



**29 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**



May 18, 2015

**Two Frequent End of the Year Requests Related to
Transforming Student and Learning Supports**

- >We're planning for next year: What are some initial steps in transforming student and learning supports?**
- >We've been working toward transforming student and learning supports: How are others summarizing progress?**

Related Set of Center Resources

- >Aids for reporting on progress and accomplishments**

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Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested. The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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Note: In keeping with the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports, this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed.* The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Request:

Were planning for next year: What are some initial steps in transforming student and learning supports?*

Center Response: We have prepared several brief documents to help with this. See

- >*First Steps in Transforming Student and Learning Supports into a Unified and Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/1ststeps.pdf>
- >*Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf>
- >*Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superstart.pdf>

Here is a brief synthesis of initial steps.*

Step 1: Creating Readiness and Commitment. Work with key stakeholders to build commitment to unifying student and learning supports into a Learning Supports Component (i.e., a component that systematically and comprehensively enables learning by addressing barriers to learning & teaching). Clarify why the component is essential and ensure that the commitment to its development is fully and realistically integrated into school improvement and other strategic operational planning. Keep in mind that building readiness and commitment is an ongoing process.

Step 2: Appoint an Administrative Leader for System Development. Assign an administrative-level Learning Supports Lead to begin development of the component. Be sure the leader's job description is revised to reflect the new responsibilities and accountabilities; provide appropriate personnel development. Be sure this leader is at administrative planning and decision making tables and component development is a regular part of the agenda.

Step 3: Appoint a High Level Steering Group to Champion and Monitor the work. Establish an official Steering Group of high level power leaders to steer, champion, problem solve, clear barriers to moving forward, and provide essential guidance to keep the work flowing.

Step 4: Establish a Development Team to Work with the Administrative Lead. Assign key staff to a component development team (i.e., a Learning Supports Leadership Team) to work with the leader to prepare a design "document" and a strategic plan for unifying and then developing the component. In the process, this team helps clarify, analyze, identify priorities, recommend resource redeployment, and establish and guide workgroups for developing each facet of the component over a period of several years. Be sure the strategic plan for the component is fully integrated into the overall strategic plan.

Step 5. Establish an Operational Infrastructure of Mechanisms for Planning and Implementation. Elicit volunteers and provide them with relevant professional development and support for pursuing the various facets of the work. While the component development team will guide and support movement forward in establishing a comprehensive system of learning supports, the work requires the efforts of planning and implementation teams and smaller workgroups to carry out specific tasks.

Step 6. Conduct In-depth and Ongoing Analyses to Determine Gaps, Priorities, and Resource Deployment. Build on initial listings of current personnel and activities by doing an indepth and structured mapping of all resources the school currently uses to address barriers to learning and teaching. Then, (a) do a gap analysis with respect to available needs assessments, (b) identify immediate priorities for moving forward with improvement and system development, and (c) recommend (re)deployment of resources to meet priorities in a cost-effective manner. Be certain the decisions are reflected in all strategic and school improvement plans

Step 7: Provide Ongoing Professional and Other Stakeholder Development. Include a focus on a comprehensive system of learning supports in all planning for continuous learning at the school. Provide on-the-job opportunities and special times for such learning. Delineate what those assigned to develop the component need to learn over time; ensure all others (teachers, student support staff, other staff and volunteers, community stakeholders) are included in learning about how best to address barriers to learning and teaching. Use the free resources available through the UCLA Center’s mentoring, coaching, technical assistance, and online resources.

Step 8. Use Formative Evaluation to Support Progress. Ensure that a formative evaluation process is established. Such a process should encompass data on and analyses of all facets of planning and implementation related to developing a comprehensive system of learning supports. Moreover, the process should be designed to provide guidance and support to foster progress. This means monitoring all factors that facilitate and hinder progress and then ensuring actions are taken to deal with interfering factors and to enhance facilitation. As significant progress is made in developing the system, the monitoring can expand to evaluate the impact on student outcomes that are direct indicators of the effectiveness of learning supports (e.g., increased attendance, reduced misbehavior, improved learning).

Listserv Participants: What do you want to know about unifying student and learning supports and then developing a comprehensive and equitable system? Send requests to Ltaylor@ucla.edu .

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Requst: **We’ve been working toward transforming student and learning supports: How are others summarizing progress?**

Center Response: As the school year ends, it is time to show what has been accomplished with respect to moving toward a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports. Unlike old reports that cited only the number of students seen by student support staff, summarizing system developments designed to enhance equity of opportunity for the success of all students also becomes a major focus. As noted in Step 8 above, this is a formative evaluation process. It includes details about what has been accomplished to date related to all 8 steps. Special attention is given to the *Five Essential Elements of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essentials.pdf> .

- >A very first attempt to share progress is exemplified in a recent document highlighting transforming efforts in Calhoun County, Alabama – online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/calhouncounty.pdf>
- >Also see the statewide progress update from the Alabama Department of Education – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/ala2015.pdf>

Another example comes from a 2007 evaluation by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) summarizing early work in Iowa. Descriptive and formative evaluative data were gathered related to Iowa's first steps in implementing its initiative for guiding schools in developing a comprehensive system of learning supports. The following are excerpts from the Executive Summary – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/AIRFinalreport-IowaDataGrant.pdf>

"Evaluation of the Learning Supports initiative indicated that having clear guidance and support from the state, a strong local leader, and adequate funding were associated with better implementation of Learning Supports. Teams were working together much more effectively in the second year of the initiative. Districts doing a better job implementing Learning Supports had higher reading and math achievement than districts with poor implementation. We would expect that [in a third year] these gains would have been even greater."

"Data analysis showed that although achievement levels for field test districts were below the state mean, the percent proficient for reading and math at grades 4, 8, and 11 were consistently higher for the medium and high implementation groups than for the low group."

"Eight of the ten pilot sites reported improved student behavior and expected this improvement to serve as groundwork for future academic success."

"Community outreach. Most of the teams attempted to connect with the surrounding community and involve them in promoting the goals of the Learning Supports initiative. Community involvement included outreach to local organizations like the YMCA, agencies that provide mental health and substance abuse services, community businesses, churches, neighborhood centers, parks and recreation offices, parent-teacher organizations, and volunteer groups. Iowa City has also used technology to increase their outreach to parents by creating an automated telephone tree that dials out to parents and a real-time student information website."

"Internal/external champions. Most of the Learning Supports teams considered their team members to be internal champions, and particular members played important roles as volunteer coordinators, at-risk youth coordinators, team leaders, managers of specific initiatives, and liaisons to other community organizations. These members helped to connect the Learning Supports initiative to the community. For those teams that reached out to the community and created partnerships, their external champions ranged from parent-teacher organizations and the school board to local business leaders and service agencies."

"Changes in the environment and new opportunities/challenges. Learning Supports team members were also a part of the communities in which they worked, so they were often involved in different organizations from which they could draw information, trends, new ideas, and feedback to support initiatives develop and support their plans. In several field test sites, the AEA staff provided surveys, staff training and resources, and other types of support to collect, analyze and report data. The stronger these ties were among the team and with the community, the greater their ability to respond to opportunities and challenges. In addition, district-based teams that were made up of a wide variety of team members had a broader view of community needs."

Listserv Participants: Sharing reports of progress is a good way to help others move forward. Share with us, and we will send the information on to the over 100,000 stakeholders on our listservs. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources:

>Aids for reporting on progress and accomplishments

In addition to the documents cited above, see the Center's System Change Toolkit – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm> for links to additional resources to guide data gathering related to transforming student and learning supports.

For example:

- > *Benchmark Tool Related to Efforts to Prepare for Systemic Change*
- > *Benchmark Checklist for Monitoring and Reviewing Progress in Developing a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
- > *Monitoring Progress in Developing a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching -- Topical Guide for Self-Evaluation*
- > *Expanding the Accountability Framework for Schools*

Examples of indicators of effectiveness in addressing addressing barriers and re-engaging students include increased attendance, reduced tardies, reduced misbehavior, less bullying and sexual harassment, increased family involvement with child, fewer referrals for specialized assistance, fewer referrals for special education, fewer pregnancies, fewer suspensions and dropouts.

*For information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Also see: *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf>

***Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to
enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development***

***Please share relevant resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences!
Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu***

***Note: Responses come only to our Center at UCLA for possible inclusion
in the next week's message.***

***We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on
our website at***

***<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>
and to *Facebook* -- access from the Center's home page
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>***