

PRACTICE BRIEF

USING DATA TO INFORM PRACTICE

BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

High quality intervention models use data to inform and evaluate every phase of implementation. For systems of integrated student support to be effective, they must respond to the specific strengths and needs of individual students and to school and community contexts. Both qualitative and quantitative data assist in ensuring a responsive, improving, and effective system of support. This brief outlines planning processes for data collection, organization, analysis, and use.

PLANNING

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE AND CONTEXT FOR DATA UTILIZATION

Every district and school may have varied orientations towards data collection, sharing, and use. To understand the culture and context within which you will be generating and using data for a system of integrated student support, it may be helpful to answer the following questions:

CULTURE

- How would you describe attitudes towards collecting and using student data?
- What are the existing requirements for sharing and using data?
- Is there a champion or leader for data use in the school or district?
- Is there a topic that a specific site wants data on? How will implementation be organized around that topic?

EXISTING DATA

- What data do you already have?
- What sources do these data come from?
- Where are the data stored?

STAFFING

- District Level: Who is responsible for student support? What is the organization of responsibility? Is there an individual administrator or director?
- School Level: What is the administrative structure and distribution of responsibility for student support services?
- Besides teachers, who is responsible for addressing the whole child as your site defines it? Is there a school nurse, social worker, counselor, etc., and how are they operationalizing their responsibilities?
- What is the school culture? Is there a willingness to reframe the structure and distribution of student support responsibilities?
- If the assessment data says the school is doing fine, how are professionals going to help the school further student progress?
- Discuss the needs and strengths of the current student support structure.
- How are the following stakeholders involved in supporting all students?
 - Teachers and all staff who interact with students
 - Administrators
 - Families
 - Pre-identified community partners
 - If grades 7+, students themselves



ESTABLISHING STRUCTURES

DATA ALIGNMENT

Most schools are already collecting substantial data on their students. To align data with effective practices for integrated student support, school and district leaders may consider:

- Whether currently available child-level data permit an understanding of the child across all domains of development. For example, schools may have data on academic achievement and attendance, but what about student health?
- What additional data may be needed and how might it be collected and stored?
- How might existing systems be used to enable a system of integrated student support?
- How to avoid duplication in data collection?
- How to refine or establish a system for organizing data so that it permits an understanding of how individual students or groups of students are doing across multiple developmental domains, such as academics, social-emotional-behavioral, physical health and wellbeing, and family?

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

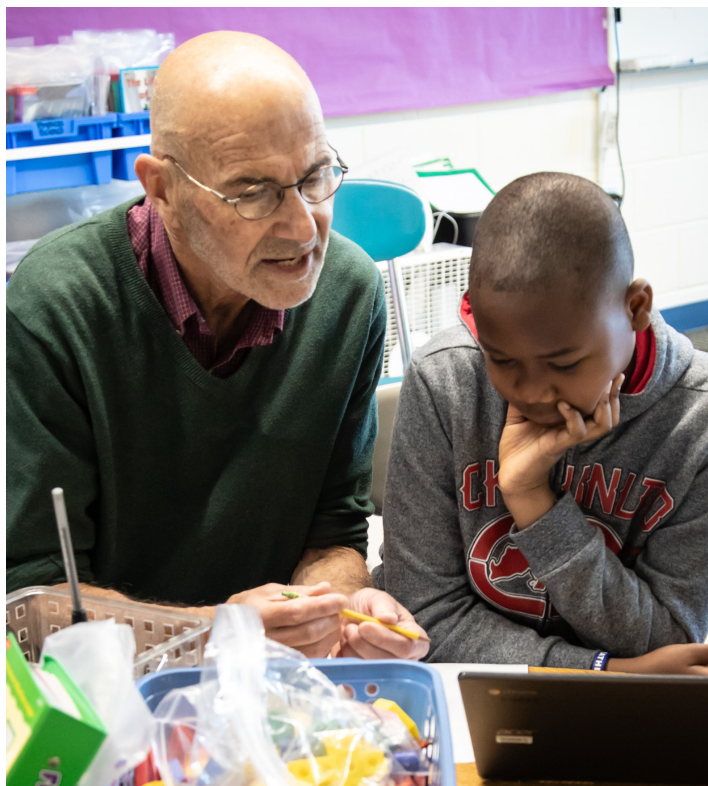
Identify or establish an implementation team that includes staff that understands the principles of effective practice, is qualified to analyze the data, and positioned to inform system structure.

- How might existing school structures be used or modified?
- What evidence-based approaches might inform system building in your school or district?
- What resources or flexibilities might implementation team members need in order to engage in this work?



ESTABLISHING INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The implementation team can help to define the set of process and outcome benchmarks that your school or district may use to determine how to improve your systemic approach to integrated student support, and how to determine whether or not it is having an impact on student outcomes. Select evidence-based models have used the following indicators to determine whether implementation quality and outcome indicators are on track.



PROCESS BENCHMARKS

Process benchmarks are designed to assess the quality of implementation and allow for continuous progress and improvement. Examples of process benchmarks include:

- Percentage of individual students reviewed
- Percentage of students with a personalized plan
- Number of services referred and delivered
- Number of services provided
- Number of agency partners
- Number of agency partners delivering individualized services
- Satisfaction surveys

OUTCOME BENCHMARKS

Outcome benchmarks are designed to determine expected long-term changes across all domains of student and school development. Examples of outcome benchmarks include:

- Attendance
- Report card grades
- Teacher rating of effort
- Social emotional development metrics
- State-wide achievement test scores
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- School Climate Survey
- Percent retained in grade
- Number of and types of disciplinary incidents.

RECOMMENDED TIMELINE FOR MEETING BENCHMARKS

Extensive research on effective systems of integrated student support provides insight into a timeline for improving both process and outcome benchmark indicators. Certain indicators, including those related to implementation quality, can improve rapidly. Other indicators, such as those demonstrating improvements in healthy child development and learning, can take longer to see. However, even on student outcomes we can look for early indicators that implementation is on the right track and is likely to have a positive impact on students over the long-term.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Process Benchmarks	<p>Students are being reviewed and receiving personalized plans.</p> <p>Agency partners are delivering broad and individualized services.</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys are administered.</p>	<p>More students are being reviewed and receiving personalized plans.</p> <p>More agency partners are available and more services (broad and individualized) are being delivered to students.</p> <p>Students and families report feeling more supported and connected.</p>	<p>All students are being reviewed.</p> <p>Supports are fully coordinated across in and out of school contexts.</p> <p>Staff report satisfaction with agency partners.</p> <p>Teachers are changing their practices to meet student needs.</p>
Outcome Benchmarks	<p>Improved student effort.</p>	<p>Improved social-emotional behavior.</p> <p>Improved report card grades.</p> <p>Improved school climate.</p> <p>Decrease in frequency and volume of disciplinary incidences.</p>	<p>Improved attendance.</p> <p>Decreased grade retention.</p> <p>Improved state-wide achievement tests scores.</p> <p>On Track for Long-Term Positive Outcomes</p> <p>Reduced chronic absenteeism</p> <p>Reduced grade retention</p> <p>Increased graduation rates</p>

CONCLUSION

When well implemented, systems of integrated student support can transform students’ developmental trajectories and demonstrate significant gains in academics and social-emotional outcomes. Data collection, organization, analysis, and use are vital to ensuring high-quality implementation, data-informed decision making, and an understanding of whether your efforts are on track to make a difference for students.

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



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