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## Are you concerned about how to improve student and learning supports?

In discussions about improving supports for students, we commonly hear:

*Schools need more counselors! Schools need more psychologists! Schools need more social workers ... more nurses ... more specialists ... more ...!*

Unfortunately, schools generally need more of everything.

But, given current school funding, few can add enough student support staff to address the number of students in need -- especially in schools where large numbers of students are not doing well.

Given that: *Improving the ways schools address barriers to learning and teaching requires fundamentally rethinking how existing student and learning supports operate.*

Currently, in most schools, such supports do too little to prevent problems and do not respond quickly and effectively enough when learning, behavior, and emotional problems arise. And, the reality is that when student problems are addressed, only a relatively few students are helped.

At this time, many schools are adopting some form of MTSS (multi-tiered student supports). While this is seen as a step in the right direction, it is a mistake to think MTSS represents a fundamental system change. To understand why, see the preview of the Center's fall ejournal article on *Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning* -- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fall19preview.pdf>

As the article indicates, it is time to realize that more is involved in the type of truly *comprehensive* approach that can enhance equity of opportunity than a framework that delineates a continuum of interventions. That is, while a full continuum is essential, it is just one facet of a comprehensive system of student/learning supports.

Schools need to move forward by unifying existing student and learning supports into a *primary* component of school improvement that is fully integrated with the instructional and management/governance components. Then, the various fragmented approaches must be organized into a delimited set of practice arenas. The aim is to develop over the next few years a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports.

For more on this, see:

>*Improving School Improvement*

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

Both accessible at: [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)