

## Connecting Learning Supports to Common Core State Standards for Curriculum

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

The concept of common core state standards currently focuses on the *curriculum* facet of the instructional component of schooling. Indeed, the term common core state standards is rapidly becoming synonymous with the focus on improving curriculum (<http://www.corestandards.org/>). However, with respect to improving and transforming schools, it is obvious that focusing only on curriculum standards while necessary is hardly sufficient. That is why the movement also currently is focusing on model standards for teaching. Ultimately, the movement must develop interrelated standards for (a) curriculum and teaching, (b) learning supports to address factors that interfere with learning and teaching, and (c) school governance/management.

To provide a perspective on all this, we suggest reviewing the Center's article entitled:

***Common Core State Standards: What about Student and Learning Supports?***  
(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/summer12.pdf>). It provides a perspective on common core state standards and model core teaching standards and discusses how the instructional impact can be enhanced by establishing standards for learning supports.

And for a family friendly presentation explaining common core state standards for curriculum, see the National Parent Teacher Association website –  
[http://www.pta.org/common\\_core\\_state\\_standards.asp](http://www.pta.org/common_core_state_standards.asp)

Until a common core of state standards for learning supports are adopted, we recommend infusing learning supports into applications of the common core state standards for curriculum and the model core teaching standards. To accomplish this as districts move forward to implement common core state standards for curriculum, it will be invaluable to discuss with teachers and support staff:

- (1) what they anticipate needing in order to be successful in meeting the standards, and then
- (2) how learning supports will help meet these needs.

Remember: Learning supports are designed to *enable* learning by addressing external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with instruction (see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on the Learning Supports Component – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/qf\\_enabling.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/qf_enabling.htm)) In brief, this unified and comprehensive component of school improvement is conceived along a continuum with the content focus coalesced into the six classroom and school-wide arenas highlighted in the Exhibit on the following page.

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## Six Content Arenas for Learning Supports

- (1) *Enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (e.g., personalized instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and accommodations and specialized assistance in the classroom for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)
- (2) *Increasing home and school connections* (e.g., with all student caretakers)
- (3) *Supporting transitions* (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other daily and periodic transitions)
- (4) *Facilitating student and family access to effective special assistance and services as needed* (e.g., in the classroom, referral out for school, district, or community assistance)
- (5) *Responding to and where feasible, preventing crises* (e.g., minimizing impact of crises, eliminating violence and harassment, ensuring safety)
- (6) *Increasing community involvement and support* (e.g., outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers for a variety of roles and functions and integration of resources)

Below are a few specific examples of how learning supports can be infused into applications of the common core state standards for curriculum.

### (1) Classroom Focused Enabling

- >As teachers receive professional development related to common core state standards, include discussion of what is involved in personalizing learning (a concept that is embedded in Race to the Top and other federal initiatives);  
[Note: We will be sending out two continuing education units focused on personalizing learning next week; also relevant are our continuing education units on *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* -- see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf> ]
- >Include learning supports staff in the teacher professional development
- >Emphasize ways to increase teaming, cooperative learning, peer and cross-age tutoring, volunteers to enable teachers to match instruction to student motivational and developmental differences
- >Establish early intervention procedures for those students who are having problems progressing

(2) Home Involvement & Engagement (includes all primary caretakers)

- >Provide families with grade appropriate information (such as that provided by the PTA website above – which is in both English and Spanish) and add information about how students will have a range of learning supports to ensure student success
- >Encourage families to attend beginning of the year open house with teachers so they can learn more about common core standards, the ways the school will be providing learning supports to ensure student success, and the ways families can support learning at home
- >Plan outreach to families who are unlikely to have assimilated the information
- >Use outreach to identify families who are encountering barriers to being involved with the school and their child's learning
- >Develop strategies to address the barriers
- >Work with teachers on follow-ups to inform and engage families

(3) Transition Supports

- >Establish processes for informing those who enroll after school is underway
- >Use the district website to summarize the initial information presented and delineate information for each grade level so that families can anticipate what will be expected at the next grade level for each student
- >Establish early intervention procedures for those students who are having school adjustment problems; begin with Response to Intervention strategies as we discuss them in our continuing education units on *RTI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports* – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>

(4) Family and Student Support

- >For students and families identified as encountering major barriers that cannot be addressed primarily through classroom-based strategies, focus on individual assistance that the school can provide and on connecting them with whatever is appropriate and available in the community. One example is to organize volunteers (including local college students) to provide no-cost tutoring and mentoring. More severe and chronic problems need to be triaged for referral.

(5) Crisis Prevention and Response

- >For some students and families (and staff), new initiatives such as the introduction of the common core standards cause them to be alarmed; a process should be put in place to detect such folks and work through their concerns

(6) Community Outreach

- >Provide community stakeholders with information on matters such as:
  - >>how common core means to improve college and career readiness;
  - >>how the district plans to integrate it into existing learning supports and other initiatives, such as Response to Intervention
  - >>how they can provide assistance for students and families who are encountering barriers