Strengthening School Improvement

Addressing Barriers to Learning & Teaching and Re-engaging Disconnected Students:

Transforming Student & Learning Supports by Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Learning Supports

Topics Covered:

I. Why a system of learning supports is imperative for school improvement policy and practice
II. What the long-standing approach to student problems in districts and schools has been
III. Expanding School Improvement Policy & Reframing Student and Learning Supports
IV. Toward a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Interventions

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For an overview of resources available at no cost from the Center, see the Center website: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu
I. Why is a System of Learning Supports Imperative for School Improvement?

Some Major Concerns

- High Student Dropout Rates
- High Teacher Dropout Rates
- Continuing Achievement Gap
- So Many Schools Designated as Low Performing
- High Stakes Testing Taking its Toll on Students
- Plateau Effect

Teachers shouldn’t be expected to do it alone!
The imperative is well-stated by the Carnegie Task Force on Education:

*School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students.*

*But . . .*

*when the need directly affects learning,*

*the school must meet the challenge.*

The Challenge: *Doing More with Less*

We all know that sparse resources (people, budget, time, etc.) are a constant challenge.
The Challenge:
Addressing All Students; Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Range of Learners
(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)

Motivationally ready & able
Not very motivated/ lacking prerequisite knowledge & skills/
different learning rates & styles/
minor vulnerabilities
Avoidant/ very deficient in current capabilities/
has a disability/ major health problems

No barriers

Barriers to learning, development, teaching

Instructional Component
Classroom Teaching + Enrichment Activity
(High Standards)

Desired Outcomes (High Expect. & Accountability)

*Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning

Environmental Conditions**
Neighborhood
> extreme economic deprivation
> community disorganization, including high levels of mobility and crime
> violence, drugs, etc.
> gangs
> racial and ethnic conflicts

Family
> chronic poverty
> conflict/disruptions/violence
> substance abuse
> modeling problem behavior
> abusive caretaking
> inadequate provision for quality child care
> problems stemming from minority, immigrant, homeless, foster care, juvenile offender status

School and Peers
> enrollment and attendance hurdles
> poor quality school
> negative encounters with teachers
> negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models

Person Factors**
Individual
> medical problems
> low birth weight/ neurodevelopmental delay
> psychophysiological problems
> difficult temperament & adjustment problems
> inadequate nutrition
> English is a second language
> learning and mental disorders

**A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.
Examples of *Risk-Producing Conditions* that Can Be Barriers to Development and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>&gt;learning and mental disorders</td>
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*Examples of Protective Buffers*

Conditions that prevent or counter risk producing conditions – strengths, assets, corrective interventions, coping mechanisms, special assistance and accommodations

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<td>&gt;strong economic conditions/emerging economic opportunities</td>
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<td>&gt;safe and stable communities</td>
<td></td>
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<td>&gt;available &amp; accessible services</td>
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<td>&gt;strong bond with positive other(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;appropriate expectations and standards</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;opportunities to successfully participate, contribute, and be recognized</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;adequate financial resources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;nurturing supportive family members who are positive models</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;safe and stable (organized and predictable) home environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;family literacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;provision of high quality child care</td>
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<td>&gt;secure attachments – early and ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>School and Peers</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;success at school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;safe, caring, supportive, and healthy school environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;positive relationships with one or more teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;higher cognitive functioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;psychophysiological health</td>
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<td>&gt;easy temperament, outgoing personality, and positive behavior</td>
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<td>&gt;strong abilities for involvement and problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;sense of purpose and future</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;gender (girls less apt to develop certain problems)</td>
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*Examples of Conditions for Promoting Full Development*

Conditions, over and beyond those that create protective buffers, that enhance healthy development, well-being, and a value-based life

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<tr>
<td>&gt;nurturing &amp; supportive conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;policy and practice promotes healthy development &amp; sense of community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;conditions that foster positive physical &amp; mental health among all family members</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>School and Peers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;nurturing &amp; supportive climate school-wide and in classrooms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;conditions that foster feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;pursues opportunities for personal development and empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;intrinsically motivated to pursue full development, well-being, and a value-based life</td>
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*A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.*

II. Current Approach to Addressing Barriers at Schools

What we see around the country: Much activity, much fragmentation!

Mapping a district’s existing efforts to address problems yields a consistent picture of many practices and fragmented, piecemeal, and usually disorganized activity (as illustrated below). The range of such learning and student supports generally is extensive and expensive.*

*Learning and student supports are the resources, strategies, and practices that aim at enabling all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school and beyond by directly addressing external and internal barriers to learning and teaching.
What does this mean for systemic change?

Current Situation is that the efforts to provide supports to address barriers are marginalized in policy and practice.

This leads to

- Fragmentation

- Poor Cost-Effectiveness (up to 25% of a school budget used in too limited and often redundant ways)

- Counterproductive Competition for Sparse Resources (among school support staff and with community-based professionals who link with schools)
Here’s a Look at the Marginalization

Graphically Clarifying the Policy Problem

This is how school improvement policy & practice addresses barriers to learning and teaching

**Direct Facilitation of Learning & Development**

- Instructional Component
- Management Component

**Other concerns are seen as supplementary**
- Concern for Safe Schools
- Some Student & Family Assistance

Besides offering a small amount of school-owned student "support" services, schools outreach to the community to add a few school-based/linked services.

**Governance and Resource Management**
III. Expanding School Improvement Policy & Reframing Student and Learning Supports

Clearly, there are some student and learning supports; what’s missing is a dedicated, unified, and comprehensive component directly focused on:

(1) addressing barriers to learning & teaching

AND

(2) re-engaging students who have become disconnected from classroom instruction & schools
The need is to expand to a three-component policy framework with the intent of developing a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Student and Learning Supports.

- **Direct Facilitation of Learning** *(Instructional Component)*
- **Addressing Barriers to Learning/Teaching** *(Enabling or Learning Supports Component – an umbrella for ending marginalization by unifying the many fragmented efforts and evolving a comprehensive approach)*
- **Governance and Resource Management** *(Management Component)*

**Examples of Initiatives, programs and services that belong under the umbrella**
- >positive behavioral supports
- >programs for safe and drug free schools
- >full service community schools & Family Resource Ctrs
- >Safe Schools/Healthy Students
- >School Based Health Center movement
- >Coordinated School Health Program
- >bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs
- >re-engaging disengaged students
- >compensatory education programs
- >special education programs
- >mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act & other federal programs
- >And many more activities by student support staff
IV. Toward a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Interventions

Rethinking Student and Learning Supports

Drawing on the trailblazing work of various state and local education agencies – see Where’s It Happening? http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/nind7.htm
Here are some of the prototypes that these pioneering efforts have adopted/adapted
Prototype of an Enabling or Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers to Learning and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction

Range of Learners
(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)

Motivationally ready & able

Not very motivated/ lacking prerequisite knowledge & skills/ different learning rates & styles/ minor vulnerabilities

Avoidant/ very deficient in current capabilities/ has a disability/ major health problems

No barriers

Barriers to learning, develop., teaching

Enabling/ Learning Supports Component
(1) Addressing interfering factors
(2) Re-engaging students in classroom instruction

Instructional Component
Classroom Teaching + Enrichment Activity

Desired Outcomes (High Expect. & Accountability)

*In some places, an Enabling Component is called a Learning Supports Component. Whatever it is called, the component is to be developed as a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports at the school site.
A Unified, Comprehensive, & Systemic Learning Supports Component is *Standards-Based and Accountability-Driven*

The intervention framework consists of

- a full *continuum* of interventions

&

- an Organized and Delimited Set of *Content Arenas*
Prototype for Clarifying Levels of Intervention Continuum:*
Interconnected Subsystems for Meeting the Needs of All Students

One Key Facet of a Unified and Comprehensive Framework

**School Resources**
(facilities, stakeholders, programs, services)

Examples:
- General health education
- Social and emotional learning programs
- Recreation programs
- Enrichment programs
- Support for transitions
- Conflict resolution
- Home involvement
- Drug and alcohol education

- Drug counseling
- Pregnancy prevention
- Violence prevention
- Gang intervention
- Dropout prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Learning/behavior accommodations & response to intervention
- Work programs
- Special education for learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and other health impairments

**Community Resources**
(facilities, stakeholders, programs, services)

Examples:
- Recreation & Enrichment
- Public health & safety programs
- Prenatal care
- Home visiting programs
- Immunizations
- Child abuse education
- Internships & community service programs
- Economic development

- Early identification to treat health problems
- Monitoring health problems
- Short-term counseling
- Foster placement/group homes
- Family support
- Shelter, food, clothing
- Job programs

**Subsystem for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems**
primary prevention – includes universal interventions (low end need/low cost per individual programs)

**Subsystem of Early Intervention**
early-after-onset – includes selective & indicated interventions (moderate need, moderate cost per individual)

**Subsystem of Care**
treatment/indicated interventions for severe and chronic problems (High end need/high cost per individual programs)

Systemic collaboration is essential to establish interprogram connections on a daily basis and over time to ensure seamless intervention within each system and among systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems, systems of early intervention, and systems of care.

Such collaboration involves horizontal and vertical restructuring of programs and services
(a) within jurisdictions, school districts, and community agencies (e.g., among departments, divisions, units, schools, clusters of schools)
(b) between jurisdictions, school and community agencies, public and private sectors; among schools; among community agencies

*Various venues, concepts, and initiatives permeate this continuum of intervention systems. For example, venues such as day care and preschools, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to intervention, and coordinated school health. Also, a considerable variety of staff are involved. Finally, note that this illustration of an essential continuum of intervention systems differs in significant ways from the three tier pyramid that is widely referred to in discussing universal, selective, and indicated interventions.
Prototype Categories of *Basic Content Arenas* for Learning Supports Intervention

Note: *All categorical programs can be integrated into these six content arenas.* Examples of initiatives, programs, and services that can be unified into a system of learning supports include positive behavioral supports, programs for safe and drug free schools, programs for social and emotional development and learning, full service community schools and family resource and school based health centers, Safe Schools/Healthy Students projects, CDC’s Coordinated School Health Program, bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs, compensatory education programs, special education programs, mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act, and many more.
Descriptions and major examples of activity in each of the six basic content arenas are available in the new, free online book entitled:

*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*


(The chapters also provide protocol frameworks and many specifics for a systemic learning supports component to replace the existing marginalized and fragmented set of student and learning supports in districts and schools. The work also stresses that transformation can be done by redeploying existing resources and garnering economies of scale.)

See the information about the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html)
For more specific examples and mapping and analysis self study surveys for each arena, see the Center’s online resource aid:

*Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change*

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdftdocs/resourcemapping/resourcemappingandmanagement.pdf
Combining the Continuum and Content Arenas
Provides the Framework for a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Supports*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Intervention</th>
<th>Subsystems for Promoting Healthy Development &amp; Preventing Problems</th>
<th>Subsystem for Early Intervention (Early after problem onset)</th>
<th>Subsystem of Care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom-Based Learning Supports</td>
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<td>Supports for transitions</td>
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<td>Home Involvement/ (Re)engage. in Schooling</td>
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<td>Community Outreach/ Collaboration</td>
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<td>Crisis/ Emergency Assistance &amp; Prevention</td>
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<td>Student and Family Special Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodations for differences &amp; disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialized assistance &amp; other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education &amp; School-Based Behavioral Health)</td>
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</table>

*Note: Various venues, concepts, and initiatives will fit into several cells of the matrix. Examples include venues such as day care centers, preschools, family centers, and school-based health centers, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to interventions, and the coordinated school health program. Most of the work of the considerable variety of personnel who provide student supports also fits into one or more cells.
Reworking Operational Infrastructure

In reworking infrastructure, it is essential to remember

**Structure Follows Function!**

Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports involves reworking the organizational and operational infrastructure for

- schools
- feeder patterns
- districts (and departments of education)
- school-community collaboratives
- regional and state education agencies

The point is to ensure the operational infrastructure at schools, LEAs, and SEAs has a leader and staff focused on planning & developing a Learning Supports Component. Specifically, the need is for

- Administrative Leader for Learning Supports Component
- Learning Supports Leadership Team
- Workgroups
What the Student Support Infrastructure Looks Like at Most Schools

**Instructional Component**

- Leadership for instruction
  - (Various teams and work groups focused on improving instruction)

**Management/Governance Component**

- Management/Governance Administrators
  - (Various teams and work groups focused on Management and governance)

**Case-Oriented Mechanisms**

- School Improvement Team
  - moderate problems
  - severe problems
Example of an Integrated Infrastructure at the School Level  
(Should be paralleled at the district level)

*Learning Supports or Enabling Component Leadership consists of an administrator and other advocates/champions with responsibility and accountability for ensuring the vision for the component is not lost. The administrator meets with and provides regular input to the Learning Supports Leadership Team.

**A Learning Supports Leadership Team ensures component cohesion, integrated implementation, and ongoing development. It meets weekly to guide and monitor daily implementation and development of all programs, services, initiatives, and systems at a school that are concerned with providing learning supports and specialized assistance.

***Ad hoc and standing work groups – Initially, these are the various “teams” that already exist related to various initiatives and programs (e.g., a crisis team) and for processing “cases” (e.g., a student assistance team, an IEP team). Where redundancy exists, work groups can be combined. Others are formed as needed by the Learning Supports Resource Team to address specific concerns. These groups are essential for accomplishing the many tasks associated with such a team’s functions.

For more on this, see
### Differentiating a Case-Team from a Learning Supports Component Leadership Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What a school probably has is a Team Focused on Specific Individuals &amp; Discrete Services</th>
<th>What a school also needs is a Leadership Team for Developing a Unified &amp; Comprehensive System of Learning Supports</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a Case-Oriented Team</strong></td>
<td><strong>a Resource &amp; System Development-oriented Team</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes called:</td>
<td>(Focused on <em>all</em> students and the <em>resources, programs, and systems</em> to address barriers to learning &amp; promote healthy development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Child/Student Study Team</td>
<td>Possibly called:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student Success Team</td>
<td>• Learning Supports Resource Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student Assistance Team</td>
<td>• School Support Resource Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher Assistance Team</td>
<td>• Learning Supports Leadership Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IEP Team</td>
<td>• Learning Supports Development Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS:**

- triage
- referral
- case monitoring/management
- case progress review
- case reassessment

- aggregating data across students & from teachers to analyze school needs
- mapping resources
- analyzing resources
- enhancing resources
- program and system planning/development – including emphasis on establishing a full continuum of intervention
- redeploying resources
- coordinating-integrating resources
- social "marketing"
Connecting Resources Across a Family of Schools, a District, and Community-Wide

Operationally, it is invaluable to connect feeder patterns or a “family” of schools in the same geographic area in order to

> focus on common concerns,

> maximize use of limited resources, and

> achieve economies of scale

When personnel and activities are shared by several neighboring schools, they help minimize redundancy, reduce costs, and enhance equity.
Connecting Resources Across a Family of Schools, a District, and Community-Wide

Enhancing a system of learning supports by connecting resources across
  • a family of schools
  • a district
  • community-wide

High Schools

Middle Schools

Elementary Schools

Learning Supports Leadership Team

School District Management & Governance Bodies

Community Resources Planning & Governing Agents
Resources from the UCLA Center

UCLA Web site

The Center at UCLA has extensive resources which are free and readily accessible online. These include:

- Resources to help meet daily needs related to student learning, behavior, and emotional concerns
- Policy and practice analyses to help rethink current student and learning supports
- A system development toolkit to help design and implement a unified, comprehensive, and equitable learning support system
- A practitioner’s toolbox, and more . . .

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

Online Technical Assistance and Coaching

The Center at UCLA provides free technical assistance for all relevant inquiries and provides free distance coaching for those moving forward with transforming student and learning supports.*

Contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For more in-depth related to this presentation, see:
- Improving School Improvement
- Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide
Access both at: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

For system change resources, see

* System Change Toolkit for Transforming Student Supports into a Unified & Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm