INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

## BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>



## 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.



### CITATIONS

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<sup>2</sup>Berliner, D. C. (2009). Poverty and potential: Out-of-school factors and school success. Education Policy Research Unit; Dearing, E. (2008). Psychological costs of growing up poor. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1136(1), 324-332; Phillips, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Duncan, G. J., Klebanov, P., & Crane, J. (1998). Family background, parenting practices, and the Black-White test score gap. In C. Jencks and M. Phillips (Eds.), The black-white test score gap. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>3</sup>Rothstein, R. (2010). How to fix our schools. Issue Brief #286. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, October 14, 2010. Available: [www.epi.org](http://www.epi.org).

<sup>4</sup>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>

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