Why Aren't Schools Doing More to Improve Student and Learning Supports?

Are you trying to enhance equity of opportunity, promote whole child development, and improve school climate?

> *Are you aware that analyses of school improvement plans and state legislation indicate too little attention is being paid to a fundamental aspect of achieving these goals –* **namely transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students***?*

Obviously, some attention is being given to dealing with the fragmented approach to both policy and practice aimed at improving how schools prevent and correct learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

However, the trend is to do more of the same. For example, there are calls for implementing more universal prevention strategies, screening for problems, hiring a few more support staff (e.g., counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, school resource officers), promoting the establishment of more school-based health centers, integrating and coordinating services, and developing community schools.

While all this is well-intentioned and helpful to *some* **students in need,** *it is not a recipe for enhancing equity of opportunity for the many students who are not doing well in too many schools.*

We know that transforming any facet of schools is hard. It requires a major shift in culture and thinking. It is generally at odds with the established agenda of policy makers, administrators, and staff and their unions and guilds. It entails policy making that ends the marginalization of student and learning supports. It calls for rethinking MTSS.

> **Nevertheless, for equity of opportunity, whole child development, and improved school climate to become**
> **realities, transforming student/learning supports is essential (along with the planned improvements in instruction and management).**

Specifically, our analyses indicate that the type of system transformation needed involves

> (1) enacting policy that coalesces all that schools do to (a) address barriers to learning and teaching and (b) re-engage disconnected students into a unified component

> (2) ensuring that the unified component is a primary and essential facet of all school improvement efforts (i.e., treated on a par with the instructional and management components)

and
> (3) reworking operational infrastructures at state and local education agencies and at schools so that the unified component is developed into a comprehensive and equitable system of learning supports.

For more details on improving the system of supports: See
> >*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
> >*Improving School Improvement*
> Both accessible at: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html .

For a brief discussion about *rethinking MTSS*, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall19.pdf

> If the above matters strike a chord with you, think about taking some systemic action. For some first steps, see the call to action at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsnew/call.htm.

Let us know if you need additional information.