

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

From: Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor

May 20, 2012

Re: Update

We hope all is well as this school year winds down, and we plan for the coming year.

(1) About the Requests for Job Descriptions and Website Exemplars.

In response to the recent request for job descriptions designed for a District Learning Supports System Director, we received a quick response from the Stillwater district in Minnesota. We have added that job description to the other job descriptions in the capacity building section (Section B) of the rebuilding toolkit. It can be accessed directly at – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/ljobstillwater.pdf>

We also heard from participants about the need to add to the job descriptions a function that encompassed pursuing extramural funding in ways that avoided “projectitis” and helped build a comprehensive system of learning supports. And one response suggested that in considering management style “the job description might include (proof of) the ability to provide and empower stakeholders by means of reflection, collective thinking, critical thinking and dialogue, and the recognition that change is not linear. ... Leaders who take on these roles ought to have a strong commitment to help move others along the change process (and have a lot of patience), but not a top-down approach. It has to be collaborative ...”

With respect to website use, Krista Allison at the Ohio Department of Education has shared her department’s newly developed site for the *Ohio Safe and Supportive Learning Collaborative*. See <http://ohiosupportivelearning.ning.com/>

This is the closest we have heard about any website specifically designed to move SEAs, LEAs, and schools toward a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning & teaching. If you can guide us toward one, please do so.

(2) Central Valley School District (Spokane Valley, WA) Moving Forward.

From Terrie VanderWegen, Assistant Superintendent: “We spoke at the start of the school year when our district wanted to have an Initiative that addressed reducing the barriers to learning for students preK-12. You gave us some great guidance in that phone conference. We have used your framework and have developed significant action plans for our district. I am proud to say that because of your research and framework, we have plans that will be implemented next year that will significantly impact students that have barriers to learning. If you are ever in our area I would invite you to visit our district and review our action plans.

I believe our district would make a great case study in putting research into practice. Thank you for your support. I look forward to sharing with you.”

As we follow-up with this district, we all should have the opportunity to learn a great deal.

(3) Focusing on Learning Supports as Research for an Advanced Degree.

Several members of the Collaborative Network are planning to pursue an advanced degree and are thinking about topics related to learning supports. One focus that has been discussed is an analysis that clarifies how much of a school’s and/or district’s budget is expended on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Informal estimates have suggested that in some districts this amounts to about 25% of the budget. A good financial analysis will help underscore the need to ensure that such a significant portion of the budget is used in an increasingly cost-effective manner.

Another topic that has been suggested is an action research study of the systemic change process required to “get from here to there” in implementing a comprehensive system of learning supports.

(4) Working More Collaboratively with Those Responsible for School Improvement.

Lauren Kazee at Michigan Department of Education reports that those concerned with learning supports in her department “are working more collaboratively with our Office of Education Improvement and Innovation (aka School Improvement) in general, but also on integrating coordinated school health~school climate~conditions for learning efforts into districts school improvement plans. This is a huge step forward for us and one we are thrilled about as it ‘forces’ schools/districts to look at things other than just academic measures, etc. I should have a sample School Improvement Plan with this integrated in the near future. I can share it”

(5) Using Brochures for Social Marketing a New Learning Supports System.

Gainesville City Schools (GA) has developed such a brochure. We have added it to the brochures in Section A of the rebuilding toolkit.

See – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/gainesvillebroch.pdf>

This is the type of social marketing tool that can be widely disseminated and used effectively as part of the Learning Supports System section of a district’s website.

Also see the new brief set of Guidance Notes prepared by the Center on *Social Marketing as a Spiraling Facet of Program and Systemic Change*. This is in Section C of the toolkit. Direct access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/socmark.pdf>

(6) About Contact From Newark, NJ and NYU's Metro Center for Urban Education

In early April, we were contacted by Barika Williams, a Project Associate with NYU's Metro Center for Urban Education (working with Dr. Lauren Wells and Dr. Pedro Noguera on the Broader Bolder Approach to Education). She indicated that she is working "to move seven schools in Newark, NJ towards a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports." She contacted us to see if there was a school implementing school-wide or district-wide Learning Supports System she could visit. She stated: "I would like see what a comprehensive system looks like on the ground in action and how it shifts operations, relationships, systems, etc. to increase my understanding as I move to operationalize our work in this direction."

Working with our collaborative colleagues at Scholastic, we were able to arrange a visit to the Gainesville schools in early May. She ended up taking a 7 person group that included 2 principals, 2 social workers, 1 guidance counselor, and 3 school organization personnel - spanning across three different K-8 schools. She reported back "We had a wonderful and informative trip to Gainesville. Everyone down there was incredibly welcoming and encouraging of taking the steps to begin shifting to a comprehensive system of learning supports. In retrospect we probably should had planned for a full 2 days because we all wanted more time at the end of day, but some of the group schedule required them to be back by Tuesday. Still, we all walked away with a lot to think about, process, and begin to translate into next steps. ... I know Lauren and I would very much like to have a conversation with you all to discuss moving ahead, and the opportunity of potentially working with you all and becoming a site. I will touch base with her, but maybe the next step is for us to setup a phone call sometime in the next 2 weeks."

(7) About Continuing Education/Professional Development Relevant to Learning Supports.

As you know, we have developed a set of continuing education units focused:

Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families: Four Units for Continuing Education

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2302&number=9994>

This set of CE units provides a perspective on motivation that goes beyond mainly reinforcing and enforcing behavior. The emphasis is on:

- expanding understanding of engagement, re-engagement, and intrinsic motivation in the context of school improvement and school climate
- highlighting strategic approaches to engaging and re-engaging students, with special attention to avoiding over-reliance on extrinsic reinforcers and minimizing practices that can produce reactance
- engaging and re-engaging families by attending to differences among families and other primary caretakers with respect to resources, motivation and needs, and barriers to involvement with the school
- stressing that teachers can't and should not be expected to do it all alone. Rather their work needs to be embedded into a unified and comprehensive system of

learning supports and that system should be built with a view to engaging and reengaging students, families, and all the professionals who have a stake in improving schools.

- >Unit I: *Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification*
Direct access: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf>
- >Unit II: *Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement & Re-engagement*
Direct access: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageii.pdf>
- >Unit III: *Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement*
Direct access: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiii.pdf>
- >Unit IV: *Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports*
Direct access: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiv.pdf>

Note: We are encouraging folks to share this continuing education resource widely and especially with those who plan professional development for schools. Given the importance of engagement and the fact that staff feel unequipped to re-engage disconnected students, we are recommending the topic as a focus for a summer “retreat” designed to develop a common perspective for teachers and learning support staff.

REQUEST: We understand the importance of developing a range of professional development resources specifically related to a unified and comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. We will continue to develop such resources as part of our ongoing work, and as we have reported, we are exploring with Scholastic making this a regular feature of their professional development unit.

At this time, we would appreciate hearing from you about what you think we should develop as our next set of continuing education units.

Also, since we are receiving many inquiries from folks seeking ways to get CE credit for the CE materials we develop, is there a mechanism for a district or regional education center to adopt/adapt such resources and provide CE credit?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Please send responses to: Ltaylor@ucla.edu