

First Steps in Transforming Student and Learning Supports into a Unified and Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

The following is a brief synthesis of steps drawn from various Center resources.*

Step 1: *Create Readiness and Commitment.* Work with key stakeholders to build commitment to unifying student and learning supports into a Learning Supports Component (i.e., a component that systematically and comprehensively enables learning by addressing barriers to learning & teaching). Clarify why the component is essential and ensure that the commitment to its development is fully and realistically integrated into school improvement and other strategic operational planning. Keep in mind that building readiness and commitment is an ongoing process. Use brief overviews developed by the Center at UCLA and brochures and design documents developed by SEAs and LEAs across the country as prototypes that can be adopted or adapted.

Step 2: *Appoint an Administrative Leader for System Development.* Assign an administrative-level *Learning Supports Lead* to begin development of the component. Be sure the leader's job description is revised to reflect the new responsibilities and accountabilities; provide appropriate personnel development. Be sure this leader is at administrative planning and decision making tables and component development is a regular part of the agenda.

Step 3: *Appoint a High Level Steering Group to Champion and Monitor the work.* Establish an official Steering Group of *high level* power leaders to steer, champion, problem solve, clear barriers to moving forward, and provide essential guidance to keep the work flowing.

Step 4: *Establish a Development Team to Work with the Administrative Lead.* Assign key staff to a component development team (i.e., a *Learning Supports Leadership Team*) to work with the leader to prepare a *design "document"* and a *strategic plan* for unifying and then developing the component. In the process, this team helps clarify, analyze, identify priorities, recommend resource redeployment, and establish and guide workgroups for developing each facet of the component over a period of several years. Be sure the strategic plan for the component is fully integrated into the overall strategic plan.

Step 5. *Establish an Operational Infrastructure of Mechanisms for Planning and Implementation.* Elicit volunteers and provide them with relevant professional development and support for pursuing the various facets of the work. While the component development team will guide and support movement forward in establishing a comprehensive system of learning supports, the work requires the efforts of planning and implementation teams and smaller workgroups to carry out specific tasks.

Step 6. *Conduct In-depth and Ongoing Analyses to Determine Gaps, Priorities, and Resource Deployment.* Build on initial listings of current personnel and activities by doing an indepth and structured mapping of all resources the school currently uses to address barriers to learning and teaching. Then, (a) do a gap analysis with respect to available needs assessments, (b) identify immediate priorities for moving forward with improvement and system development, and (c) recommend (re)deployment of resources to meet priorities in a cost-effective manner. Be certain the decisions are reflected in all strategic and school improvement plans.

Step 7: *Provide Ongoing Professional and Other Stakeholder Development.* Include a focus on a comprehensive system of learning supports in all planning for continuous learning at the school. Provide on-the-job opportunities and special times for such learning. Delineate what those assigned to develop the component need to learn over time; ensure all others (teachers, student support staff, other staff and volunteers, community stakeholders) are included in learning about how best to address barriers to learning and teaching. Use the free resources available through the UCLA Center's mentoring, coaching, technical assistance, and online resources.

Step 8. *Use Formative Evaluation to Support Progress.* Ensure that a formative evaluation process is established. Such a process should encompass data on and analyses of all facets of planning and implementation related to developing a comprehensive system of learning supports. Moreover, the process should be designed to provide guidance and support to foster progress. This means monitoring all factors that facilitate and hinder progress and then ensuring actions are taken to deal with interfering factors and to enhance facilitation. As significant progress is made in developing the system, the monitoring can expand to evaluate the impact on student outcomes that are direct indicators of the effectiveness of learning supports (e.g., increased attendance, reduced misbehavior, improved learning).

*For more details about and resources to aid in accomplishing the above steps, see the Center's *System Change Toolkit* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm> .

Transforming student and learning supports involves major systemic changes that are phased in strategically. The major phases are:

Year 1

First Phase – Introduction and Creating Readiness, Commitment, & Engagement

Second Phase – Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure, Capacity, and Pursuing Initial Implementation

Years 2-4

Third Phase – Replicating to scale, Sustaining, and Evolving to Enhance Outcomes

Year 4 and continuing

Fourth Phase – Generating Creative Renewal and Replication to Scale

Each phase has a host of tasks that should be pursued strategically – see our Center's *Prototype Strategic Plan for Guiding SEAs and LEAs in Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/stratplan.pdf>).

Note: The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA. Phone: (310) 825-3634. Email: smhp@ucla.edu website – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>