Making the Grade: Assessing the Evidence for Integrated Student Supports

Webinar

March 6, 2014
Agenda

1. Overview of Child Trends and ISS project, Carol Emig, President, Child Trends
2. Presentation of ISS Study Findings, Kristin Anderson Moore, Senior Scholar, Child Trends
3. Communities In Schools, Daniel Cardinali, President
4. Children’s Aid Society, Jane Quinn, Vice President for Community Schools and Director of the National Center for Community Schools
5. City Connects, Mary Walsh, Executive Director, and Daniel Kearns Professor, Lynch School of Education at Boston College
6. Q&A
Child Trends’ Field-Building Work

• Strengthen and evaluate programs;
• Design new programs
• Recommend refinements to existing programs and policies
• Examine research and evidence base for promising programs
• Share what we’re learning
Why Examine ISS?

• Education achievement gap
• Proliferation of integrated student support/community school/wrap-around programs
• Alignment with child development literature
Acknowledgements

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AT&T Foundation
What are Integrated Student Supports?

ISS is an emerging field of practice, which relies on the coordination of prevention and intervention services for students and families to:

- Remove academic and non-academic barriers to learning
- Increase chances of school success
- Expand opportunities for positive youth development
Key Findings

1. There is emerging evidence that ISS models can contribute to student academic progress
2. Preliminary studies find a positive return on investment
3. ISS, as a student-centered approach, is firmly grounded on child and youth development research
4. ISS is aligned with empirical research on the varied factors that promote educational success
5. High-quality implementation is important to achieve positive outcomes
This Review of ISS Involved:

• Examination of ISS models in practice
• Synthesis of educational research
• New empirical analyses of high school graduation and post-secondary attendance
• Assessment of alignment with child development theory
• Review of outcome evaluations
• Examination of cost-benefit analyses
• Assessment of implementation evaluations
ISS Approaches Reviewed

Nine ISS approaches were reviewed. These are national models that:

- Operate in multiple states and school districts
- Serve an estimated 1.5 million at-risk students
- 75 percent of students are black or Hispanic

CoZi Initiative
Similarities and Differences Across the Models

Similarities:

- Have common core components
- Target needs and offer supports for students, schools and families
- Supports are tailored to the needs of the community, school, and students

Differences

- Implement the core components in different ways
Common Components

Integrated Student Supports
Core Components
Examples of Common Supports

Student-Level

- Physical and mental health interventions
- In-school academic and expanded learning time opportunities

Family-Level

- Social services for families in need
- Parent education and family counseling

School-Level

- Efforts to improve school climate
- Efforts to improve school effectiveness
ISS Theory of Change
Aligned with Child/Youth Development Theory

• Child-centered approach
• Lifecourse perspective
• Positive youth development approach
• Whole child perspective
• Ecological theory
What Factors Lead to Educational Success?

State and federal policy

Neighborhood

School

Peer

Parent and family

Individual
Conclusions from Educational Research and Original Analyses

Many factors influence school success
  • Factors span domains, not just in-school factors
  • Individually, factors have relatively small effects
  • Collectively, they shape students’ futures

This provides empirical evidence for the comprehensive ISS approach
Review of Evaluations
Do ISS models improve academic and non-academic outcomes?

To assess this, we:

1. Identified evaluations of ISS models
2. Examined the study rigor of each evaluation using specific criteria, and
3. Summarized program effects on academic and non-academic outcomes
We Found Nearly a Dozen Rigorous Evaluations

Out of the 36 outcome evaluations reviewed,

• 11 met criteria and 25 did not

Of the 11 evaluations included in our review,

• 4 were RCTs and 7 were QEDs
• 8 evaluated full ISS models (1 RCT, 7 QED) and 3 evaluated partial ISS models (level 2 vs 1) (all RCT)
Findings for Academic Outcomes are Promising ...

Some improvements in:
- Student school progress
- Attendance
- Math and reading/ELA
- Overall grade point average

- Most effects found in quasi-experimental studies.
- Non-academic outcomes have few evaluations and few results.
### Effects on Student School Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>RCTs</th>
<th>QEDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Progress</strong></td>
<td>0 out of 2 with at least 1 sig. impact</td>
<td>3 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cumulative Promotion Index</strong></td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
<td>Assessed for CIS, but no sig. test (school level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credit completion</strong></td>
<td>0 out of 2</td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade retention</strong></td>
<td>Assessed for CIS Jacksonville, but no sig. test (school level)</td>
<td>1 out of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dropout</strong></td>
<td>Assessed for CIS Austin, but no sig. test (school level)</td>
<td>1 out of 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promoting power</strong></td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
<td>1 out of 1</td>
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</tbody>
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### Effects on School Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>RCTs</th>
<th>QEDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Attendance</td>
<td>1 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. impact</td>
<td>3 out of 3 with at least 1 sig. effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>0 out of 2</td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic absenteeism</td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
<td>2 out of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance rate</td>
<td>1 out of 2</td>
<td>1 out of 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Effects on Academic Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome measures</th>
<th>RCTs</th>
<th>QEDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 out of 3 with at least 1 sig. impact</td>
<td>4 out of 6 with at least 1 sig. effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading and ELA Achievement</strong></td>
<td>4 out of 6 with at least 1 sig. effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reading/ELA test scores</td>
<td>0 out of 3</td>
<td>4 out of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reading/ELA report card scores</td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
<td>3 out of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math Achievement</strong></td>
<td>1 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. impact</td>
<td>4 out of 6 with at least 1 sig. effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Math test scores</td>
<td>1 out of 4</td>
<td>4 out of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Math report scores</td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
<td>3 out of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Achievement (GPA)</strong></td>
<td>0 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. impact</td>
<td>2 out 2 with at least 1 sig. effect</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Effects on Student-Level, Non-Academic Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome measures</th>
<th>RCTs</th>
<th>QEDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-Level, Non-Academic</td>
<td>0 out of 4</td>
<td>3 out of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School attachment</td>
<td>0 out of 4</td>
<td>1 out of 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School behavior problems</td>
<td>0 out of 4</td>
<td>2 out of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and emotional learning</td>
<td>0 out of 4</td>
<td>0 out of 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>0 out of 1</td>
<td>0 out of 1</td>
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Review of Cost Effectiveness
Return on Investment

Three studies estimate long-term payback for $1 invested:

$11.60

$10.30 for elementary,
$14.80 for middle

$4.40/$9.96
Return on Investment

Complex assumptions and methods

One particularly critical assumption:

• Services and programs provided by the ISS models are included as a cost but;
• Services in the community are not considered a cost
• Aligned with ISS theory of change

Unexamined questions:

• Do communities really have unused capacity that needs to be accessed?
• Are there really no incremental community costs?
• Does the ISS model provide efficiencies, which lower costs?
• Nevertheless, the return on investment is >$1
Review of Implementation Evaluations
To Assess Evaluation Implementation, We:

- Identified implementation studies examining *associations* between implementation approaches and outcomes
- Selected studies that met the outcome evaluation review criteria
- Summarized the effects of implementation characteristics on academic outcomes
ISS Implementation Quality is Related to School-Level Outcomes

Two models explored associations between implementation and academic outcomes:

1. **Communities in Schools (CIS) National Evaluation**
   - Mix of 179 elem., 98 middle, 51 high schools (3 years)
   - Implementation rubric with 19 items
   - Schools coded low or high

2. **Comer Schools (2 studies)**
   - Chicago: K-8 schools 5th-8th graders (4 years)
   - Maryland: 23 middle schools (2 years)
   - Implementation index with 11 items
   - Continuous score
Specific Results are Mixed

- It is clear from both studies that quality matters, but...
- It isn’t clear which activities or processes, or combinations of activities or processes, are related to better outcomes.
- More research is needed.
Findings Regarding Implementation Quality in ISS Models

- The CIS study found that low-quality implementation is no different than no program.
- High-quality implementation is key, but
- It is not yet clear what services affect what outcomes and which students are most likely to benefit.
In Sum:

Across ISS models, the details differ, but the overarching approaches are quite similar:

- Comprehensive services are offered (not just academic)
- Integrated (not just co-located) supports
- Person-based/student-focused, as much as place-based
- Needs assessments are conducted
- Ongoing data and monitoring are emphasized
- Families and communities are engaged
Six Key Conclusions

1. As an approach, ISS is based in research on child and youth development, and draws profoundly from the wisdom of experienced practitioners; however

2. The evidence base regarding effectiveness is emerging; findings are promising, especially for academic outcomes, but the evidence comes primarily from quasi-experimental evaluations.

3. Understanding of ISS core components is general, not specific
Six Key Conclusions

4. Research indicates the determinants of educational achievement and attainment are myriad and include non-academic factors

5. Individualized, or tiered, attention to non-academic needs, as done in ISS models, can improve academic performance

6. Initial estimates of cost effectiveness indicate that the return on investment is greater than $1 per $1 invested
Research Needs

ISS is a promising and rapidly-growing approach with emerging evidence. Further research and evaluation are warranted:

• More impact evaluations: assess academic and non-academic outcomes and mediators
• Research on best practices: what components are essential?
• Research/evaluation on what works for whom
• Greater uniformity across evaluations in terms of measures, methods, and rigor
• Richer data in national surveys on educational context and practices
• More work to estimate costs and cost effectiveness
Communities In Schools

Empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life

Achieving Results
The CIS Network strives for quality and scale

A network of nearly **200** non-profit organizations in **26 States** and the District of Columbia.

Serving **1.31 million students** annually in **2,200** public schools in urban, suburban and rural communities.

Serving **250,000 parents** or guardians

Focused on the **lowest performing schools** and the students most **vulnerable** to dropping out.
CIS Model of Integrated Student Supports (ISS)
Virtuous Learning Cycle: Ongoing evaluation

Communities In Schools:
- Positively impacts dropout rates \textit{and} on-time graduation rates
- Fidelity = \textit{Doubles} the effects

Communities In Schools:
- Randomized Control Trial
- A Comparative Interrupted Time Series

Diplomas Now:
- School Level Random Control Trail
Improving Implementation: CIS’ Total Quality System (TQS)

SCHOOL SITE STANDARDS

NONPROFIT BUSINESS STANDARDS

Higher performing organization, greater impact on children

EVIDENCE
City Connects

• What is City Connects?
  – An intervention that systematizes the delivery of student support in schools and leverages community and district services to narrow the achievement gap

• How?
  – Assesses strengths and needs of each student with every classroom teacher across four domains of child development
  – Links students to a tailored set of services/enrichments in community and school
  – Tracks service delivery electronically and follows up
  – Full-time licensed and trained school counselor/social worker

• Outcomes
  – Immediate positive impact on achievement and thriving
  – Long-term positive impact on absenteeism, retention, and drop out

*see www.CityConnects.org
Importance of Child Trends Report

• For the first time, pulls together many of the disparate interventions that address the out-of-school needs of students

• Recognizes that addressing out-of-school factors is a critical lever in closing the achievement gap

• Ties these interventions to what we know from research about how children develop

• Examines the research demonstrating that this work makes a difference to children’s achievement
Quality matters!

Rigor in practice
• Is standardized, but flexible
• Measures fidelity of implementation
• Relies on licensed, credentialed professionals
• Leads to sustainable changes in how schools and community partners do business

Rigor in Research
• Employs multiple methods
• Demonstrates impacts on students and school
• Includes longitudinal and cross-sectional approaches
Future directions

• Next step is to examine different features of the interventions and their impact on outcomes

As City Connects expands:

• Research is underway to examine how student support leads to positive effects on achievement
Background on The Children’s Aid Society’s Community Schools Work

- The Children’s Aid Society is NYC’s oldest and largest youth organization (160 years old, $130M budget)

- In March 1992, we opened our first community school in New York City, in partnership with the NYC Department of Education

- We currently operate 16 community schools in NYC

- Since 1994, we have also sponsored the National Center for Community Schools—a practice-based center that provides implementation assistance to community school leaders across the country (and world)
Response to the Study: Strengths

- Excellent research-based assessment of what young people need in order to achieve productive adulthood
- Strong analysis of the common essential practices/ingredients across model (despite variation in how they are implemented)
- Astute observations about the need for more research—this is a woefully understudied body of work, largely because of funding constraints
Response: Practice Issues

- Lack of articulation of the major differences in the models examined (whole school change)
- Lack of clarity about the relationship of Integrated Student Supports to the broader community schools field
- Not adequate attention to the ways many of these models are integrated into the life of the school (governance, school-based supports) or how they address equity and social justice
Response: Evaluation Issues

- Very narrow band of evaluations assessed—extremely tight criteria, given the nature of the work (a lot of learning is not reflected)
- We need a call for many different kinds of evaluations, moving forward
- Not sure the recommendation about random assignment of schools is practical
- The three cost studies, despite some similarities, count “costs” very differently
Q & A

childtrends.org

Thank you!