What's Missing in the New Report on *The State of School Diversity in the United States?*

"A new report released by the U.S. Department of Education states that progress toward increased racial and socio-economic diversity has stalled in many communities as segregation patterns have persisted, leading to inequitable access and outcomes for students." (https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/resources/diversity.pdf)

Stressing that racial isolation is strongly related to resource inequity and opportunity gaps, the report recognizes "racially isolated schools with majority students of color are often schools with fewer resources than others to support student success."

We can't imagine that anyone familiar with schools across the country will be surprised by the report; however, we do think it is important to take a *critical* look at what the report suggests must be done.

"The Department is encouraging states and districts to renew efforts to provide more equitable access to the important resources that make a difference in educational opportunity and outcomes – including high-quality and experienced educators, early childhood education, rigorous coursework, and equitable and adequate school funding. In some instances, this can be done through safe and accessible public transportation efforts that address the needs of students of all geographical, socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, assessing and identifying strategies around school boundaries and feeder patterns can help to diversify student populations served at a given school. The Department is committed to leveraging decades of experience and research to advance educational equity and excellence in P-12 education."

The report then lays out "currently available or proposed federal resources to support states and districts in their efforts to ensure equal access to educational opportunity and increase the racial and socio-economic diversity of their schools and classrooms to advance equitable access to high-quality education."

Unfortunately, implicitly implied is that increasing diversity and improving instruction are sufficient steps for schools to take to enhance equity of opportunity. Not discussed is the type of unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports that is essential for preventing and ameliorating learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Thus, the report continues the long-standing marginalization of student/learning supports in school improvement policy and practice. This ongoing marginalization has resulted in formulating efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching in ad hoc, piecemeal, and extremely limited ways. The trend for tinkering with complex system problems is underscored by ED's proposal for a new rule to streamline Medicaid billing permissions for students with disabilities (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/05/18/2023-10542/assistance-to-states-for-the-education-of-children-with-disabilities).

Clearly, schools will take advantage of any offer that brings more money to help students. But ad hoc and piecemeal (and often short-term) supplements to current student/learning supports often get in the way of making essential fundamental systemic changes. And the continued marginalization of student/learning supports ensures continued fragmentation and ineffectiveness in addressing the nature and scope of needs at too many schools.

In the wake of the pandemic, the pressure to address students' mental health and learning loss makes this year an advantageous time for action by everyone concerned about *ending the marginalization* of student/learning supports. See "Call to action" https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsnew/call.htm .

Let us know your thoughts about direct action to elevate student and learning supports in policy as a nonmarginalized and unified system. That will help us in mobilizing others. And if you want us to send information to anyone, just let us know.

Send your ideas and any information about what you see happening to Ltaylor@ucla.edu   or to adelman@psych.ucla.edu   .

Finally, if you just want to learn more about improving student/learning supports, here are some resources:

>*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports* https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fall22.pdf

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf

For more in depth presentations, see the following free resources:

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

>*Improving School Improvement*

>*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

all three can be accessed at
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html