To: **District and State Collaborative Network for Developing Comprehensive Systems of Learning Support**

From: Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor

March 10, 2012

Re: **Countering tendencies to marginalize student/learning supports**

Because of shrinking budgets and superintendent changes, we have been hearing that more and more directives for school improvement are stressing the instructional component as the only focus for school improvement. It seems that anything else is viewed as a "distraction."

While few who are formulating such directives are unaware of the need to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students, they do seem unaware of how disconnected their directives are from the reality of what schools need to do every day. In effect, they are continuing the trend to marginalize efforts that are essential to enabling students to benefit from improved instruction. And such directives certainly work against encouraging a focus on developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports as a primary facet of school improvement.

The question is: What more should we be doing at this time to counter tendencies to ignore and marginalize this matter?

Minimally, we hope participants in the Collaborative Network will work to expand directives related to school improvement. In this regard, we would like to compile any resources you already use to make the case for student/learning supports as an essential component of school improvement. Please send anything along these lines to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

H & L

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If you don't have anything relevant to this, below are a few of the many Center resources from which you could draw. The following have been used to make the argument for the learning supports connection to improving instruction and other important student outcomes.

>*Improving Outcomes for Students and Schools Requires*
>*a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*
>http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improvingoutcomes.pdf

>*So you Want Higher Achievement Scores?*
>*It's Time to Rethink Learning Supports.*
>http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/schoolboard.pdf

>*Learning Supports: Enabling Learning in the Classroom*
>http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtipract.pdf

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Thanks to all of you who responded to our inquiry about professional development for learning supports. While there was some support for every category, here are top recommendations.

(1) Regarding delivery systems that would be most useful, webinar presentations was endorsed by the highest number of people (with web-based workshops and onsite workshops tied for second). Other suggestions were CD for flexibility in viewing, phone conferencing.

(2) Regarding materials that would be most useful, Framework prototypes that can be adopted/adapted was the top choice (with Tool kit of resources coming in second and hadbooks/guides coming in third). Other suggestions were for a video/multimedia and for data on impact.

(3) Regarding audiences/stakeholders for professional development, Administrators was ranked first, student support staff second, and teachers third. Other suggestions were elected officials/policy makers, mental health and health partners, parents and students, and national organizations.

Other comments:

- "Exemplary staff training designs have a long term goal with two or three attainable yearly objectives that can be fluidly attained. This fluidity accounts for the different cultures that exist in districts and even within districts. The training designs must also have a process to develop check points along the way to measure progress toward the established objectives and long range goals."

- "I have checked the majority of the items because different districts have varying needs and will utilize these areas more than others. Having a variety of ways to train and retool schools to include Student Support Systems will require a range of options for conveying the value for this change. I believe a training model of options for webinars with follow-up consultation, coaching and/or technical assistance is effective, or on-site training with reinforcement of web-based information, with follow-up consultation, coaching, and/or any combination with a requirement of follow-up. Encouraging districts to develop their own handbook and tool kit would help to integrate into their existing system as a way to institutionalize the inclusion of Student Support System."

- "As part of state initiative we are doing a great deal of PD. I find it is fragmented because district is not moving in specific direction to support a consistent goal."

- "...I think participants gain the most from on-site presentations/workshops as the presenter is personally there to interract with the audience and the participants can interact with each other. ..I also do a fair amount of email follow up."

Re: Info about the learning supports work by the Ohio Dept. of Education

Krista Allison at the Ohio Department of Education reports on the next phase of their regional learning supports roll-out. Last fall the department hosted 16 regional meetings. They used a recorded webinar with slides on the national look at learning supports, a live presentations via the web regarding the state work on learning supports, and a locally facilitated discussion group to follow up with local planning. You can see the reports from these events online – http://www.education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=431&ContentID=118704&Content=119549

In the next phase over the next three months, the department will be offering live, interactive webinars to local audiences focusing on next steps in 3 content areas – learning supports, school climate and school improvement. These will provide a lead into a best practices day long event in early August.

Re: Hawai`i's agencies looking to enhance school-community collaboration

Major agencies in Hawai`i are convening an interagency steering group to develop an formal alliance and to adopt a unifying and comprehensive framework to better integrate school and community resources for supporting children and youth. The agencies will meet on March 16th to
1. Share perspectives on what the current state of affairs is in the state,
2. Enhance their understanding about what others across the country are doing,
3. Expand their vision, mission, and frameworks for working together,. and
4. Explore ways to move forward.

They have invited us to present on (a) How Others Frame a Unified and Comprehensive Approach and on (b) Fundamental Interrelated Problems that Initiatives Must Address.

The group plans to roll out their initiative at a June statewide summit.

We hope to be of some help to them and certainly will learn quite a bit to share with colleagues across the country.