

### OVERVIEW

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

Integrated student support is an 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.

This is a critical moment for action because:

- Students' learning and wellbeing are increasingly impacted by the complex challenges of our time.
- And yet, children and youth are resilient and there is growing understanding about how to more effectively support healthy child development and learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (2022, February 28). *Commentary: We must transform how schools address barriers to learning*. EdSource. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from [edsources.org/2022/we-must-transform-how-schools-address-barriers-to-learning/668110](https://edsources.org/2022/we-must-transform-how-schools-address-barriers-to-learning/668110)

- Policymakers are doing more to enable schools to address students' comprehensive wellbeing, including by creating conditions for systems of integrated student support.
- Schools are more open to innovation and change, including by implementing approaches to better address the complexity of student needs and interests.
- Evidence-based approaches to integrated student support, which build upon the traditional student support function of schools, provide a roadmap for action.

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, Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR), City Connects, Communities In Schools, the New York City Community Schools, and the National Center for Community Schools.

In the course of developing the guidelines, four key lessons emerged:

**LESSON 1:** Integration and coordination of comprehensive services is key both at the level of each student and the level of the school.

**LESSON 2:** Relationships are central to an effective system of integrated student support.

**LESSON 3:** Different evidence-based approaches use varied mechanisms to achieve many of the same core functions inside of a school.

**LESSON 4:** When well-implemented, these practices, processes, and structures become the drivers of systems improvements.

The six components of integrated student support are described below. To read the full report and to learn more, go to [integratedstudentsupport.org](http://integratedstudentsupport.org).



## CORE COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

