Understanding EIIS:
Oregon's Student Success Systems

Handout

Oregon's Early Indicator and Intervention System (EIIS), the state's student success system model, is a set of structures and strategies for organizing data, aligning school practices, and engaging with students and families to help all students thrive.

Student success systems vary in their design and implementation but should contain a set of essential elements. The graphic below illustrates and defines the five elements of Oregon's EIIS system.

Develop Shared Mindsets

Develop shared strengths-based mindsets and establish universal aspirational goals for all students. Focus on relationships and promote family and community engagement.

Create Systems and Structures

Assess and understand the structures that support or impede each group or community from achieving universal goals and train teachers to use data and EIIS systems. Analyze and update policies to promote a school culture that fosters student engagement.

Collect Holistic Data

Invest in holistic data collection tools and processes and provide administrators and educators with access to real-time disaggregated student data, including community, family, and student feedback and other street data.

Design Student Supports

Ensure all students have access to culturally responsive universal and targeted supports and processes to help each focal student group reach universal goals. Engage with families and community organizations to design and deliver supports.

Monitor Progress

Establish protocols and processes for evaluating supports and systems to understand trends, identify levers for change and shifts, and improve outcomes for students.
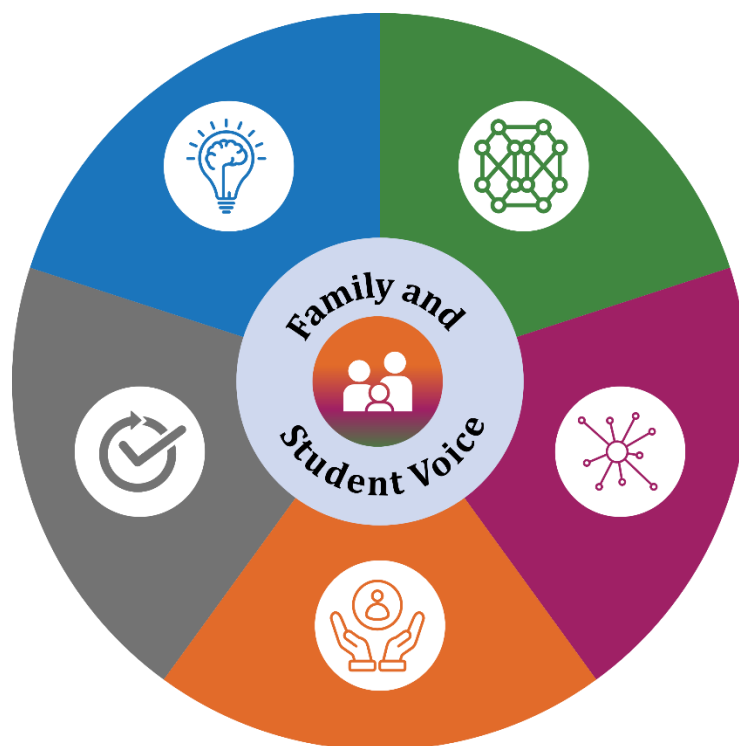
The concept of a student success system will not be new for most districts. Rather, EIIS builds upon districts' existing systems, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Response to Intervention (RtI), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) frameworks ([Grad Partnership, 2022](#)).

To emphasize supports that are student-centered and equitable, we use the term **student success system** to encompass all the processes districts use to meet students' needs. Data points, no matter how powerful, do not mean anything in isolation. Student success systems rely on a few key factors:

- Strong and supportive relationships among adults at school, students, and families to work together to interpret the data, understand underlying needs, and identify supports. Research shows that positive relationships are important for ensuring young people are engaged and motivated in school ([Roorda et al., 2011](#); [Cornelius-White, 2007](#)).
- Real-time, actionable data that are holistic, humanize students, and capture many aspects of students' well-being.
- Strategic improvement actions at the individual, classroom, school, and district levels.
- Student-centered mindsets that are asset-based and equity-focused ([Grad Partnership, 2023](#)).

What indicators do student success systems use to understand student well-being?

Data can be a helpful starting point in understanding student needs, but no single indicator can paint a whole picture. This is why data dashboard systems often aggregate and organize many different data points based on a range of indicators of student success. It is important to understand each indicator's strengths and limitations and to look across indicators to holistically understand each student. It is also critical to apply multiple lenses in understanding the data, including perspectives from school-based teams, families and caregivers, students, and communities. These indicators are interconnected in complex and varying ways for different students and can be used to describe both student strengths and potential areas of need. However, at their best, they serve as a basic signal and cannot provide a full understanding of the underlying factors that lead to a student's strengths or challenges.

Two elementary school students work on an assignment in class. Jessica Scranton for FHI 360.

Traditional Indicators

Through decades of research, these indicators of student progress have been found to be predictive of students' high school completion. Students who are "off track" in these areas as early as middle school are more likely to not graduate from high school.

Indicator Focus Area	Definition	Strengths of Indicator	Limitations of Indicator
Attendance	% of school days attended	• Easy to track • Frequently updated • "Coming to school matters" is easy to message and explain	• Does not show why a student is absent or provide context • Excused vs. unexcused absences may not be accurately captured
Behavior	Observed and reported student behavior at school, sometimes in a variety of school settings	• Connects with PBIS • Infractions are tracked • Some districts give behavior grades	• Subjective, culturally specific • May reflect and exacerbate structural racism, ableism, sexism • May focus more on negative than positive behaviors
Course grades – English language arts	Academic performance in English language arts classes (especially core classes)	• Easy to track • Frequently updated • Many interim measures	• May not align with standardized test scores • Often excludes family insights • Often calculated differently depending on the teacher; can be subjective
Course grades – math	Academic performance in math classes (especially core classes)	• Easy to track • Frequently updated • Many interim measures	• May not align with standardized test scores • Often excludes family insights • Often calculated differently depending on the teacher; can be subjective

Expanded Indicators

These indicators provide additional context to understand students' assets and circumstances. Recent research continues to show the importance of these indicators in assessing student well-being and learning. More research is needed to understand the predictive power of these indicators, but research in the field of positive youth development indicates that these indicators point to crucial parts of students' experiences and should be used to inform student supports.

Indicator Focus Area	Definition	Strengths of Indicator	Limitations of Indicator
Agency	Students' ownership and active participation in their learning	• Connected to student confidence, self-efficacy, and ability to take control of their own learning	• Often only collected through annual surveys • Infrequently updated • Challenging to track in many school data systems
Belonging	Feeling respected and accepted at school and having a sense that school is relevant to their lives	• Describes how students experience school • Correlated with positive student well-being	• Often only collected through annual surveys • Infrequently updated • Challenging to track in many school data systems
Connectedness	Strength of relationships with peers and adults at school	• Describes how students experience school • Correlated with positive student well-being	• Often only collected through annual surveys • Infrequently updated • Challenging to track in many school data systems
Social-emotional well-being	Students' skills in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making	• Describes students' non-cognitive strengths and needs that impact their learning • Can include family insights	• Often only collected through annual surveys • Infrequently updated • Challenging to measure frequently (typically collected via annual or biannual survey)

How Student Success Systems Show Whether Students Are Thriving

Each school district is encouraged to consider its local context as they define their own goals and thresholds for each indicator. Based on their definitions of success and other local factors, districts can create criteria to understand when students are thriving or experiencing challenges. While the traditional indicators can provide helpful information about some aspects of student progress at school and serve as a predictor of high school graduation, they don't explain why that progress is happening or not happening. The expanded indicators are needed to understand whether students are truly thriving. Together, the traditional and expanded indicators can provide a holistic understanding of students' strengths and needs. For example, a student who is performing well academically may need support building a true sense of belonging at school; otherwise, the student may eventually disengage despite their apparent school success.

In addition, both traditional and expanded indicators can be examined at different levels of detail to understand how student needs are satisfied by the systems in place at school. Satellite data are high level, typically covering the whole district or whole school. Satellite data can be used to identify patterns of success and struggle across large numbers of students. Map data are for examining patterns within student groups, such as students who share a grade level, course, or teacher, or who belong to a demographic or other specific group. Map data help identify areas of deeper analysis and questioning. Street data are the data that can help us understand the "why" or what is happening for specific individuals and small groups in a way that casts light on why the patterns in the data look the way they do.

Patterns emerge in the data when thresholds are set to determine what "on track" looks like. To determine their thresholds for being on track for each indicator, it is helpful for districts to consider their student population and district goals as well as the research. Educators can establish criteria in student data systems as well as "look fors" (observational elements) that align with the community's understanding of what it means to thrive in school. While being off track in one or more indicators may serve as an alert that a student needs support, it does not guarantee the student cannot or will not be promoted to the next grade level, graduate, or eventually thrive. The indicators serve as a prompt to check in with a student, with other adults at school, and with a student's family and dig deeper to identify their needs, connect, collaborate, and help set them up for success.

Importance of Understanding Root Causes of Challenges

Data reports may highlight the symptom(s) of a student's challenge or need, but additional information is often needed to get to the root cause(s). Student success teams can gather additional information to investigate how students are experiencing school (e.g., their connections and sense of belonging) and understand their family and community contexts (strengths, cultural capital, and needs). For example, family connections can support students' well-being and motivation in school, while housing or food instability, community violence, and other life situations can contribute to school disengagement. Thus, when a student who regularly attended school begins to miss a lot of school, the adults at school need to share what they know about the student and dig beneath the surface so they can be better prepared to put the change in a larger context. Then, the student and their family can be engaged in dialogue and collaborative problem-solving to identify what support plan would be most helpful.

Designing Student Supports

Oregon's EIIS approach to designing student supports integrates the concept of **targeted universalism,** or the idea that schools can simultaneously aim for universal goals while addressing disparities in opportunities and outcomes among student groups. This is achieved in two ways: by changing the systems that create and perpetuate those disparities and by actively addressing the gaps and harm caused by them.

When educators use student data systems to identify students in need of support (as per the key indicators), the next step is to identify the supports that best meet each student's needs. Most schools and districts organize these supports into three types, or tiers: universal, small group, or individual. This organization helps educators plan how they will design, resource, and deliver the supports. But it doesn't always address root causes of student difficulty. Another important part of the work is improving our systems (instructional, organizational, disciplinary, etc.) to prevent student needs from going unmet in the first place.

What Types of Supports Can Schools Use?

- **Universal:** School-wide, whole grade, or whole class measures that proactively build strengths (e.g., growth mindsets, an openness to challenge and discovery, prosocial behaviors, hopeful purpose, social-emotional competence) and keep all students on track to success.
- **Small group:** Tailored activities to support small groups of students with similar needs.
- **Individual:** Intensive one-on-one supports customized to address specific root causes of students' needs.

Reimagining Universal Supports

A student success system requires a mindset shift from seeking to fix students to fixing systems. So, when many students are off track in at least one indicator area, it is important to recognize that the current universal supports are not working. Additionally, school systems do not have the resources to provide a majority of students with small-group and one-on-one supports. As a result, it is ideal for school systems to focus on analyzing existing universal strategies to see which are effective at setting all students up for success and which are not.

Emerging research indicates that when universal supports embed a positive youth development method that takes a strengths-based approach to building students' assets, agency, belonging, and connection, students are more likely to thrive in school and in life (Shek and Chai, 2020). This approach relies on developmental relationships—relationships that are deeply caring, challenge and push youth to be their best selves, and share power and decision-making. When these types of relationships are the norm, schools can provide a nourishing environment in which all students can belong and grow (4-H, 2023).