

Integrating Student Supports

This report describes facilitation and coordination efforts related to funds allocated from the safe and supportive schools line item 7061-9612 to leverage preexisting investments and establish an infrastructure to facilitate coordination of school and community-based resources including, but not limited to, social services, youth development and health and mental health resources in accordance with research-based practices for integrating student supports.

May 2019

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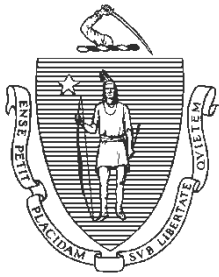
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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

May 6, 2019

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this Report to the Legislature, *Integrating Student Supports*, pursuant to Chapter 154 of the Acts of 2018, line item [7061-9612](#) that reads in part:

“...provided further, that not less than \$200,000 shall be expended in order to leverage preexisting investments and establish an infrastructure to facilitate coordination of school and community-based resources including, but not limited to, social services, youth development and health and mental health resources in accordance with research-based practices for integrating student supports; provided further, that the department shall report to the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means not later than October 1, 2018 on the results of such facilitation and coordination efforts in the prior fiscal year; ...”

This report outlines efforts that were funded by a combination of the 2017 state budget line item [7061-9612](#) (which did not request a legislative report) and the aforementioned 2018 line item. Both line items authorize that any unexpended funds can be spent through the subsequent June; in other words the 2017 state budget funds through this line item can be spent during school year 2017-2018 through June 30, 2019 and the 2018 state budget funds can be spent during school year 2018-2019 through June 30, 2020.

Based on insights from working with and hearing from the field, the Department determined that the best first step in building upon work already done in this realm and helping communities further efforts to create comprehensive, integrated systems of student support (*i.e., leverage preexisting investments and establish an infrastructure to facilitate coordination of school and community-based resources*) was to seek one or more vendor partners with experience in this realm who could aid in the planning and running of a professional development series. This would allow participating districts to commit in teams to learn together and to create action plans informed by *research-based best practices for integrating student supports*. The Department and partner vendors could then support implementation of these action plans as the next step. Pending funding availability, the Department and partner vendors could then support learning, action planning, and implementation of additional cohorts, informed by lessons learned from the initial efforts.

Efforts during school year 2017-2018 included drafting (winter 2018), posting (spring 2018), and reviewing submissions and selecting vendors (spring-summer 2018) related to a Request for Responses (RFR) through the state procurement system. This RFR sought one or more

individuals or organizations, with whom the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) could partner, to offer professional development and support to districts in their efforts to integrate student supports. School year 2018-2019 (winter-spring 2018-2019) is focused on working with the selected partners (the Rennie Center and the Boston College Center for Optimized Student Support) to facilitate an opportunity for nine district teams to participate in a series of professional development offerings with self-assessment (a landscape analysis) and action planning components, leading to action plan implementation (supported by the Department and partners) starting in the 2019-2020 school year (beginning in the summer/fall 2019). Pending funding availability, a new cohort of district participants will also be able to participate in professional development and action planning efforts, to be offered during the 2019-2020 school year, and then receive support to implement their action plans the subsequent school year 2020-2021.

[Supporting social-emotional learning, health, and safety](#) is one of the Department's strategic priorities designed to help prepare all students for success after high school. The primary goal is to promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy, culturally-responsive, and inclusive learning environments that address students' varied needs and improve educational outcomes for all. Integrated student support (ISS) efforts refers to a school- and district-based approach to promoting students' academic achievement and wellness by developing, securing, and coordinating supports that build upon students' strengths and address barriers to learning. These ISS efforts can be a critical component of communities' endeavors to create safe and supportive learning environments that establish effective systems and strategies woven into all areas of school efforts (such as those included in the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework: leadership, professional development, policies/procedures/protocols, teaching and learning, and collaboration with families, as well as access to resources and services).

Massachusetts has a strong foundation to build upon in order to advance a more comprehensive approach to integrated student support. This work is informed by, and will help further inform, the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission's [principles of effective practice for integrating student supports](#), as well as the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for schools](#) (most especially the sections related to access to resources and services), in addition to the Department's [Safe and Supportive Schools](#) and [Systems for Student Success](#) grant programs and resources.

We look forward to continuing to facilitate and learn from these efforts, and thank the Governor and Legislature for your commitment to this work.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature: *Integrating Student Supports* pursuant to Chapter 154 of the Acts of 2018, line item [7061-9612](#):

“...provided further, that not less than \$200,000 shall be expended in order to leverage preexisting investments and establish an infrastructure to facilitate coordination of school and community-based resources including, but not limited to, social services, youth development and health and mental health resources in accordance with research-based practices for integrating student supports; provided further, that the department shall report to the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means not later than October 1, 2018 on the results of such facilitation and coordination efforts in the prior fiscal year;...”

This report outlines efforts that were funded by a combination of the 2017 state budget line item [7061-9612](#) and the aforementioned 2018 line item. Both line items authorize that any unexpended funds can be spent through the subsequent June; in other words the 2017 state budget funds through this line item can be spent during school year 2017-2018 through June 30, 2019, and the 2018 state budget funds can be spent during school year 2018-2019 through June 30, 2020.

Background

[Supporting social-emotional learning, health, and safety](#) is one of the Department’s strategic priorities. The primary goal is to promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy, culturally-responsive, and inclusive learning environments that address students’ varied needs and improve educational outcomes for all. For students facing a range of academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and wellness-related barriers to achievement, effective classroom instruction is essential but may be insufficient to generate deep engagement and learning that prepares students for success after high school. Integrated student support (ISS) is a school- and district-based approach to promoting students’ academic achievement and wellness by developing, securing, and coordinating supports that build upon students’ strengths and address barriers to learning. These resources range from traditional tutoring and mentoring to the provision of a broader set of supports, such as linking students to physical and mental health care, enrichment opportunities, and extra-curricular activities, as well as connecting their families to parent education, family counseling, translation services, food banks, or employment assistance. The ISS efforts can be a critical component of communities’ endeavors to create safe and supportive learning environments that establish effective systems and strategies woven into all areas of school efforts (such as those outlined in [the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework](#): leadership, professional development, policies/procedures/protocols, teaching and learning, and collaboration with families, as well as access to resources and services).

Massachusetts has a strong foundation to build upon in order to advance a more comprehensive approach to integrated student support. This work is informed by, and will help further inform, the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission’s [principles of effective practice for integrating](#)

[student supports](#) as well as the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for schools](#) (most especially the sections related to access to resources and services), in addition to the Department's [Safe and Supportive Schools](#) and [Systems for Student Success](#) grant programs and resources.

There are many powerful examples of schools working to address the needs of students using a variety of programs, practices, structures, and models that present the potential to be transformed into a system of integrated student support. Schools are also increasingly focused on developing students' social-emotional competencies and providing safe and supportive school environments, both of which can be aligned with and aided by a focus on comprehensive integrated student supports. Similarly, all districts have components that can contribute to building an effective ISS system, often overseen by designated student support teams.

Yet even with these building blocks in place, schools and districts can improve their systems for integrating comprehensive supports. To start, schools are currently being asked to play many roles when it comes to addressing student needs. Practitioners (and students) would benefit from a more coordinated approach that includes links to external partners and supports with targeted expertise and connections. Even when these linkages are in place, schools often require assistance in better understanding students' and families' backgrounds, identifying services and supports appropriate for individual students and managing partnerships to ensure that they are aligned in a meaningful way with the work of the school. Moreover, many schools and districts could use additional support to measure the impact of their current practices and programs on student outcomes.

Solicitation of a Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy Provider

In the summer of 2018, the Department released a Request for Responses (RFR) to solicit an organization with expertise in Integrated Student Support Systems to help plan, organize, and facilitate a unique professional development opportunity for districts to: 1) deepen their understanding of the critical components of a system that effectively and proactively identifies and addresses students' strengths and needs, and 2) either adopt a research-based model/practices or rigorously strengthen existing student support structures.

Working with the Department, the selected vendor planned, organized, recruited for, and facilitated an Integrated Student Support professional development opportunity (including a series of in person and virtual convenings) for districts, referred to as the Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy. This professional development opportunity is designed to help districts (1) understand the core components of integrated student support and how they work together, (2) conduct a self-assessment (landscape analysis) on the current practices, processes and resources they have dedicated to each core component, (3) learn about evidence-based models and strategies to establish effective integrated systems, and (4) implement a selected model/approach or develop/strengthen the district's own model including all core components.

Ultimately, the Department received four proposals in response to the RFR. After careful review of the written applications, as well as follow up interviews with a subset of applicants, Department staff selected a collaborative proposal submitted by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy (the Rennie Center) and Boston College Lynch School of Education's

Center for Optimized Student Support (COSS). These two organizations have a long track record of providing meaningful training and networking opportunities for school and district leaders, a comprehensive understanding of the core components of ISS systems, and a history of translating theoretical concepts into practical guidance and resources for educators. They can help the Department build upon preexisting investments in efforts related to integrated student supports. They can help inform district efforts to establish an infrastructure to facilitate coordination of school and community-based resources, including, but not limited to, social services, youth development and health and mental health resource. They can also inform the professional development and action planning and implementation processes with research-based practices for integrating student supports. They are well-positioned to bring together and facilitate change among a cohort of districts interested in strengthening their student support systems.

Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy Design

The Department worked with its selected partners (The Rennie Center and COSS) to design a professional development series, the Systemic Student Support (S3) Academy. The S3 Academy is designed to deepen practitioners' understanding of the critical components of a system that effectively and proactively identifies and addresses students' strengths and needs. It also helps district and school practitioners identify next steps; by the end of the year, participants have developed a preliminary plan for advancing toward a system of integrated student support, and they are prepared to move forward toward implementing an approach that can be embedded in the ongoing work of school and district staff to create safe and supportive schools.

The S3 Academy is structured around a set of three day-long workshops facilitated by the Rennie Center and COSS. These workshops bring together district and school staff to receive in-depth professional development as well as technical assistance through a series of guided planning sessions. In between the three in-person workshops, virtual sessions also support districts and schools with self-assessing their own practice and building a thoughtful, well-designed plan to improve their student support systems. To the degree possible, these plans are informed by, aligned with, and integrated into other self-assessment and action planning efforts where appropriate (e.g., safe and supportive schools, rethinking discipline, turnaround, school and district improvement plans, etc.).

S3 Academy Overview
Goal: Bring together district and K-8 school (elementary or elementary + middle or middle) practitioners to: understand the core components of integrated student support and how they work together; self-assess on current practices, processes, and resources; learn about evidence-based models and strategies to establish effective integrated systems; and develop a plan for advancing integrated student support.
In-Person Workshops
Workshop 1: December 12, 2018
Aim: Increase participants' understanding of the meaning and impact of ISS.
Participating teams:
• Meet the other participants and learn about each other's experiences and interests. • Learn from experts in the field about the science and core components of ISS, as well as the evidence on the impact of ISS. • Explore and synthesize their understanding of ISS, laying the groundwork for the ISS landscape analysis process.

Workshop 2: February 28, 2019	
Aim: Use ISS landscape analysis indicators to set the stage for the planning process.	
Participating teams:	
• Reflect on the outcomes of their landscape analysis both within and across district teams. • Analyze their ISS landscape analysis data and use it to generate an actionable problem of practice. Learn from experts in the field about research-based models and practices that can enhance or strengthen student support structures.	
In-Person Workshops (continued)	
Workshop 3: April 3, 2019	
Aim: Refine plans and prepare to implement ISS in schools and districts.	
Participating teams:	
• Reinforce their understanding of integrated student support models and practices. • Use guided work time to reflect on and refine preliminary plans. • Develop measurable outcomes that can help guide ongoing work.	
Virtual Convenings	
Virtual Convening 1: January 14, 2019	Virtual Convening 2: March 14, 2019
• Introduce an online ISS landscape analysis resource and allow participants to ask questions and clarify their understanding • Following this convening, teams carry out the ISS landscape analysis on their own time prior to the second in-person workshop	• Introduce a planning template and allow participants to ask questions and clarify their understanding • Following this convening, teams complete a draft plan on their own time prior to the third in-person workshop

Additionally, the Rennie Center and COSS are available to offer targeted support and technical assistance as teams work through the landscape analysis and planning process. They will also provide feedback to districts on the plans that each team develops.

Selection of Participating Districts and Next Steps

In the fall of 2018, the Department released an application for interested districts to apply to participate in the S3 Academy. The Department, the Rennie Center, and COSS also hosted a webinar to share more information about the opportunity and answer relevant questions. Districts of any size, location, or general demographics were eligible to apply. However, it was specified that districts would receive priority for selection if they have K-8 schools (elementary; or elementary and middle; or middle) with extensive student support needs, where this type of systemic approach is particularly vital to ensure that students can thrive (e.g., schools identified as requiring broad/comprehensive or targeted/focused support).

Nine districts submitted applications for the S3 Academy, including: *Arlington Public Schools, Belchertown Public Schools, Fall River Public Schools, Hudson Public Schools, Nantucket Public Schools, Nashoba Regional School District, Shrewsbury Public Schools, Taunton Public Schools, and Wachusett Public Schools*. After the Department, the Rennie Center, and COSS reviewed each application and followed up with additional questions where necessary, all nine districts were accepted into the Academy. Despite outreach efforts to prioritize districts that are requiring assistance or intervention from the Department through the school and district accountability system, the Department received and accepted applicants that reflected more diversity in terms of needs and resources. The Department will consider possible ways to more effectively outreach to priority districts in the future (in particular moving the outreach and application process to earlier in the year to align with the timeline of other Department

academies). That said, it is also valuable to support needs in all communities, and learn from efforts that can potentially offer lessons learned to a broader range of communities across the Commonwealth.

The three in-person cross-district trainings were held in Marlborough on December 12, 2018, February 28, 2019, and April 3, 2019. The two virtual convenings (webinars) took place on January 14 and March 14, 2019. The Department and its partners will be reviewing action plans once submitted, and will reflect on lessons learned from this year, to be able to apply them to next year's efforts.

Pending the availability of additional funding during school year 2019-2020 (from remaining available 2018 state budget funds, authorized to be spent through the June 30, 2019 and/or from 2019 state budget funds, if appropriated for this purpose), the S3 Academy plans to support participating districts with the implementation of their action plans. If possible, the S3 Academy will also expand to support an additional cohort of districts and schools during the 2019-2020 school year.