



Investing in Early Childhood Mental Health & Social-Emotional Learning

A Guide for School Districts

As your school district works to develop and implement plans for Student Success Act funds, it's important to know that upstream investments in early development and student mental health have great potential to impact students' long term well-being and educational outcomes. The primary purpose of Student Investment Account funds is to improve students' behavioral and mental health.

Research clearly demonstrates that children's early development, beginning at the prenatal stage, sets the foundation for their lifelong health and academic success. Families who have experienced trauma and other adversity; and/or students who have diagnosed behavioral and mental health needs will benefit from targeted supports.

All students and school staff reap the rewards when schools integrate trauma-informed inclusionary practices, and focus attention and resources on social-emotional health and learning. This guide shares specific recommendations for effective strategies and partnerships that districts should consider as they work to meet this important goal.

The Importance of Partnership



The resources below provide programming and other opportunities to support the behavioral and mental health of students and their families. These are potential partners and resources with whom schools and districts can build relationships; connect families to; braid and blend funding; augment and co-locate services; and/ or share community level data.

Organization	Contact
Coordinated Care Organization (CCO)	For a warm connection to your local CCO, reach out to a CCO Innovator agent: https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/OHP/Pages/Innovator-Agents.aspx
Early Learning Hub	https://oregonearlylearning.com/administration/what-are-hubs/
Parenting Education Hub	https://orparenting.org/parents/opec-parenting-hubs/
Community Mental Health Program	https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/AMH/Pages/CMH-Programs.aspx
Help Me Grow Oregon	https://oregon.providence.org/our-services/h/help-me-grow-oregon/
Oregon Infant Mental Health Association	https://www.oraimh.org/
Oregon Community Health Workers Association	http://www.orchwa.org/

Effective Strategies



There are numerous strategies and programs that are proven to support children’s social-emotional development, behavioral and mental health, and promote school readiness. Take care to listen to parent and community input about the needs of students in your school district. Then, choose appropriate strategies to address those needs.

Prepare and ease the transition for young children with identified behavioral and mental health needs or a history of trauma

Work with local preschool programs (Head Start, Preschool Promise, or other early learning setting) to develop [transition plans](#) and hold transition meetings with parents/caregivers and appropriate staff from elementary school and early education programs. Include the mental health consultant if one worked with the family.

Work with local mental health providers to offer resources to parents as their children transition into your schools

Connect families to programs and resources that promote social emotional development and early childhood mental health from birth through age 5

Home Visiting programs

[Help Me Grow Oregon](#)

Parenting education

Early learning programs, including Early Head Start and Head Start, infant and toddler socialization groups, culturally-responsive early learning programs

Prepare your staff to best support children who have identified behavioral and mental health needs or a history of trauma

Implement Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), also known as the [Pyramid Model](#)

Work as a school/district to become [trauma informed](#) in policy and practice

Provide professional development on adverse childhood experiences, social-emotional development, [neurosequential development](#), working with children exposed to trauma and toxic stress, and strategies like collaborative problem solving

Fund early childhood mental health consultation for primary grades, preschool classrooms within schools, and feeder preschools/other early learning settings

Mental health consultation and PBIS have been proven an [effective model](#) when paired together

Embed trauma-informed parenting strategies and parenting groups alongside mental health consultation

Effective Strategies (Cont.)

Purchase curricula and provide staff training

that specifically supports social-emotional learning and positive behavior

[Pax Good Behavior Game](#)

[Incredible Years:](#)

CASEL [guide](#) to school wide SEL

[Second Step](#)

[Conscious Discipline](#)

Fund early learning programming that

includes a focus on social-emotional development

See [CI's Guide for districts investing in early learning](#)

Integrate school-based health navigators to

help students and families access mental and behavioral health services

[Early learning hub P3 navigators](#)

[Earl Boyles school-based Community Health Worker \(CHW\) and Community Ambassadors](#)

[CAIRO SPACE Program cultural navigators](#)

Share data and information

CCO data on children with health complexity and utilization of behavioral health services

Early learning hub family input collected about community needs and priorities