



**School Practitioner
Listserv**



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

February 22, 2016

Concern from the Field:

>As defined in ESSA, who are Specialized Instructional Support Personnel? Are they the only ones who provide student and learning supports?

- Center Perspective
- Perspectives from the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources:

>Center Toolkits

Resources to Build Capacity of Paraprofessionals

New Resource from the U.S. Department of Education

>VetoViolence: Resource for Prevention Practitioners

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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 *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.

Concern from the Field: Now that the new *Every Student Succeeds Act* has replaced the job title “Pupil Personnel Service Provider” with the term *Specialized Instructional Support Personnel*, are these the primary student and learning support staff?

Center Perspective: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designates the term Specialized Instructional Support Personnel as including

“school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists; and (ii) other qualified professional personnel, such as school nurses, speech language pathologists, and school librarians, involved in providing assessment, diagnosis, counseling, educational, therapeutic, and other necessary services (including related services as that term is defined in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401).”

Clearly, however, other folks working in schools/districts are part of the range of personnel who provide learning and student supports. For example, there are staff focused on Title I, special education, homeless students, English Language Learners and immigrants; there are educational assistants, family outreach staff, and more. (*Who else?* See the perspectives from the field.)

Given that many are involved in addressing barriers to learning, beyond the matter of *who?*, the question arises:

What is a good way to engage all these personnel in working toward developing a more unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports?

We see this as an operational infrastructure matter, and our answer is provided in various Center resources. See for example: *Key Leadership Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Student & Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/resource_oriented_teams.pdf .

Note that, rather than the type of site coordinator mentioned in ESSA, we stress forming a learning supports leadership team tasked with *system development*. For a quick overview of the composition and functions of such a team, see *What is a Learning Supports Leadership Team?* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

Perspectives from the Field: We asked a number of colleagues to reflect on the above matters. Here are some of the responses we received:

(1) “I think of learning support staff as any person who is not a classroom teacher. ... Many schools have teaching coaches, data folks, as well as all the ones you mentioned below. A registrar can be of tremendous support on a student support team and a must is a Principal or Vice Principal. They tend to be a liaison to the family and know all kinds things about students...”

(2) “Many of our staff members have become “specialized” to help support the increasing demands placed on instructional staff. Many schools across our country now have behavior specialists, reading specialists, RtI specialists, autism specialists, etc. Perhaps this is just another example of how fragmented our system is, but I think it is yet another attempt to get the much needed help to our teachers. Until schools embrace systems change, evaluate and coordinate existing efforts and resources, reallocate duplicated resources, and collaborate with community partners, it will be hard to identify and justify additional support staff. So, your question about who else might be included on learning support teams is a real challenge since everyone seems to be already stretched pretty thin. However, I think school nurses would be a valued asset to the teams since they are typically the first responders to students’ mental health issues.”

(3) “I recommend considering a broad group of stakeholders that serve as caring adults and supports for kids — bus drivers, cafeteria staff, school nurses and others in the community. Especially community folks that are experts in youth development, leadership and outside-of-school time opportunities. Examples might be Extension Services personnel, library staff and, for teens, local youth employers. I typically suggest that schools map community resources to determine who to involve.”

(4) “I believe that there are other adults in school districts that may have connections to students, but often are ignored or marginalized. These groups are the following: Bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and coaches. I have provided both mandatory trainings and PBIS training to these groups of individuals and through these encounters I have learned that some students (often those who do not connect well their same-age peers) form personal relationships with the invisible workers in school buildings or with their bus drivers. I work for an area education office, in planning for students who need support (albeit social-emotional, mental health, behavioral or academic), both special education and general education staff who work with those students should have the opportunity to provide their knowledge with the team. Educational assistants are typically with students all day across various settings. These workers have insights and experiences that are different from those of the educators who serve the students. Their insights have the potential to add depth and breadth to conversations around student planning. As I mentioned above, the unnoticed and invisible workers in the school may have relationships with students or they have opportunities to observe students during unstructured times. In some schools these employees, along with educational assistants, are treated like second-class citizens and are not privy to the same professional development trainings the certified staff receive.”

(5) “... this varies based on how states and districts allocate resources and who controls the decision-making. For example, in our district teacher assistants are limited by our state funding and directed by law in the majority of their functions. Their hours are limited to the student day and they must be used for learning supports, not for paperwork or other types of duties teachers may have assigned them in the past. Our schools use them in general education as small group and individualized direct support for students. This is determined by several factors including the needs across tiers of intervention delivery. Assistants are then assigned by our building administrators and academic facilitators to meet those needs. Having those administrators and facilitators on a team are important to ensure that academic needs are met appropriately in our district.

As for ELL, Title 1, and MCV supports, that varies across the nation as well. In our district, our school social workers and counselors represent our homeless learning support and therefore are present at meetings around student needs. ELL, EC, and other programs, when separate staff exist, are included in our student services team meetings as appropriate for the students in question. This also includes our MTSS team meetings as well. When discussing larger school needs, all are included to represent their voice. In our district we do that in two ways: school leadership team and our student services teams.

Another way that schools have found it helpful to include all voices is to ensure that student services team members are able to attend team meetings around these issues as well, whenever possible. For example, when I was in schools as a school psychologist (and later as a school counselor), I regularly attended EC team meetings and ELL team planning meetings to ensure that we all were aware of the same issues and student needs on our campus. Those issues were then discussed by our larger teams, if relevant. Our school leadership team also ensured that representatives included staff from student services, Exceptional Children (EC), ELL, and Title 1 on their teams.

The biggest challenge, however, is consolidating teams and coordinating the work so it’s meaningful and not simply done for compliance. Too often, our schools are mandated to have teams that include the same people over and over again: school leadership teams, school health teams, learning support or student services teams, crisis teams, bully prevention teams, MTSS/PBIS teams, and the list could go on and on. In addition, schools often have committees to address their specific

challenges or school needs: community engagement, school events, character development, science education, etc. Each team is given some specific work plans, which are unique, but can also overlap. It would be wonderful to have one master team at both the district and school-house level that all teams report to and for multiple people to be given access to representation on these teams. This master team would have the high level view of all work going on in the district or school building, coordinate any particular overlap, and drive all work by strategic goals that include everyone. This would spread the workload to all in the school building. However, adding more to the plate of anyone in the school building at this point would be challenging.

In our district we're moving towards our student services teams encompassing the work of crisis teams, bully prevention teams, learning support teams, and systems of care teams for students; however, this change is taking place slowly. Also, from a non-student services perspective, our district has started a new initiative called ILT (instructional leadership teams) where 6 times a year all school teams meet for common training and planning around reading. A school's ILT team consist of administrators, academic facilitators, and teacher leaders. At those meetings, which take a week for our district to get all schools through, we have staff who represent all of the learning supports in our district available for consultation. This includes academic content specialists (for integrating reading across the curriculum), ELL, EC, Title 1, Student Services (in our district that is school counseling, school psychology, school social work, school nurses, 504, MCV, MTSS, coordinated school health, bully prevention, and character development), as well as district leadership from all levels. The efforts are aligning instructional practices and improving them as schools work with others facing similar challenges. I hope to see more of this work in the future and I dream of a day where we can do something similar around the whole child."

(6) Excerpt shared from a state department of education review addressing the problem of silos: "... Over the past decade, increasing federal requirements and funding, combined with decreasing state categorical requirements and funding, have led staff to focus predominantly on federally required activities. This has narrowed the focus of interactions with LEAs and limited the scope of advice and services staff provides. ... Even within the constraints of federal requirements, we believe the state department of education could explore opportunities for using federally required activities and federally funded staff to provide more helpful services to LEAs....Some states have adopted more innovative approaches towards undertaking federal activities. Specifically, some state education agencies have expanded the scope of their activities beyond an evaluation of whether the activities LEAs undertake with federal funds are permissible, to trying to ensure those expenditures are effective at improving student outcomes. For example, to provide LEAs with more holistic feedback on improving student outcomes, several states have merged staff responsibilities and funding sources that traditionally have worked in separate silos. These include staff supported by federal grants that fund services for students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and English learner students..."

(7) "I agree is important to involve student support personnel, such as special education staff, education assistants, and federal programs personnel. However, this simple idea can be difficult to implement. In my experience, many schools districts tend to deploy their staff in ways that limit their effectiveness. For example, in our state, school psychologists are typically funded from special education funds and thus can only see current or potential special education students. Or at least, that is how the powers that be have decided to organize their schools. I'm sure all the Federal programs personnel have rules imposed by the government, and additional rules imposed by administration. Assistant activities may be limited by the state licensing/certification agency, etc. People in schools are overloaded with too many students with too many problems. When you are just barely holding on by your fingernails, it is difficult to think creatively about new ways"

(8) "I have had experience and include related professionals/paraprofessionals in the educational support partners category. Everyone at the table making decisions about the educational/social/emotional development of every student. Perhaps the most underutilized resource across these services are the parents, whose partnership, in my experience, is essential to an integrated learner identity-especially so for learners living in poverty. I found the following

engagement sites most valuable: Preschool/kindergarten welcome wagon for parents and their children; planned/implemented engagement of parents when their children/our students need an IEP, especially the first IEP to set the active parent participation agenda as a meaningful and important part to the process for student, teacher(s), administrator, PPS Team members, community agency staff etc. ‘It takes a village to raise a child.’

With that in place, I found that , in middle class schools, parent /family and other volunteers could enrich the classroom climate by increasing personal attention to individual students; in economically poor schools, I found that parents/community members could play the same role if they were hired as classroom aides-they need to work, cannot afford to volunteer-findings of my doctoral dissertation. Volunteers and aides were most effective if they caught students on task or socially /emotionally appropriate. This activity created strong bonds between student and positive adult and encouraged further engagement. In the pilot school that invented this way of working systemically, academic outcomes were so positive that the school lost its ESEA (or similar) funding and hence its program-what irony! I also saw very positive outcomes from the Newcomers' Project, where we developed a paraprofessional Welcome Wagon approach to all students newly enrolled in the district coming from foreign countries, speaking primarily another language at home, but even those from parts of the US where segregation was still rampant. We used paraprofessionals with similar life experiences/language fluency and , via enrollment support and follow up home visits, oriented parents/families to the daily school patterns-time to arrive/leave; bus routes; library hours; school breakfasts and lunches-food acceptable in their cultures. This approach made a huge difference in the ease with which the Newcomer students found their way into this new experience.

In my more routine Pupil Personnel Services work, I discovered the power of empowerment of our students-experiences where they could discover and practice their own sense of being in control and actively engaged in their own problem solving.”

Invitation to listserv participants: *If you have perspectives on any of this, let us hear from you!* Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured set of Center Resources

>Center Toolkits

(1) *System Change Toolkit for Transforming Student Supports into a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching - Rebuilding Student Supports into a Comprehensive System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* – offers materials, tools, specific guides, and other resources as aids for action and to deepen learning about the substance and processes of the work to be done. The tools are grouped in an order that roughly approximates moving from creating readiness, through initial implementation, to sustaining and scaling-up.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

(2) *Practitioner and Professional Development: Virtual Toolbox for MH in Schools* – This toolbox reflects a broad view of mental health in schools and of the role mental health plays in the well-being of students, their families, and their teachers. Also stressed is the value of embedding mental health into a comprehensive classroom and school-wide system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students as an essential facet of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/toolbox.htm>

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Resources to Build Capacity of Paraprofessionals

In many schools and districts the largest number of student support staff are the paraprofessionals working in the classrooms. To build capacity, learning support staff can play a significant role in their continuing education and professional development. Here are some resources for such capacity building:

- > *Title I non-regulatory guidance for paraprofessionals* – <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/paraguidance.pdf>
- > National Resource Center for Paraeducators – <http://www.nrcpara.org/>
- > *A Guide to Schoolwide Planning for Paraeducator Supports* – <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport/downloads/guide.pdf>
- > Paraeducator Resource and Learning Center – <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport/downloads/guide.pdf>
- > National Clearinghouse for Paraeducator Resources – <http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html>
- > Maximize paraprofessional services – <http://www.ldonline.org/article/6184/>
- > *Guidelines for training and support of paraprofessionals* – http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/guidelines_paraprofessionals.pdf
- > *Best practices in utilizing special education assistants* – http://isminc.com/pdf/research-free/general/2937_best-practices-in-utilizing-special-education-assistants

New Resource from the U.S. Department of Education

> **VetoViolence: Resource for Prevention Practitioners**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention DC invites you to visit Division of Violence Prevention's VetoViolence Web site. http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/?utm_content&utm_medium=email&utm_name&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term

VetoViolence is designed specifically for violence prevention practitioners, including state and local health departments, grantees, program evaluators, technical assistance providers, and decision-makers. The Web site, which has won 7 awards since 2011, uses new and innovative ways to provide violence prevention training, tools, and resources.

The Web site provides interactive and engaging evidence- and practice-based tools, trainings, and resources to help you stop violence-before it happens in your community. Here are a few examples:

- > Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Snapshot is a resource that will help you understand the landmark Kaiser ACE Study. The resource answers questions like "how can we use ACE study data to prevent ACEs from occurring?"
- > Dating Matters® Capacity Assessment and Planning Tool is an online system that will help you assess and monitor your capacity for implementing a comprehensive teen dating violence initiative.

>Dating Matters®Training is an online course in which you can learn how to improve the health of teens and to prevent teen dating violence.

>EvaluACTION is designed for people interested in learning about program evaluation and how to apply it to their work.

>Principles of Prevention is an online training in which you learn how to apply key concepts of primary prevention, the public health approach, and the social-ecological model to your violence prevention work.

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

***THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND
INTERESTING THIS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE BECOMES!***

Send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences to ltaylor@ucla.edu

**We 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/>**