

Reynolds School District

Student Investment Account Annual Report Questions

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<p>1. There are clear impacts from the reduction in SIA funding and from the direct efforts to respond to COVID-19. While you can't fully set those aside, what is important for your community, including focal student groups, families, and educators, to understand about your SIA implementation efforts during the 2020-21 school year and the positive impacts that have occurred? How were you able to make progress towards the goals and outcomes you were aiming at with SIA funding and processes? (500 words or less)</p>	<p>The themes that emerged from our SIA Plan community engagement and Board prioritization included mental health support and safety. These themes, and the prioritized funding for the first biennium of the Student Investment Account were fortuitous in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the fall of 2019 Reynolds School District added 10 school counselors and 10 social workers strategically placed across district schools to directly support students' mental and social-emotional needs. This allowed for an ability to triage support to families in crisis through a team approach guided and led by a specialist (social worker).</p> <p>School counselors and social workers concentrate on youth with difficulties achieving academic potential due to individual, social, or home barriers and work to mitigate those barriers and increase engagement in school. They work to address the structural inequality that is perpetuated in the school system, health care system, and housing system that disproportionately affects students and families of color.</p> <p>School counselors and social workers report that systems of care for mental health services have significantly increased both the level of services and response times. School teams can provide both triage and preventative services, as well as more intensive follow-up to ensure services are effective. Focusing on a smaller caseload allows staff to reach more families with home visits and direct supports including food deliveries, triage services, needs assessments, basic need supplies and services, and referrals for community partners ranging from culturally specific services to housing resources and health care access. Weekly, short-term therapeutic interventions and social interaction calls/site visits to students positively impacted student engagement and attendance during distance learning.</p> <p>Social workers and counselors also proved critical in being a resource for staff struggling with self-care, compassion</p>

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	<p>fatigue and trauma support through the pandemic. They were also able to provide training for staff around trauma, mental health and connecting with families. Social workers and counselors had a prominent place on the Reopening Task Force, representing mental health perspective and lens to the work.</p> <p>While it was a difficult year to measure outcomes of our goals, the annual Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE) survey results were encouraging that the focus and investments in student mental health and safety are reaping benefits. 79% of parents/guardians feel that their child's school provides a caring, supportive environment. And 82% of students report that there is at least one adult who knows and cares about them (an 8% increase over the previous year's survey).</p>
<p>2. What barriers, impediments, or challenges to your SIA implementation have you faced or identified that are helpful for your community and/or state leaders to be aware of? (500 words or less)</p>	<p>Reynolds School District has a commitment to staffing our schools in a differentiated manner so that schools with the highest needs receive the most resources. In Reynolds we call this process "Staffing for Equity", and it is based on the Oregon Quality Education Funding Model. In costing out our model, we found that Reynolds would need an additional \$35 million in revenue at today's costs to fully fund it. As we are not able to fully realize our Staffing for Equity aspirational goal, we are using the SIA funding and board prioritization to help determine which pieces of the Staffing for Equity model we can fund.</p> <p>In 2019-20 we only received a portion of the SIA funds we built our plan around. This meant reprioritizing the investments in our SIA plan and only allowed us to focus on some of the elements in one SIA category: health and safety.</p> <p>While these investments proved crucial to our students, staff and community in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, there are other priorities that we know will help us prepare lifelong learners to achieve their full potential in a complex and interconnected world.</p> <p>We were unable to address our continued commitment to class size reduction through a sustainable funding source, and additional administrators and teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) to synchronize student supports across the district and provide coaching to assist teachers with both social-emotional needs and academic content needs. We were not able to provide additional funding for</p>

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	<p>professional development in social-emotional learning, positive behavior interventions and support, multi-tiered systems of support and restorative practices, nor the full funding to purchase culturally responsive curriculum. Our elementary schools continued to not have library media specialists in place or hire a Family and Parent Engagement Specialist.</p> <p>Fortunately, for fiscal year 2021-23 the Student Investment Account was funded at a higher level, and a majority of the items in our complete plan are now being funded.</p>

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3. SIA implementation includes ongoing engagement with focal students, the families of focal students, and educators. What successes and challenges, if any, have you experienced in maintaining engagement? (500 words or less)

During the 2019-20 school year students, families, staff, partners and community members collaborated to define Reynolds School District's vision and help develop our new Strategic Plan. Over 400 stakeholders shared input, 18 focus groups were held, along with three community meetings and six steering committee meetings. Many of our engagement efforts had to be virtual this year, which was an adjustment from last year's in person sessions.

Focus groups included 380 participants in the following groups: Hispanic Families, Indigenous Families, Russian/Ukraine Families, International Families, Black Families, Special Education Families, Certified/Licensed Staff, Classified Staff, Administrator Staff, Middle School Students, Reynolds High School Students, Reynolds Learning Academy Students, Local Business Leaders, Faith Leadership, and Community Partners.

Additionally, Reynolds hosts regular advisory groups that are made up of a diverse group of shareholders, specifically our students and families that have been marginalized and disenfranchised from our systems, and our Reopening Task Force (made up of students, teachers, community partners, parents, classified staff, and administrators).

Throughout this process, stakeholders were asked to view the district through the lens of the Board of Education's Core Commitments and Beliefs: Safety, Equity, Instructional Practices and Organizational Culture.

From this input, we heard many of our district's strengths: A diverse student population, Board of Education and community; strong relationships and support from community partners; hope and excitement for the future. And we also heard some areas to focus on: Lifting the voices of students, staff, and families in developing and refining policies and procedures; mental health supports for staff and students, culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, equity as the foundation of decision-making.

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	<p>The process resulted in the Steering Committee and Cabinet identifying four major goal topic areas that were then developed into our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan: Marginalized students, culturally responsive instruction, student and staff wellness, and professional development. These are similar needs to the ones listed in our SIA plan thus, we did not make any major adjustments to our plan.</p> <p>We also use budget input sessions yearly to engage shareholders in budget allocation and priorities conversations and feedback. SIA is always a part of this process. The entire community is invited, staff, students, families, and community members. These groups tend to be diverse as well. Reynolds SD is a very diverse school district with culturally specific groups that advocate for our students and families of color. These input sessions run on a cycle starting in November until the budget is formally adopted in June.</p>
<p>4. Please share your professional assessment of what guided your choices and prioritization efforts in the first year of SIA implementation? What stands out? Anything important or surprising to report back or reflect on? How were key decisions on scaled down implementation made? What impacts, if any, are helpful to name in how you navigated through the last year, specifically as it relates to SIA implementation? (500 words or less)</p>	<p>Through our extensive community, staff, parent, and student outreach, and through our deep dive into district data, areas of need were identified. Because more areas of need were identified than the SIA can fund, we worked with our stakeholder groups and our Board of Directors to prioritize the needs in order to determine which would be funded through the SIA. Student mental health was the top priority and health and safety was the focus of 6 of 13 of our budgeted activities.</p> <p>Reynolds School District is committed to addressing our student's mental health and safety needs. We recognize that increased mental, behavioral, and health supports have a direct impact on the outcomes of our most marginalized students. By using an equity framework and analyzing data on our most impacted students such as rates for homelessness, foster youth, chronic absenteeism (Oregon's 4th highest rate among school districts), mobility and the state designations of comprehensive and targeted, we prioritized using funds to improve the ratio of assistant principals and counselors to students at our elementary and middle schools. With a homeless population of 8% (2018-2019 data) and 400 students in foster care, another priority</p>

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was to increase the current capacity of three social workers to a total of 13 school social workers. To ensure student safety, improve chronic absenteeism due to student health issues, and as part of our commitment to educating the whole child, the District increased the number of days per week allocated to each school with licensed school nurses. And with 71 languages spoken and 68% of our students identifying as non-white, we prioritized using remaining funding to purchase culturally relevant texts for our classrooms and school libraries.

As mentioned above, these investments proved fortuitous in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. And while students and families were the direct recipients of the funded activities, our staff greatly benefitted from these resources as well, as this story from one of our school counselors illuminates:

“Every school counselor or social worker I have met is the kind of person who will make significant personal sacrifices to support students and families and colleagues. In our school we have had many staff who have lost loved ones (multiple in the same 2-week span), and previously there would have probably been a total collapse in student support services during that time. With our additional counselor and social worker, we have been able to give each other the grace and support we need to grieve in a healthy way, while also continuing to support students and families at the highest level I have seen in my 3 years with the district. The impact of the events of this last year are going to last for many years to come, impacts that will touch everyone, including all levels of school staff and all students and families. My hope is that we continue to have this level of mental health support staffing, if not a higher level. We are so, so grateful to have received it this year.” - Katherine Mendonca, Elementary Counselor