School Practitioner Listserv

29 years & counting

A Weekly Community of Practice Network for Sharing and Interchange

Mental Health in Schools
UCLA Center
Program and Policy Analysis*

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With the beginning of the school year, it is important not only to address specific student problems, but to focus on ways to enhance the system of student and learning supports. Thus, this week we explore

>*Transforming student and learning supports: Challenges and overcoming them*

>*Center resources that can help relaunch student and learning supports*

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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.

About challenges to transforming student and learning supports:

We asked colleagues who have been working to transform learning support over the past several years to share their experiences. Here is a sample of their responses:

(1) "One of the biggest challenges I would say is getting the initial buy-in due to the resistance encountered with another new initiative. Second would be getting the framework embedded deep enough and refreshed routinely enough to withstand the transition of the initial champions of the work. Lastly, holding folks accountable to doing their part."

(2) "The top challenge to implementation that we have seen are having a strong leader who will guide the work and for schools/districts to dedicate the time necessary to sustain the system.

(3) "As you know we have encountered many barriers to implementation, but have worked through many of those. The Learning Supports component begins with the premise that Instruction is a well oiled machine, but what we found as we worked to move from the traditional two component system (instruction and management) to a three component system (instruction, learning supports, and management) is the resistance of the traditional ways of doing business. Re-structuring our cabinet and promoting the equity of the Three Components have been critical as we move beyond simply responding to barriers to developing systems to proactively and preventatively address them moving forward. We now have an Assistant Superintendent (Management), Executive Director of Learning and Teaching (Instruction), and an Executive Director of Learning Supports. We are currently addressing the need for professional development time and goals related to developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports that is equal in size and density to Instruction. I also have found that staff at the building are the easiest to change practice. The imperative is right in front of them. With guidance and understanding of developing systems they dig into the work. We have had critical personnel changes, but have endured due to, in part, our Superintendent's belief in a Three Component model. This belief led to our district strategic plan explicitly calling out Learning Supports as an equal and vital component with Management and Instruction. We are in for another exciting and productive year!"

Overcoming the challenges

We see the beginning of the new school year as a great time to strengthen student and learning supports and in doing so start to move toward a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system. Here are some ways to proceed that will help overcome typical challenges to the work:

(1) Work with the leadership of student and learning supports to generate a plan to *Relaunch student and learning supports.* Highlight the pressing concerns about barriers to learning and teaching that need to be addressed this year and outline a strategic plan for actions.*

(2) Use available data to show:
    (a) the imperative for and value of student and learning supports
    (b) the increasing value of moving toward unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

(3) Use time with the key admininstrators, staff leaders, and other decision shapers to do a brief presentation on *Current Status and the Relaunch Plan.*

(4) Ensure there is policy commitment for what has been proposed.

(5) Arrange for a series of kick-off/showcasing announcements and presentations to all school personnel and to community collaborators and stakeholders (e.g., bulletin/memo/ letter announcements; leadership presentations). Be sure teachers' meetings include presentations about the work.

*Note about sharing the plan. Prepare a short handout of key points in the Relaunch Plan to guide presentations and to ensure that everyone has a copy of the why, who, and what is to take place. For example, emphasize the following:

- "Over the past year, we have accomplished the following ...

- At the same time, our efforts have been hampered by the piecemeal and fragmented way student and learning supports continue to be organized.

- As we relaunch, the plan is to move toward a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system. To make it happen, we are proposing policy, a new leadership structure for student and learning supports and a related plan for staff development, and full integration of the relaunch plan into school improvement strategic plans.

- The relaunch is intended to increase prevention and early intervention efforts to address barriers to learning related to: in-classroom learning and student supports, supports for transitions, home and community involvement and engagement, crisis assistance and prevention, and student/family assistance.

- Anticipated outcomes include:
    >development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports
    >improved attendance, reduction in referrals for behavior problems, enhanced
      engagement in learning, improved social and emotional functioning, and more
    >higher levels of student, family and staff morale and an improved school climate

- Immediate next steps will be to widely share what will be happening."

Listserv partcipants: What can you share about enhancing the system of student and learning supports. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Center resources that can help relaunch student and learning supports

On advocating for policy that will end the long standing marginalization of student and learning supports in school improvement policy and practice:

>*Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf

>*Fully Integrating Student/Learning Supports into the School Improvement Agenda* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fully integrating student-learning supports.pdf

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

On pursuing actions to end the fragmented implementation of student/learning supports:

>*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

>*Benchmark Checklist for Monitoring and Reviewing Progress in Developing a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/benchmarktool.pdf

On enhancing how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students:

>*Five Essential Elements of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essentials.pdf

>*Transforming Learning Supports to Transform Schools* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/transform.pdf

On showcasing these matters in communications, at meeting and conferences, in professional development, etc.:

>See our website for power point presentations, webinar samples, brochures, etc. (Access by going to the Center's System Change Toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm)

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

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
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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/