



**School Practitioner
Listserv**



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

March 7, 2016

Concern from the Field:

- >Compartmentalized and Territorial Turf Battles**
 - Center Perspective
 - Perspectives from the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources:

- >Creating Readiness for Collaborative Development of a Unified Learning Supports Component**

**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: “I have been working at the district level for three years now to slowly chip away at the institutional thinking that keeps everyone departmentalized. Some people are just more open to collaborative team thinking. Others are more territorial. ... I am particularly interested in changes at the systems level. I am thinking that ... we can make changes ... using the new ESSA as a spring board. ... As long as we stay compartmentalized, progress will be slow due to funding being used ineffectively.”

Center Perspective: While an overall goal that staff share is the desire to see students succeed, some staff may not see working together as a way to achieve this goal. They often have concerns about ending compartmentalization, such as:

- >My program works, and it may be weakened by embedding it with others.
- >I might lose control, resources, and independence in making decisions.
- >Meeting with others will take too much of my time.
- >Others may use this as a way to advance their own agenda at my expense.

There also are issues about trust, personal affinity, and more.

Creating Motivational Readiness is Key to Effective and Sustainable Systemic Change

Understanding motivation is essential in working with students; it also is essential in working with adults. From the perspective of the intrinsic motivation research of Ed Deci and his colleagues, people are fundamentally driven by three needs: the need to *feel* (1) self-determining, (2) competent, and (3) connected to significant others. (For a brief discussion of this, see the Center document at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/selfdeter.pdf>). Given this, understanding and working to create readiness for systemic change among a critical mass of others requires ensuring such needs are nurtured and not threatened.

Here’s are some practices that have been suggested for enhancing *feelings of*:

autonomy/self-determination –

1. Elicit, acknowledge, and accept the person’s thoughts and feelings
2. Explore values and how they relate to the situation being discussed
3. Encourage self-initiation and provide a desired amount of choice
4. Provide a meaningful rationale when limits are set and for other relevant requests
5. Minimize use of controlling language (“should”, “must”, “ought”, and “have to”)

competence –

1. Maintain a positive attitude toward success
2. Initiate a conversation to identify barriers to success
3. Create optimal challenges in a context of autonomy support
4. Assist the person with skill building and problem solving
5. Provide immediate, accurate, and effectance-relevant feedback
6. Provide structure through the communication of clear, consistent, and reasonable guidelines

connectedness/relatedness –

1. Assume a warm, empathic, and non-judgmental stance toward the person
2. Provide a sense of unconditional positive regard
3. Communicate genuine care, interest, focus, and non-contingent support toward the person

Making it Happen

As Seymour Sarason cautioned:

Good ideas and missionary zeal are sometimes enough to change the thinking of individuals; they are rarely, if ever, effective in changing complicated organizations (like the school) with traditions, dynamics, and goals of their own.

As noted above, making it happen begins with enhancing the readiness of a critical mass of key stakeholders. Then, the focus is on both the *direct implementation* of a set of new ideas and strategically *facilitating* the phasing in systemic changes.

In Part III of *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf>), we frame systemic and organizational change processes for transforming student and learning supports so that they better address barriers to learning and teaching. We highlight

- major transformation considerations
- ways to rethink operational mechanisms for daily implementation
- processes and lessons learned in facilitating systemic transformation

Perspectives from the Field: What do others have to say? Here's a sample.

(1) “Naturally, I suggest that this person begin with those who are open to collaborating and not worry about bringing everyone along at the same time. Once others begin to see progress, they may become more interested in joining the conversation. And if not, there will come a time when they will “need to” make change. There must always be a stick along with the carrot. It could be that this person needs to find more carrots to get started.....what’s in it for staff? Needless to say, trust needs to be established. However, if a program is indeed working, a system of Learning Supports will only serve to strengthen and help that program succeed. When data show that programs work, they are funded — and they don’t have to compete with everyone else to survive. And in the spirit of ESSA, the programs that don’t work should not be funded and be replaced with ones that do, regardless of whether they belong to a larger collaborative effort. Use data. (In God we trust, all others must have data.)

As with anything worthwhile, it takes time and effort to build a system of Learning Supports. But honestly, this concern sounds again like a matter of trust. Will I spend time meeting on something that won’t last, or will change, or ??? Sometimes staff have been through enough different types of initiatives that they can become skeptical and drag their feet when new ideas come along. But what if coordinating Learning Supports actually improved their program? Maybe ask staff members what could be done to help their program and work that into the goals for establishing a system of supports. Working on a coordinated system of supports could 1) help to demonstrate a need for enhancing existing programs, and 2) coordinate efforts to reduce the needs of student and improve their overall performance. Too often, we’ve heard the phrase “work smarter not harder”. Learning Supports can help them do just that.

Independence to make decisions is not even an issue when you use data-based decision making. There is tremendous independence when the decisions are based on data and research. In fact, this practice encourages innovation and experimentation to see what could work even better. Given the accountability in ESSA, I would think that the same data-based decision making process used for student achievement could be applied to any learning supports type program, using appropriate indicators of student needs.

In a comprehensive system of Learning Supports, the pieces of the system work together to advance student achievement — not programs. No program is as important as the needs of students. I would suggest that this person begin visiting one-on-one with leadership to really air and address concerns. Sometimes people just need to feel heard and need to be given language they can use to

influence others. Then start meeting in smaller groups of 4 or 5 people who are ready to collaborate and find ways to work together. Empower these people by helping them make data-based decisions and help them publically celebrate every success they have. Begin building trust by inviting others to join and recognizing their efforts to support students — even if they are disconnected from the group. Show them how their work aligns with the work of the group — everyone is all about helping support student learning in one way or another. It will take time to pull everyone together, but people want to be part of a winning team. Keep it public and keep it positive. Hopefully, this type of approach could create some synergy.”

(2) “I would suggest initially building a coalition with those who are open to collaborative thinking. Ground those individuals in the theory and practice, and begin to lay out a strategic plan to replicate. Regarding making changes at the top, in my experience the top is not where you necessarily need to start if the supportive infrastructure is not present. In our district we began at the schools for many reasons. So many initiatives for students get “stuck” at the top as district office folks jostle around egos and the purpose of the initiative gets swallowed up and ultimately fizzles out without moving beyond the district office. Many times at the district level we juggle around piece meal concepts and on many levels we are a barrier ourselves to student learning. Time is never on the side of educating a child and working at the ground level is where you can effectively grow roots that strategically spread to change culture and climate elsewhere. I am not saying this is the strategy to use all of the time but it should always be considered when strategically planning. The size of the district will determine how to strategically go about a district wide initiative to defragment and pull individuals out of the silo mentality. In our district, we began with a small coalition with a purpose and direction from the district office. It does not matter the number at first, it is the power of the theory and practice that is the change agent and those involved are simply the catalyst for movement. Tradition is a powerful force and many do not like change. In my experience, learning organizations want to run more effectively. Those involved need to have the data that shows that what they are currently doing is less effective or has a lesser impact than what you propose.”

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Invitation to listserv participants: What thoughts can you share about making collaboration for system change effective (e.g., processes that encourage and lead stakeholders to risk bringing the pieces of student and learning supports together)? Let us hear from you. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured set of Center Resources

>Creating readiness for collaboration

An announcement for a webinar offered by Education Week and the American Institutes for Research on the topic of *Leadership Coaching* stated:

“Strong leaders who set and maintain direction are the heart of a successful school turnaround. A single person, however, cannot effectively create the kind of change required in consistently underperforming schools. Effective turnaround and transformation processes require developing district leadership and creating an effective school leadership team.”

It is evident that a single person is an insufficient change agent mechanism. Leadership team at the school level is necessary, and of course, transformative systemic changes involve tasks requiring more than the efforts on one team.

In addition to the references offered above, here are a few more that others have found helpful:

>*Organization Facilitators:*

A Key Change Agent for Systemic School and Community Changes –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/orgfacrep.pdf>

Substantive systemic changes require guidance and support from professionals with mastery level competence for creating a climate for change, facilitating change processes, and establishing an institutional culture where key stakeholders continue to learn and evolve. Change includes establishing, sustaining, and scaling-up school and community reforms and the role of an Organization Facilitator to aid with major restructuring.

>*Enhancing Readiness, Commitment, and Engagement for Transforming Learning Supports: An Ongoing Process –* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/readiness.pdf>

While creating stakeholder readiness and commitment is the first phase in a system change process, it needs to be an ongoing process. Eventually, the aim is to engage a clear majority of school and community stakeholders. In general, readiness, commitment, and engagement among the leadership is related to their appreciation that the proposed transformation will make a substantive contribution to improving school outcomes. For most folks, however, readiness for system change first and foremost is related to how the individual understands the impact of the change on her/himself.

>*Guide for Planning Coaching for SEAs/LEAs to Establish a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports –* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coaching.pdf>

In transforming education, well-designed leadership coaching and mentoring can make a critical difference in effectively building capacity for systemic change. Both internal and external coaches and mentors play key roles. Over time, the aim is to prepare a cadre of internal leaders so they become the primary system change agents and capacity builders for replicating and sustaining new directions on a large scale. For example, in working with a SEA and regional agencies, a coach/mentor should enable the leadership to facilitate the establishment and capacity building of system change mechanisms at LEAs. Leaders at LEAs should learn how to facilitate establishment and capacity building of system change mechanisms at schools.

*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/>)