

## PRACTICE BRIEF

# FINANCING SYSTEMS OF INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT

## BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

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."<sup>1</sup> These schools can consolidate other federal education grants with Title I to gain spending flexibility.<sup>2</sup> (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.<sup>3</sup>

#### 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.

## MUNICIPALITIES



### 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,<sup>5</sup> and could by extension be used to finance a school coordinator who works to connect children to necessary resources and services.<sup>6</sup>

### 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.<sup>7</sup>

### 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

### 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.

CITATIONS:

<sup>1</sup> An Act Concerning Education-A Community Schools Strategy (2016). HB 113929.

<sup>2</sup> Junge, M. and Krvaric, S (2016). Using Federal Education Formula Funds for School Turnaround Initiatives. The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd (2016)

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. Department of Education guidance, Using Title I, Part A ARRA Funds for Grants to Local Educational Agencies to Strengthen Education, Drive Reform, and Improve Results for Students, Q&A E-15 (September 2009) available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/title-i-reform.doc>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.iste.org/docs/advocacy-resources/title-iv-fact-sheet-for-essa\\_final.pdf](https://www.iste.org/docs/advocacy-resources/title-iv-fact-sheet-for-essa_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Office of Community Services (2018) CBSG fact sheet. Retrieved from: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/csbg-fact-sheet>

<sup>6</sup> Walsh, M. E., Wasser Gish, J., Foley, C., Theodorakakis, M., Rene, K. (2016). Policy Brief: Principles of effective practice for Integrated Student Support, Center for Thriving Children.

<sup>7</sup> Schubel, J. (2017). Medicaid helps schools help children. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-helps-schools-help-children>

<sup>8</sup> Price, O. (2016). School-centered approaches to improve community health: lessons from school-based health centers. Brookings. Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Price-Layout2-1.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://forumfyi.org/generate>

<sup>10</sup> Walsh, M. E., Wasser Gish, J., Foley, C., Theodorakakis, M., Rene, K. (2016). Policy Brief: Principles of effective practice for Integrated Student Support, Center for Thriving Children.

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