



THE COTTONWOOD SCHOOL
— OF CIVICS AND SCIENCE —

SIA Annual Report, Year 1 (2020-21)
November 2021

Student Investment Account Year 1 (2020-2021) Annual Report Journal October 2021 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?

Through the SIA community engagement in 2019-20 and continued engagement since then, our small community continues to prioritize culturally responsive supports focused on social-emotional, mental, and behavioral health.

The community engagement efforts that shaped our 2020-2021 SIA Plan identified these three funding priorities: 1) Rehire our school counselor 2) Build capacity and resources to learn about and celebrate each individual and their heritage 3) Purchase and support regularly scheduled Social Emotional Learning professional development for our staff.

Despite significant SIA funding reductions, Cottonwood has continued to hold up and invest in our top priorities. We were not able to move our part time counselor to full time, but found ways to move forward and strengthen each priority area in significant ways. We were able to continue with our much celebrated part time counselor and provide office space for her. We purchased SEL curriculum for our grades 4/5 to pilot, bought tools to support a school-wide mindfulness initiative and strengthened our classroom libraries by purchasing books in all grade levels that correspond with heritage months and represent our BIPOC community.

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?

The greatest barrier we faced in implementing our complete SIA Plan was the funding reduction. Even after scaling back our plan, we were only able to cover half (.5 FTE) of what we hoped would be a full-time (1.0 FTE) counselor position with SIA funds. While it was not ideal, as this position was needed more than ever due to the unforeseen effects of the pandemic on our community. The focus had to be on immediate needs and this distracted from building more sustainable systems and hindered our planning.

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?

Our engagement with multiple stakeholders is continually improving. This year we improved our outreach to focal student families with direct outreach to our BIPOC families and students with IEPs. We also used a greater variety of activities to get input: survey, personal contacts, interviews, Zoom Q&As and listening sessions.

A barrier this past year was COVID limiting opportunities with families and community partners to virtual only. CSCS used a variety of methods to garner information but we are looking forward to offering opportunities for feedback earlier in the school year and creating more opportunities for more targeted in person engagement.

Given the situation we were pleased with the engagement that we received. The creation of our DEI committee and a small group of BIPOC parents, along with our DEI consultant, has helped us to find ways to more deeply connect to our BIPOC community.

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)

Throughout the pandemic Cottonwood continued to center our commitment on our school mission, building strong relationships, minimizing screen time, emphasizing active, hands-on learning and celebrating diverse voices.

We were surprised by how Zoom supported our work to connect with families more easily. Popping onto a Zoom listening session with families allowed us to reach more people quickly and directly. Virtual listening and Q&A sessions will remain a piece of how Cottonwood engages with our busy families moving forward.