

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

Whether the focus is on establishing a prototype at one site or replicating a new approach at many schools, the systemic changes can be conceived in terms of the four overlapping phases as outlined in the following Exhibit.

Exhibit

Four Phases of Transforming How Schools Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Transforming student and learning supports involves major systemic changes that are phased in strategically over several years. The major phases are as follows:

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

(i.e., increasing a climate/culture for change through enhancing the motivation and capability of a critical mass of stakeholders)

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

(i.e., reworking operational infrastructure to ensure effective leadership, guidance, and support)

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

(i.e., enhancing capacity to ensure quality improvements, adaptive scalability, and sustainability)

Fourth Phase – *Ongoing Evolution and Generating Creative Renewal*

(i.e., enabling system stakeholders to become a community of learners and expanding accountability to support creative renewal)

Each phase has a host of strategic tasks (e.g., see Chapters 16 and 17 in *Improving School Improvement* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf>).

Getting Started

In our experience, there always are stakeholders who want to make major improvements in how schools address barriers to learning and teaching. Below are some first steps that can be adapted at any level. A list of aides for accomplishing these steps is provided at the end.

Step 1. *Establish the interested stakeholders as a workgroup and proceed to*

- (a) *map existing resources being used to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students*
- (b) *with respect to available data on needs, analyze what's working, what requires strengthening, and what critical gaps exist*
- (c) *identify immediate priorities for moving forward with improvement and system development*
- (c) *develop a set of prioritized recommendations for moving toward a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports* (emphasizing redeployment of resources to meet priorities in a cost-effective manner)
- (d) *develop and implement a plan to build readiness and commitment among key stakeholders for moving forward*

Step 2: *Have prioritized recommendations approved by appropriate authorities.*

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. *Appoint an administrative leader for system development.* Assign an administrative-level *Student/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 and provide appropriate professional development. Be sure this leader is at administrative planning and decision making tables and the system's development is a regular part of the agenda.

Step 5: *Establish a development team to work with the administrative lead.* Assign key staff to a system 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 interventions and then developing the system. In the process, the team helps clarify, analyze, identify priorities, recommend resource redeployment, and establish and guide workgroups for developing each facet of the system over a period of several years. Be sure the strategic plan for the system is fully integrated into the overall strategic plan.

Step 6. *Establish an operational infrastructure designed to ensure effective planning, initial implementation, capacity building, formative evaluation, and ongoing development.* As noted in Part II, the mechanisms that constitute operational infrastructures are critical drivers for effective implementation and system change. And the reality is that the current operational infrastructure at all levels requires major reworking in order to facilitate the desired system changes.

Step 7. *Expand formative evaluation and accountability indicators.* Initial data gathering 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, outcome monitoring and accountability measures should evaluate the impact on student outcomes with respect to *direct* indicators of the effectiveness of student/learning supports (e.g., increased attendance, reduced misbehavior, improved learning).

Resource Aids

For Workgroup and Other Stakeholder Big Picture Preparation & Capacity Building

> *Examples of State and District Design Documents*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb1a.htm>

> *Q & A Talking Points* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkita2.htm>

> Recent books to browse

> *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

> *Improving School Improvement*

> *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

all three can be accessed at

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

For Mapping Existing Resources

> *Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>

For Reworking Operational Infrastructure

> Review Part two, Section D of this guide

> *What is a learning supports leadership team?*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

About Expanded Accountability

> *Rethinking School Evaluation and Accountability*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rethaccount.pdf>

Building Readiness

> *Creating Readiness and Commitment for Developing a Unified and Comprehensive Learning*

Supports System <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/readiness.pdf>

Other Aids and Guides related to getting started

> *social marketing and public relations*

> *personnel development*

> *job descriptions*

> *reframing roles and functions of support staff*

> *blending funding streams*

> *benchmarks and monitoring*

Links to these at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb4.htm>

Preparing Design and Strategic Plan Documents

> *Preparing a Design Document* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

> *General Guide for Strategic Planning* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/genguide.pdf>

For more aids, see the **System Change Toolkit**

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

Finally, note that the UCLA Center offers free online mentoring, coaching, &

technical assistance <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coach.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/>