



Making the Grade: Assessing the Evidence for Integrated Student Supports

Webinar

March 6, 2014



Agenda

- Overview of Child Trends and ISS project, **Carol Emig**, President, Child Trends
- Presentation of ISS Study Findings, **Kristin Anderson Moore**, Senior Scholar, Child Trends
- Communities In Schools, **Daniel Cardinali**, President
- Children's Aid Society, **Jane Quinn**, Vice President for Community Schools and Director of the National Center for Community Schools
- City Connects, **Mary Walsh**, Executive Director, and Daniel Kearns Professor, Lynch School of Education at Boston College
- 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

Bloomberg Philanthropies

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:

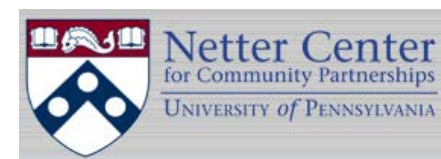
- Examination of ISS models in practice
- Synthesis of educational research
- New empirical analyses of high school graduation and post-secondary attendance
- Assessment of alignment with child development theory
- Review of outcome evaluations
- Examination of cost-benefit analyses
- Assessment of implementation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

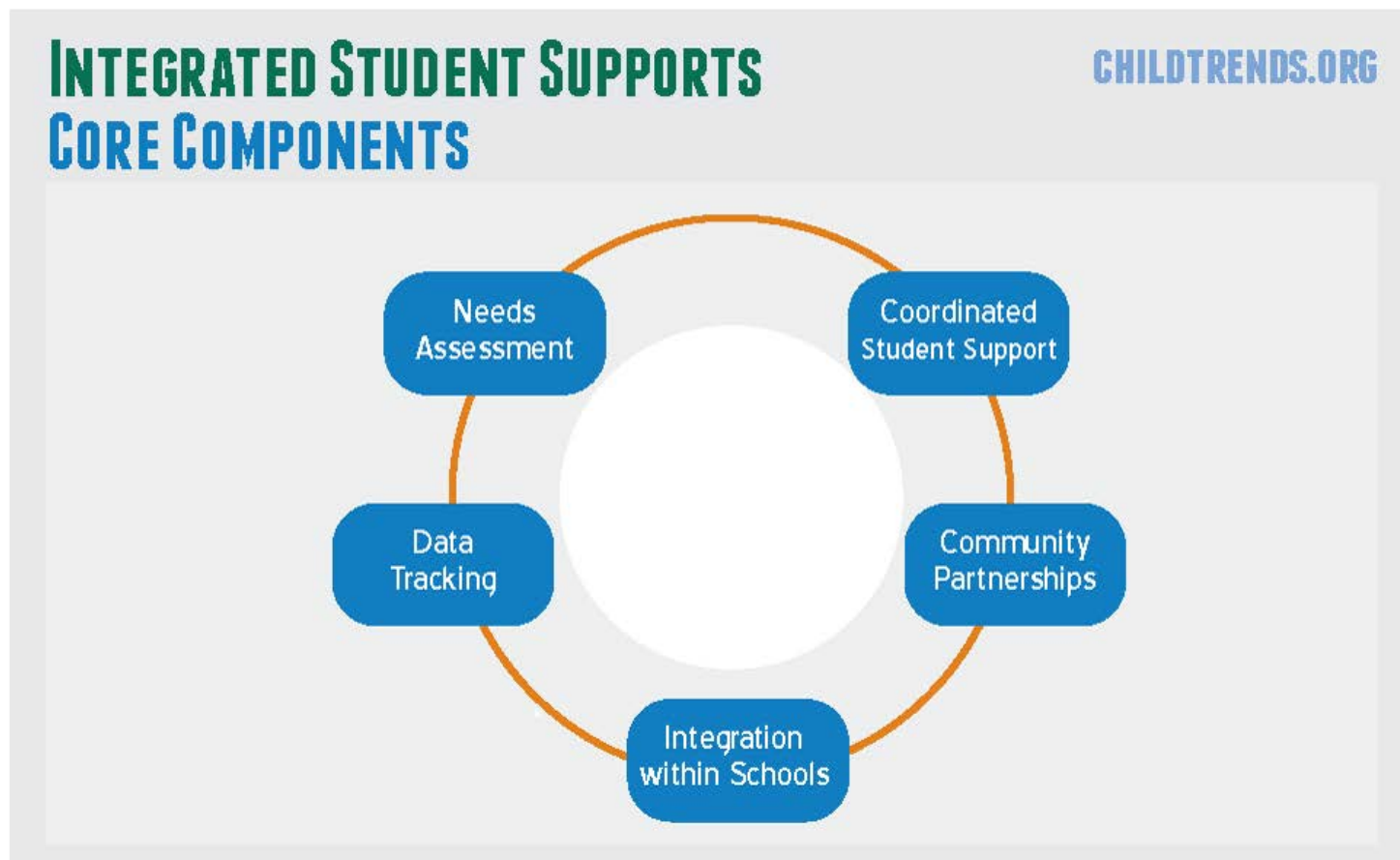
Similarities :

- 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



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

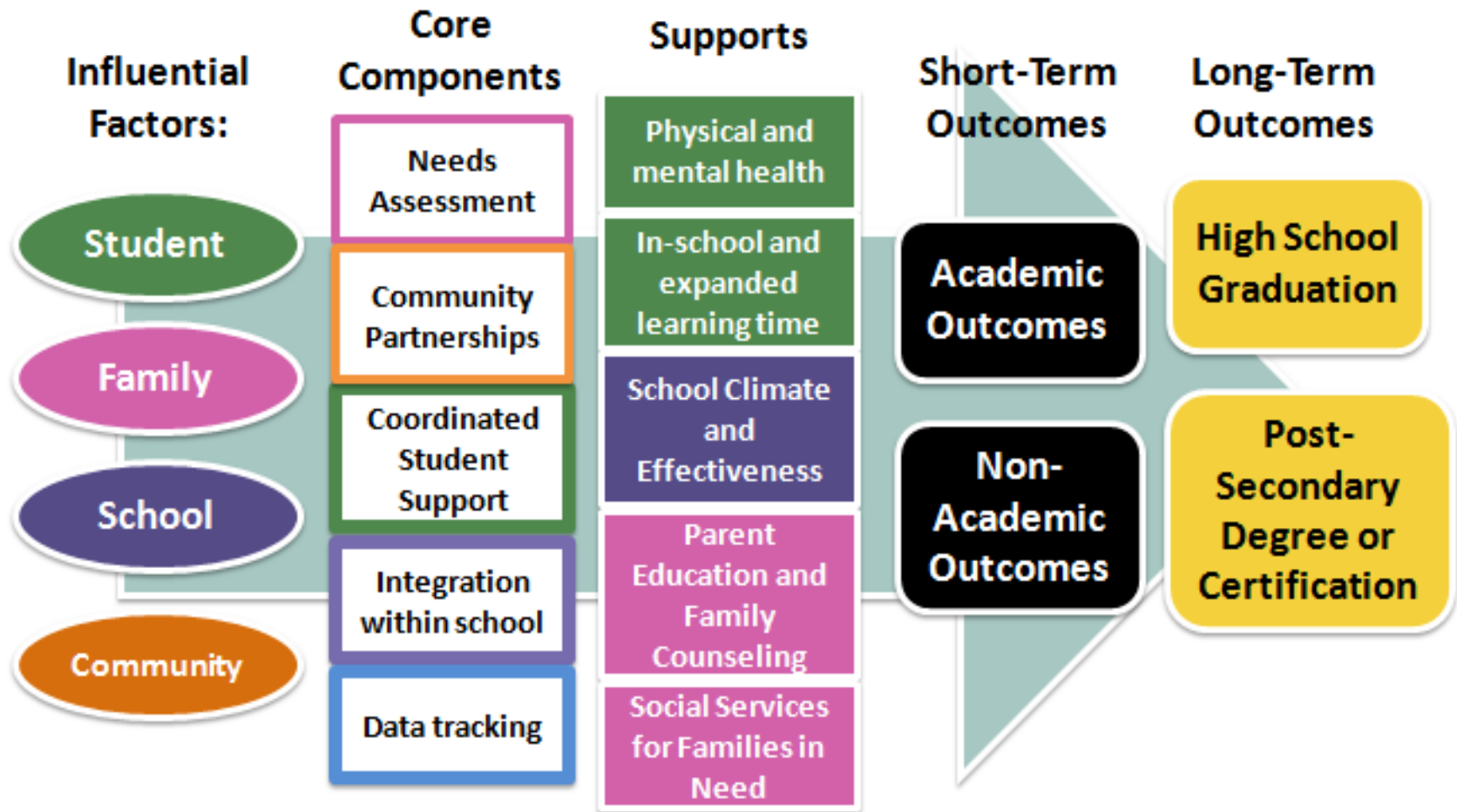
Parent education and family counseling

School-Level

Efforts to improve school climate

Efforts to improve school effectiveness

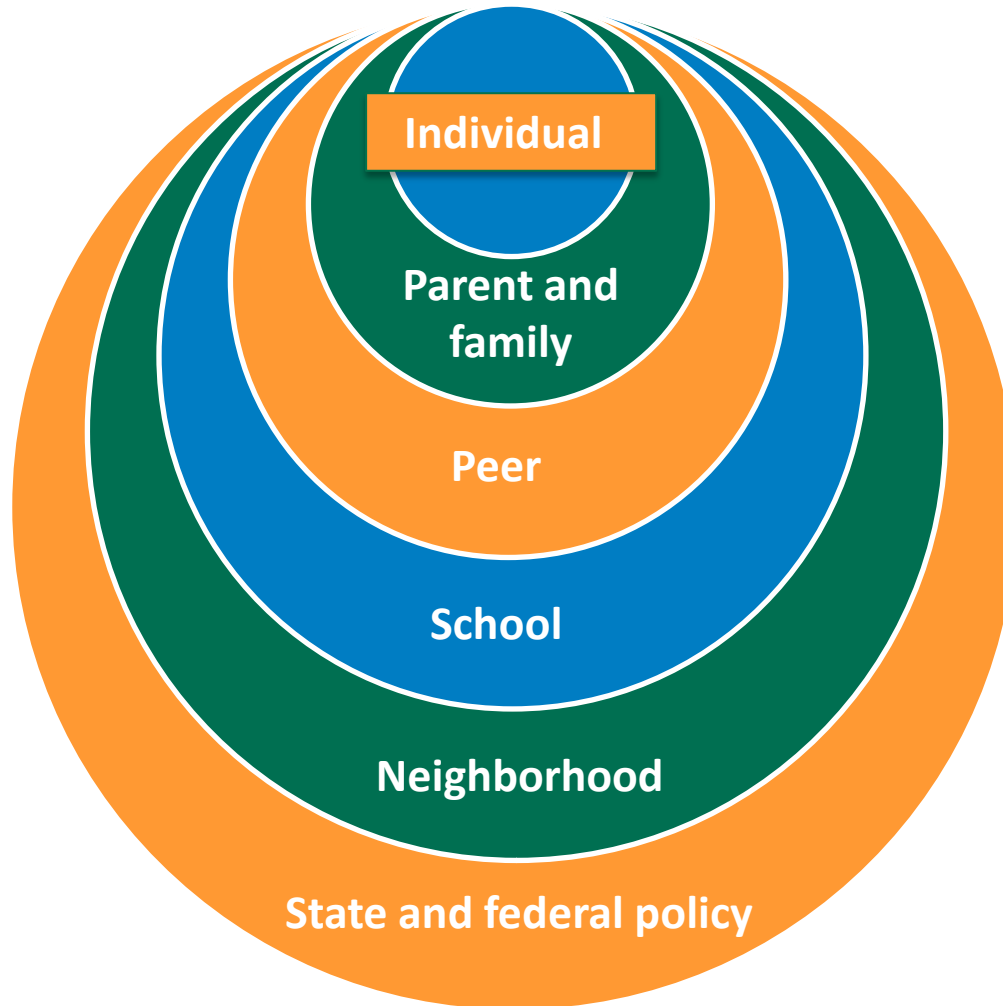
ISS Theory of Change



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?



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

| Outcome Measures | RCTs | QEDs |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Student Progress | 0 out of 2 with at least 1 sig. impact | 3 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. effect |
| Cumulative Promotion Index | 0 out of 0 | Assessed for CIS, but no sig. test (school level) |
| Credit completion | 0 out of 2 | 0 out of 0 |
| Grade retention | Assessed for CIS Jacksonville, but no sig. test (school level) | 1 out of 2 |
| Dropout | Assessed for CIS Austin, but no sig. test (school level) | 1 out of 1 |
| Promoting power | 0 out of 0 | 1 out of 1 |

Effects on School Attendance

| Outcome Measures | RCTs | QEDs |
|---------------------|--|---|
| School Attendance | 1 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. impact | 3 out of 3 with at least 1 sig. effect |
| Absenteeism | 0 out of 2 | 0 out of 0 |
| Chronic absenteeism | 0 out of 0 | 2 out of 2 |
| Attendance rate | 1 out of 2 | 1 out of 1 |

Effects on Academic Achievement

| Outcome measures | RCTs | QEDs |
|---|---|---|
| Reading and ELA Achievement | 0 out of 3 with at least 1 sig. impact | 4 out of 6 with at least 1 sig. effect |
| - Reading/ELA test scores | 0 out of 3 | 4 out of 6 |
| - Reading/ELA report card scores | 0 out of 0 | 3 out of 4 |
| Math Achievement | 1 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. impact | 4 out of 6 with at least 1 sig. effect |
| - Math test scores | 1 out of 4 | 4 out of 6 |
| - Math report scores | 0 out of 0 | 3 out of 4 |
| Overall Achievement (GPA) | 0 out of 4 with at least 1 sig. impact | 2 out of 2 with at least 1 sig. effect |

Effects on Student-Level, Non-Academic Outcomes

| Outcome measures | RCTs | QEDs |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Student-Level, Non-Academic | 0 out of 4 | 3 out of 6 |
| School attachment | 0 out of 4 | 1 out of 1 |
| School behavior problems | 0 out of 4 | 2 out of 4 |
| Social and emotional learning | 0 out of 4 | 0 out of 0 |
| Health and safety | 0 out of 1 | 0 out of 1 |

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

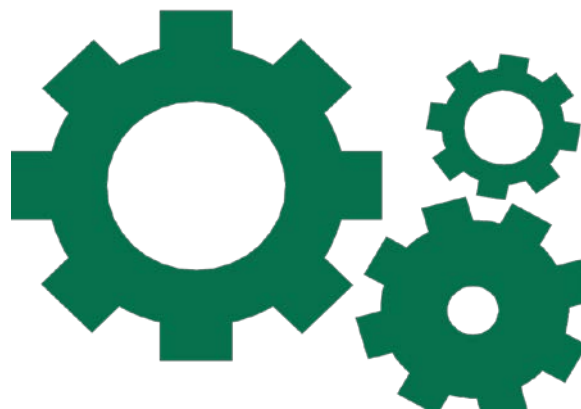
One particularly critical assumption:

- 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

Communities In Schools

*Empowering students to stay in school
and achieve in life*



Achieving Results

The CIS Network strives for quality and scale



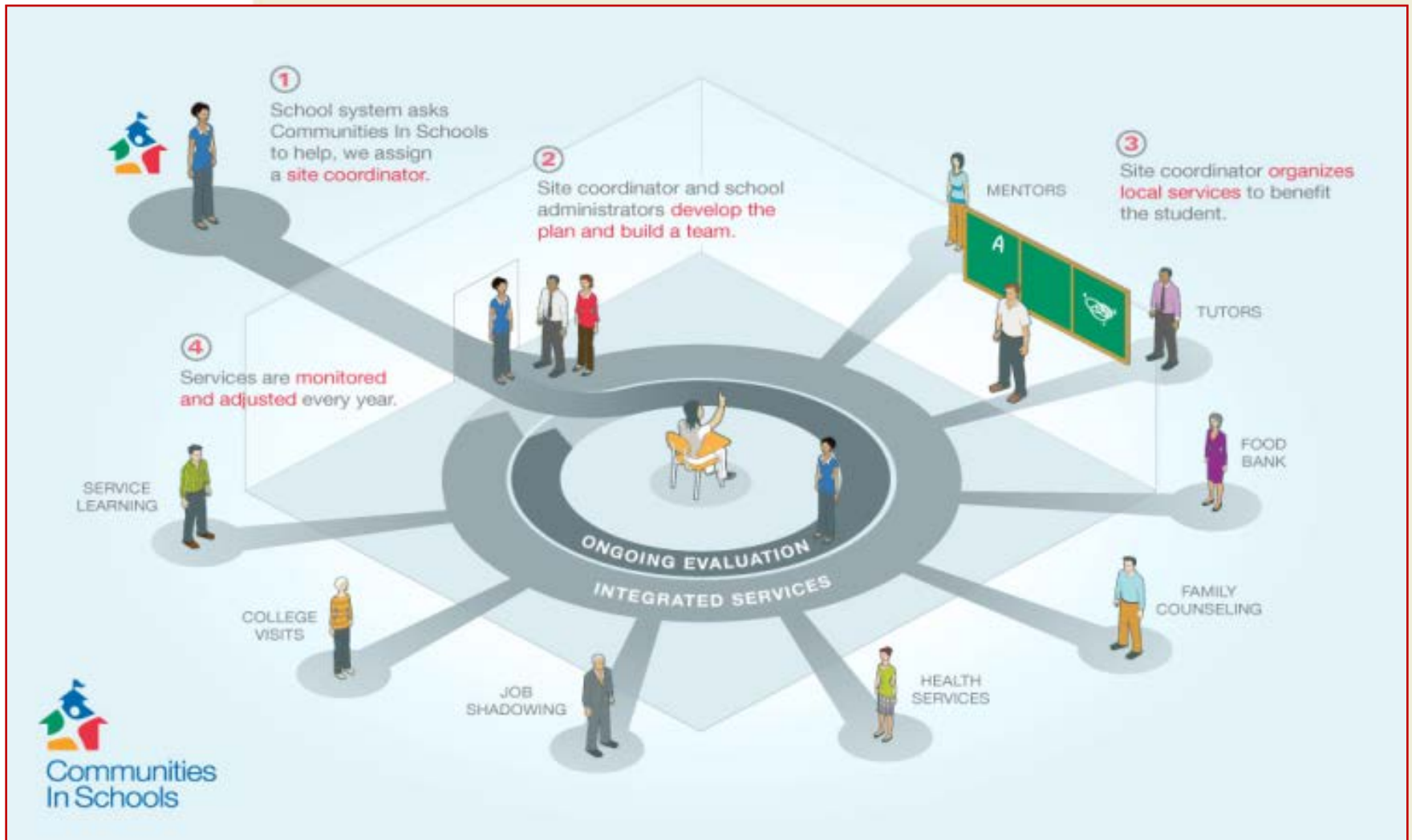
A network of nearly **200** non-profit organizations in **26 States** and the District of Columbia.

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 *and* on-time graduation rates
- Fidelity = *Doubles* the effects

Communities In Schools:

- Randomized Control Trial
- A Comparative Interrupted Time Series

Diplomas Now:

- School Level Random Control Trail

DEMONSTRATED
Effectiveness



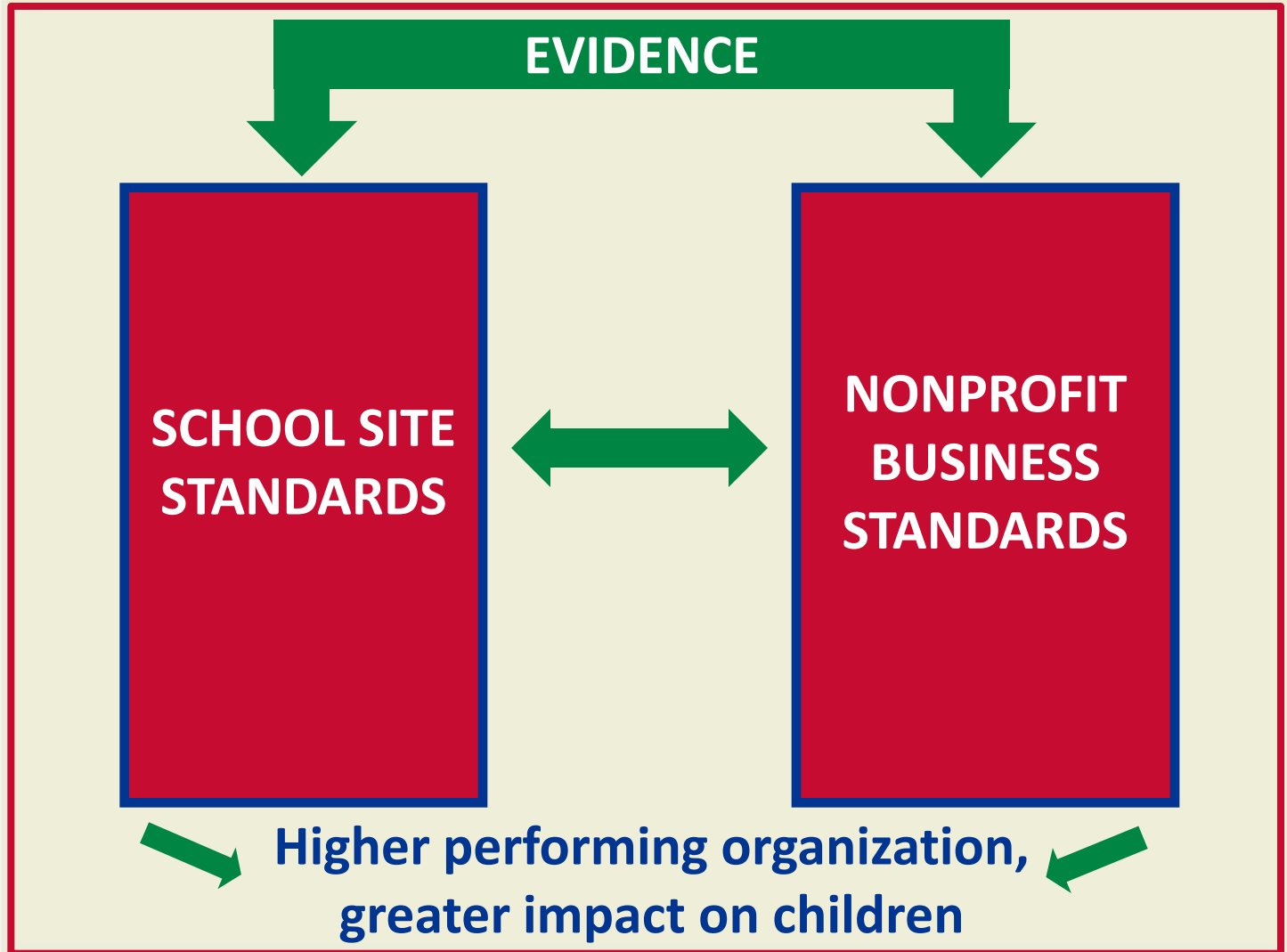
(2010)

PROVEN
Effectiveness



(current)

Improving Implementation: CIS' Total Quality System (TQS)



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

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

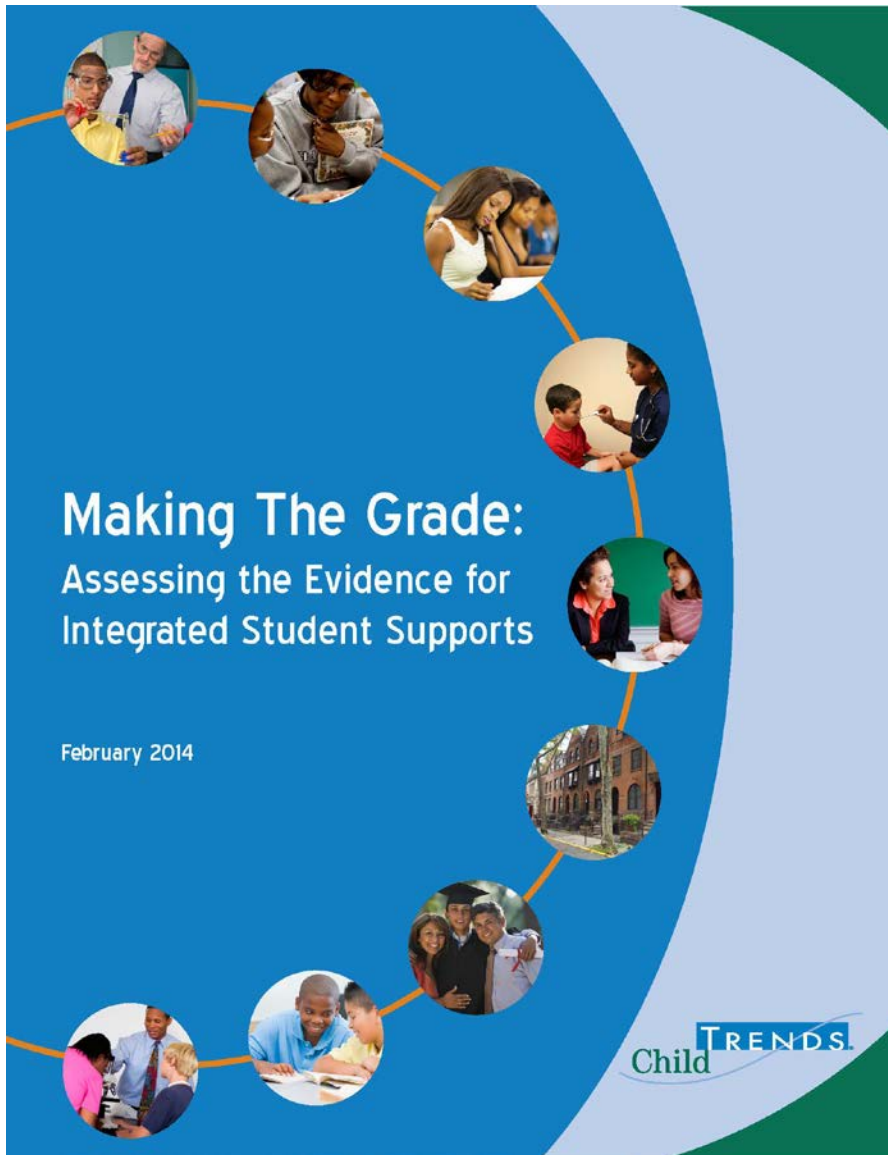


Response: Evaluation Issues



- ◆ 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!