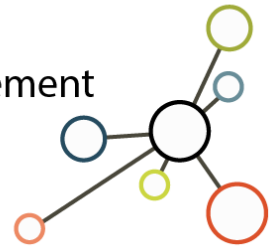




**OSPI**

Center for the Improvement  
of Student Learning



# Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol

Essential Practices for Implementing Integrated Student Supports

Developed by the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, OSPI

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## Background

In 2016, the Washington State Legislature created the [Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#) (WISSP) when it passed [4SHB 1541](#). The WISSP was one of an extensive set of interdependent strategies for closing educational opportunity gaps recommended by the State's [Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee](#) (EOGOAC). The components of the WISSP framework include needs assessments, community partnerships, coordination of supports, integration within the school, and a data-driven approach.

According to Child Trends, a national child, youth, and family research organization, "Integrated student supports (ISS) are a school-based approach to promoting students' academic success by developing or securing and coordinating supports that target academic and nonacademic barriers to achievement." Research shows that ISS is a promising approach for improving student learning and promoting healthy development.

The purpose of the protocol, as outlined in 4SHB 1541, is as follows:

- Support a school-based approach to promoting the success of all students;
- Fulfill a vision of public education where educators focus on education, students focus on learning, and auxiliary supports enable teaching and learning to occur unimpeded;
- Encourage the creation, expansion, and quality improvement of community-based supports that can be integrated into the academic environment of schools and school districts;
- Increase public awareness of the evidence showing that academic outcomes are a result of both academic and nonacademic factors; and
- Support statewide and local organizations in their efforts to provide leadership, coordination, technical assistance, professional development, and advocacy to implement high-quality, evidence-based, student-centered, coordinated approaches throughout the state.

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## Introduction

This protocol defines the key components of the WISSP framework and outlines essential practices linked to each component. The components of the WISSP are not unique to ISS. They are also found in other student support frameworks such as Response to Intervention (RTI), School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF), and other tiered systems of support that address one or more domains of learning and development. In these frameworks, Tier I, or universal supports, are provided to all students, Tier II, or targeted supports, are available to some students who need additional support, and Tier III, or intensive supports, to a few students who need to overcome significant barriers to learning and development. Each tier increases in intensity and adjusts to student needs. Tiered prevention logic in education is much like the public health model. Just as most diseases and illness can be prevented, managed, or overcome, so can learning and development challenges.

These components are also present in a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework that, when implemented, enables educators and community members to work together to effectively and efficiently address students' needs across multiple domains of learning and development within one seamless system (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

The WISSP draws from research on both integrated student supports (also known as full-service community schools, school community partnerships, community schools, school-based services, school linked services, or full-service schools) and other tiered support frameworks to highlight essential practices that help ensure students have equitable access to the supports they need to be successful. These practices include using needs assessments to identify students' academic and nonacademic barriers to learning, collaborating with the community to access additional resources for students and their families, using data to monitor progress, and creating alignment across student support services and programs.

A companion to this protocol, "*An Implementation Guide for the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol*," will be released in the spring of 2018 and will include additional tools and resources to support implementation. Resources can also be found on the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning's (CISL) website at [www.k12.wa.us/CISL](http://www.k12.wa.us/CISL).

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### Why Integrated Student Supports?

Students' learning and development is impacted by more than just the quality of the experiences they have in school. Their progress is also impacted by the experiences they have at home and in the community, the relationships or partnerships between individuals in these different settings, and the policies, cultural norms and values that govern interactions in these spaces (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Differences in the quality of children's early childhood development experiences leads to them entering the K-12 education system at different stages of readiness. According to 2016-17 Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) data, 59.4% of non low-income students demonstrated characteristics of entering kindergartners in 6 of 6 domains while only 32.6% of low-income students met the same standard. Further, as students move through the K-12 systems their experiences in school are uneven. In the 2015-16 school year an average 3.2% of white students were suspended or expelled while more than two times that number (8.0%) of black students were excluded from school at some point during the year. Across the state, while we have seen improvements in our overall graduation rate (76% in 2013 to 79.1% in 2016), gaps still remain. For example, in 2016, 89.3% of non low-income students graduated in four years while only 69.4% of low-income students met that mark. Similarly, while 88.6% and 81.5% of Asian and White students, respectively, graduated in four years, only 60.6% and 68.2% of Native American and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students, respectively, had similar success. Addressing these gaps in opportunities for all students to access the benefits of a high quality education requires a collaborative and systemic approach.

#### *Meeting the needs of students requires a collaborative, systemic approach*

When a student struggles in school, the extent to which they get the support they need to be successful depends on a number of factors. Someone must notice that the student has a need for additional support, an educator must correctly identify the source of the student's struggle, and the school must be in a position to connect the student to an appropriate intervention.

In many cases, schools do not have a system in place to uniformly identify early warning signs that a student might be struggling and to address them in a way that is culturally or linguistically responsive. Without a system in place, an opportunity gap is created because students are not identified based on

need, but instead based on whether a caring adult was in the right place at the right time, or had access to the right data they needed to notice the student’s need for support.

Research shows that when implemented within the context of a tiered system of support, ISS, which focuses on partnering with the community to develop or secure and coordinate supports that target academic and nonacademic barriers to achievement, is a promising approach to improving student learning and development (Moore, K.A., et. al., 2014).

### Creating an Enabling Context

In order for the implementation of an ISS approach to lead to positive student outcomes, it must be implemented within an enabling school and community context. Features of an enabling context include cultural norms, such as a vision for student learning and high expectations for student success, along with structural components like policies, procedures, and communication protocols. Successful implementation of ISS requires participation from all school staff and the engagement of families and communities within a context that supports this collaborative way of work.

Table 1 includes essential features of a school-community context that will enable the successful implementation of an ISS approach. The list draws from research on school-community collaborations and school improvement.

**Table 1. Features of an Enabling Context for Implementing Integrated Student Supports**

Context Feature	Description
Buy-in and Support	There is broad support among staff and the larger school community for a whole child approach to education and moving student supports in from the margins, to the center of educational improvement strategies.
Distributive and Collaborative Leadership	A culture of distributive and collaborative leadership engages all students, staff, families, and community leaders.
Funding	There is dedicated funding (from either a single, or multiple sources) for implementation and ongoing supports.
High Expectations	Families, school, district, and community leaders set high expectations for the academic, social, emotional, behavioral, mental health, and physical development of all students.
Opportunities to Learn in Multiple Contexts	Student learning and development at school, home, and in the community is connected and complementary.
Positive School Climate and Culture	Leadership teams take deliberate steps to create a positive school climate and to foster the development of a school culture that is safe, inclusive, and supportive where all students, their families, and community members feel welcome.
Professional Learning	Training, coaching, and other structured supports provide all staff, families, and community members with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to support the learning and healthy development all students.

Context Feature	Description
Support for Collaboration	There are organizational structures (e.g., policies, staff liaisons, communication protocols, etc.) in place to enable meaningful, two-way collaboration between families, schools, and community partners.
Team Structures	Teams use a results-oriented cycle of inquiry to drive continuous improvement.
Vision	The district has a clear vision for, and commitment to, supporting the learning and development of the whole child.
Universal Supports	A solid foundation of Tier I (or universal) supports is available for all students and are implemented continuously, with fidelity, by all staff in all settings (school-wide, classroom, non-classroom).

It is not critical that each of these features be in place at the point when a school is beginning the process of implementing an ISS approach, but it is essential that schools focus on building capacity in these areas to sustain the effort into the future.

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## Essential Practices of Components

### 1. Needs (and Strengths) Assessments

**A needs assessment must be conducted for all at-risk students in order to develop or identify the needed academic and nonacademic supports within the students’ school and community. These supports must be coordinated to provide students with a package of mutually reinforcing supports designed to meet the individual needs of each student. RCW 28A.300.139**

Needs assessments can occur at many levels – student, family, school building, district, and community. The first step in planning, coordinating, and delivering academic and nonacademic supports is to identify evidence-based tools and engagement strategies to determine the root cause of students' barriers to learning across multiple domains. Aggregate student level data from multiple sources along with community health indicators (i.e., poverty rates, insured rates, chronic health conditions, etc.) should be used to inform a comprehensive needs assessment, in which teams systematically determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for action. Needs assessments should be framed within the context of achieving student learning and school improvement goals previously established by the school with broad, meaningful input from families, school staff, and the broader school community.

#### *Student-Level Needs Assessments*

There are many types of student-level needs assessments. These assessments can address various domains of learning and development, or assess students’ access to basic needs. Student-level needs assessments use a range of direct (observing or assessing the student) or indirect (input given by student or others) data collection techniques. The needs assessments range from brief screeners (to identify strengths and catch students who may have early indicators of risk) to diagnostic assessments for students needing high intensity supports.

- 1) Identify evidence-based instruments and administration techniques to identify students' strengths, assets, challenges, needs, and gaps in services.
- 2) Create clear guidance for who uses the tools and under what circumstances.
- 3) Ensure questions on needs assessments are culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate, and trauma informed.
- 4) Identify data sources, determine the process for data collection, tools for managing data, as well as a strategy for analyzing data, communicating results, and action planning.
- 5) Determine how information collected during the needs assessment process will be integrated with other student level data, what information will become part of the student's permanent educational record, and what will only be used for action planning and progress monitoring.
- 6) Identify a range of relevant stakeholders (i.e., has knowledge of the student at home, in the community, and in the content and domains being evaluated) to participate in the needs assessment process.
- 7) Develop an action plan, based on the student's strengths and needs, to ensure their success.

#### *System-Level (School/Community) Needs Assessments*

System-level needs assessments and resource mapping creates the opportunity to identify academic and nonacademic supports that are currently available in school and in the community, and where gaps exist.

- 1) Identify and state a clear purpose for the needs assessment.
- 2) Identify a team to collect data.
- 3) Identify relevant data sources, a process for data collection, tools for managing data, and a strategy for analyzing data, communicating results, and action planning.
- 4) Review data to identify trends, gaps, and areas of need.
- 5) Conduct a resource inventory of existing programs and services from both inside and outside of the school.
- 6) Evaluate programs and services to determine effectiveness, eliminate duplication and fragmentation, and ensure resources are appropriately allocated.
- 7) Conduct surveys with key constituent groups to identify strengths, assets, challenges, and needs.
- 8) Interview key stakeholders for their interpretation of the data and their suggestions for its implications.

#### ISS Implementation Team

##### Critical ISS implementation team partners

- A district-employed site coordinator or a lead partner agency;
- School leaders and other key staff from all components of the school;
- Additional community-based agency partners (e.g., expanded learning providers, mental health agencies, child welfare, local hospital, library, university, law enforcement, local businesses);
- Parents and other community members;
- Students;
- Public and private funders; and
- Community leaders and elected officials to champion the endeavor

(Children's Aid Society, 2011)

- 9) Share findings and recommendations with stakeholders.
- 10) Identify an ISS implementation team that is responsible for creating action plans toward developing, securing, organizing, and coordinating a full continuum of supports that are available to students and their families either at school or in the community at the earliest sign of need.

## 2. Community Partnerships

**Community partners must be engaged to provide nonacademic supports to reduce barriers to students' academic success, including supports to students' families. RCW 28A.300.139**

A student's academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health development is influenced by factors inside and outside of the school setting. Ensuring their success is therefore a shared responsibility between the school, families, and the community. Strong reciprocal partnerships between schools and the community (i.e., expanded learning providers, health and human services agencies, housing and basic needs providers) support positive student development, whereas the lack of these partnerships becomes a risk factor (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998; Moore, & et. al., 2014).

Meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships between schools, community members, and community organizations allow for better alignment across learning environments (home, school, and community), expand the set of resources available to support students, increases the diversity in expertise among the individuals working on students' behalf, and facilitate easier access to supports/services for students and their families (Bronstein, & Mason, 2016).

- 1) Identify a staff person at the building and/or district level to serve as the primary point of contact for coordinating partnerships and integrating them fully into schools. A person from an outside organization could also be integrated within the school to provide this service.
- 2) Use results from resource mapping to identify community members and/or organizations that can provide needed supports to students and their families.
- 3) Create clear partnership policies, communication protocols, and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for each partnership that outlines its goals, scope, funding needs, types of services to be offered, and the indicators that will be used to measure progress.
- 4) Allocate adequate resources and time to develop and coordinate joint professional learning, and planning opportunities between schools and community partners to address barriers to collaboration, and so that both school staff and community partners have an opportunity to become familiar with each other's organizational structures, systems, policies, and processes.
- 5) Build a database of all partner resources with up-to-date contacts and services provided.
- 6) Develop a streamlined referral process to be used by both school and community organizations to ensure students have rapid access to supports at the earliest sign of need, along with protocols for sharing data about the outcome of referrals and student progress.
- 7) Create a sustainability plan to address on-going funding needs, staff changes or turnover, and continuity of operations.
- 8) Review the status of community partnerships annually to evaluate their effectiveness and relevancy to student and family needs.



### 3. Coordination of Supports

**The school and district leadership and staff must develop close relationships with providers of academic and nonacademic support to enhance effectiveness of the protocol. RCW 28A.300.139**

In order to effectively coordinate supports that address the needs of the student, schools must have a system in place. A well-coordinated system allows for intervention to be implemented early and be adjusted as needed in real time. The system also ensures adequate support for staff including professional learning, team planning time, policies, and operating procedures. The system helps with organization and bringing cohesion to instruction and student supports and enables rapid access to interventions.

An effective system of support is characterized by a multi-tier prevention framework of evidence-based whole school, small group, and individualized (i.e., Tier I, Tier II, Tier III) academic, social, emotional, behavioral, mental health, and other learning supports offered at the school and in the community. A continuum of supports promotes effective and efficient resource allocation, ensures that each student has equitable access to supports, and that those supports are layered and intensified according to the student's needs. This system should be comprehensive and adaptive to ensure effective and efficient planning, service delivery, data collection, monitoring, and follow-up of student supports.

The school principal works with site-based teams to ensure an array of evidence-based practices are available along a continuum of increasing intensity, there is capacity to offer the support to the students who need them, and those supports are implemented, monitored, intensified, faded, or discontinued as quantitative and qualitative data indicates.

- 1) Leadership teams facilitate understanding and skill building related to tiered prevention logic for staff, families, students, and community partners.
- 2) A person is identified at the building and/or district level to lead the coordination of supports including bridging between the school, community, and families.
- 3) Teams ensure a strong universal system for promoting healthy development and well-being and preventing learning and development problems is in place to support all students and reduce the number of students who might seem to need additional support.
- 4) A priority is placed on evidenced-based practices as a starting point for student supports.
- 5) School teams assess all current initiatives, practices, and programs that support students to ensure alignment, avoid duplication, and initiative overload. Aligned practices enhance effectiveness of supports and ensure sufficient allocation of resources based on student needs.<sup>1</sup>
- 6) Skills and competencies of each educational staff associate (ESA) who work in the building are identified across tiers of support, and the roles and responsibilities of support staff and community partners are clear to all stakeholders.
- 7) All academic, social, emotional, behavioral, physical, mental health, and other supports such as housing, food, transportation, and clothing assistance available to students (in the school and in the community) are documented and easily accessible to staff, students, families, and site-based teams to easily match supports to individual student/family needs. Each support is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pbis.org/Common/Cms/files/pbisresources/Alignment%20Brief.%20for%20posting.1.16.17.docx>

clearly described and includes the name of contact or coordinator, qualifying requirements or criteria, what type of information or data is reviewed to determine progress, and under what conditions the student no longer needs the additional support.

- 8) Teams have clearly documented and consistently followed processes to ensure early identification, intervention selection, and modification (intensify or fade) of supports, and when to exit students from participation.
- 9) Teams use a collaborative problem-solving process to create individual plans.
- 10) Individual plans are based on a determination of why students are experiencing a barrier to learning.
- 11) Individual plans are prevention-focused, continuously available, implemented within a week, developed with student and family, and linked to building-wide academic goals or expectations.
- 12) Individual plans include regular (weekly) home-school or home-school-community communication.
- 13) Students with a need for highly intensive supports have a tailored individualized plan for case managed and wraparound services.
- 14) Students who are highly mobile should experience as little disruption in existing supports as possible when transferring away from or into the school or district.
- 15) As a result of regular or frequent progress monitoring (at least monthly for all students), supports are modified, intensified, faded, or discontinued as needed. As part of progress monitoring, teams should confirm that the student received the support as planned.
- 16) Teams at the district, community, school, and student level including policy, management, and site levels guide the development, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability of systems.

#### **4. Integration of Supports**

**The school and district leadership and staff must develop close relationships with providers of academic and nonacademic support to enhance effectiveness of the protocol. RCW 28A.300.139**

The school principal is key to ensuring that there are effective strategies in place to enable all adults in the building as well as families and students to be aware of the services, supports, strategies, programs, practices, and resources available in the school and in the community, and that the process for accessing those supports is transparent. The school principal fosters the development of a culture of collaboration to ensure that a comprehensive system of services, supports, strategies, programs, practices, and resources are woven together and effectively linked and integrated into the daily functioning of the school. In order to fulfill this role, the school principal should be supported by district leaders, whose actions are ultimately driven by the district's strategic goals and policies established by the school board.

- 1) Student supports, offered by both the school and community organizations, are coordinated to facilitate seamless service delivery for students and families.
- 2) Academic and nonacademic supports provided by community organizations/members are fully integrated into the everyday functioning of the school, as opposed to merely co-location or add-ons.

- 3) Community providers who work in schools but aren't school staff are given adequate space and access to relevant student information, and their roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by staff, students, and families.
- 4) All staff are involved in supporting students and linking them to supports through identified channels.
- 5) Staff are trained to deliver and monitor supports in the setting that is least disruptive to the student's normal daily routine.
- 6) Strong communication channels between community providers, schools, and home allow for sharing of information to ensure new skills are generalizing in home and school environments and newly acquired supports are meeting the student's needs.

## 5. Data-driven

### **Students' needs and outcomes must be tracked over time to determine student progress and evolving needs. RCW 28A.300.139**

Data plays a central role in helping staff and community partners identify academic and nonacademic barriers to learning, match supports to individual student need, determine fidelity of implementation, and assess progress. A well-developed decision making system ensures information sharing between families, community agencies, and necessary school staff.

Using a common data-based problem-solving and decision making process at each level (student/family, school, district, community) helps to guide planning and implementation to support student and system improvements. Data also helps to place the problem in the context, as opposed to within the student. This process involves gathering and entering accurate and reliable data from multiple quantitative and qualitative sources in a timely manner, analyzing data to inform support planning and adjustment, and evaluating supports across tiers to ensure student and system level goals are achieved.

- 1) Ensure a data collection system and analysis tools are available and that staff are trained to use these systems and tools effectively.
- 2) Develop a common, centralized data system with MOUs for data sharing around supports/services provided by other organizations outside of the school.
- 3) Ensure student-level data in a school is processed by a data professional with specialized training and safeguards for confidentiality. This person will work to provide aggregate data for planning purposes and individual-level data to measure progress for individual students. Analyses do not need to be complex.
- 4) Ensure data are consistently organized, reports are easy to read and distributed to relevant stakeholders, and guidance for understanding visual displays are provided.
- 5) Identify and use a regular and clearly documented formal problem solving process (identify problem, analyze problem, implement plan, plan evaluation) to support continuous improvement.
- 6) Ensure data on student, school, and community success indicators in the areas of academics, behavior, physical and mental health, basic needs, and other domains are disaggregated by race, gender, disability, income, English Learner status, and other factors to inform improvement goals and action plans.

- 7) Create data decision rules or thresholds to identify which students will receive access to each intervention/support at which time. Data decision rules help determine when a support should be initiated, intensified, faded, or discontinued.
- 8) Collect and analyze fidelity data (data that allows you to determine whether the critical components of the support are in place) regularly to ensure support is provided as planned.
- 9) Collect and analyze individual student academic and nonacademic progress data to assess their ongoing need for support.

### Measuring Implementation Success

In many cases, implementing an ISS approach will require both cultural and systemic change. These shifts take time, but research suggest they have the potential to have lasting impacts on the context for learning and development in a school community, and ultimately, student achievement. As school teams progress through the implementation process there are several aspects of the student support delivery system and individual practices to help determine implementation success. Table 2 highlights some of the characteristics of a building’s student support system and overall approach to the provision of student supports that will be present when a school site is successfully implementing ISS.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Successful Integrated Students Supports Implementation**

Characteristic	Description
<b>Collaboration</b>	The school partners with families and community organizations to develop and realize a shared vision for student success.
<b>Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness</b>	All interventions and supports are responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students and families schools serve.
<b>Developmentally Appropriate</b>	All interventions and supports are appropriate for the age group or specific developmental level of each student.
<b>Equitable Access to Supports</b>	All students have access to a layered continuum of supports matched to their individual needs, and district and school resources are allocated based on need. Educators explicitly consider how culture, race, gender, power, and privilege shape students’ experiences in school and identify strategies for eliminating disparities in access to instruction and supports based on these differences.
<b>Evidence-based</b>	All interventions and supports are evidence-based. Their effectiveness, in the school’s particular context, is either proven by research or informed by the experience of staff who monitor implementation for impact.
<b>Resource Leveraging</b>	The school leadership team regularly assesses how they use local, state, and federal resources to provide students with additional support, and then partners with organizations in the community to leverage resources from other sources.
<b>Strengths-based</b>	All interventions and supports meet students’ needs by building on their strengths.
<b>Student Centered and Family Driven</b>	Students are at the center of all decisions related to the plan for their support. Students are engaged as co-constructors of solutions to the challenges they face. Families have a primary decision-making role in the

Characteristic	Description
	care of their children. School staff acknowledge that families can be both full partners working to ensure their student's success and, at the same time, periodically in need of support from the school to create a more stable home learning environment for their student.

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