

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)

January 17, 2018

Topic: About school use of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)

**Featuring: An Open letter from 3 Superintendents &
the Co-Directors of the SWIFT Education Center**

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Center Resources

>for turning MTSS into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching

Note: Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other resources including

>Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops

>Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers

>Training and job opportunities

>Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

**This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA**

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Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

**For previous postings of community of practice discussions, 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 is being sent to and forwarded by over 100,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

This week: **About school use of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)**
Featuring: **An Open letter from 3 Superintendents & the Co-Directors of the SWIFT Education Center**

The following is an exchange about the November 22 School Practitioner Listserv (see that *Practitioner* at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/2017/practitioner\(11-22-17\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/2017/practitioner(11-22-17).pdf)).

“An Open Letter to School Practitioner Community of Practice:

The California Scale-up of MTSS Statewide (CA MTSS, see www.ocde.us/SUMS) team would like to add our voice to the Center for Mental Health in Schools & Student/Learning Supports (Center) *School Practitioner Community of Practice* exchange about how schools use multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to address barriers to learning and teaching and to re-engage disconnected students. We believe our collective work with schools, districts, and state departments of education to transform education systems using a strengths-based approach, qualifies us to comment about this topic. The Center published very insightful comments from individuals in the field. The wisdom displayed by these educators confirms our belief that every school and district has strengths on which to build excellent teaching and learning systems that support all students, even those with the most complex needs.

The Center expressed concern that MTSS has severe limitations as a framework for student learning and support, and needs to evolve into a much more innovative and transformative framework for increasing student learning effectiveness. Further, the Center expressed concern that MTSS is in danger of becoming just another school improvement buzzword, or in our terms, lending itself to mapping new language onto old practices and failing to address prevention and illuminating a pathway to addressing barriers to student learning.

We at CA MTSS agree with all of these concerns and, in fact, aligned our task of scaling up MTSS statewide with the broader organizing framework represented by the SWIFT Education Center’s five evidence based domains and ten supporting features (see attachment). These domains and features address the barriers to learning through a framework of transformative educational supports that rest on evidence from rigorous investigations (swiftschools.org). The CA MTSS framework has amassed solid evidence to merit its efficacy in offering California schools a set of transformation practices with specific tools with which to track systems formative and summative outcomes. In reference to the findings in the Center’s November 11, 2017 document we offer the following points.

1. MTSS can be more than a planning convenience when schools, districts, and states are supported to translate it into practice at schools.
 - California SUMS initiative is preparing region, county and district leaders across the state to provide support to schools that are implementing new or improving existing MTSS (see www.ocde.us/SUMS).
2. MTSS can incorporate into its continuum of services and supports the principles and practices of subsystems, such as community mental health wraparound services so that the system can support all students.
 - Our approach to MTSS incorporates a resource inventory and matching process designed to help schools to intentionally include community-based service providers who can address students with complex needs across home, school and community settings.
3. Equity-based MTSS is designed to *prevent* some students’ need for special assistance through such techniques as universally designed curriculum, differentiated instruction, and schoolwide positive behavioral expectations and support. Data-based decision making is used to guide intervention decisions.
 - We are teaching California schools how to use screening and progress monitoring data with entry and exit decision rules for providing students additional or intensified support.
4. MTSS structures need to contain content on what schools do *to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems*—that is, effective teams, useful data, evidence-based interventions and supports, etc.
 - We support schools as they use as many as possible of their existing resources and deploy these resources through an organized system using Resource Inventories, Tiered Intervention Matrices, Master Schedules, and Intervention Planning Tools.

We know from experience that MTSS is not an empty phrase; and when state and local leaders support schools in sustainable transformation to an equity-based MTSS, students experience better learning and

behavior outcomes. We appreciate that the Center raised this topic for discussion and look forward to further dialogue on this critically important system change agenda.

Sincerely,

Thomas Adams, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education
Al Mijares, Ph.D., County Superintendent, Orange County Department of Education
Tim Taylor, County Superintendent, Butte County Office of Education
Wayne Sailor, Ph.D. and Amy B. McCart, Ph.D., Co-Directors, SWIFT Education Center "

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Center Response: We are extremely pleased to have received this open letter and are sharing it widely to stimulate further exchanges. We were especially interested to learn about the use of the organizing framework adapted from the Swift Education Center in evolving MTSS. We look forward to an analysis of how that approach maps onto the frameworks advocated for the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html> .)

Based on our research, the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* recognizes that effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability of a design for transforming learning and student supports calls for addressing a set of four interconnected concerns. These involve:

- Expanding the *policy* framework for school improvement to fully integrate, as primary and essential, a student and learning supports component.
- Reframing student and learning support *interventions* to create a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports in classrooms and school-wide and across all schools in a district.
- Reworking the *operational infrastructure* to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.
- Enhancing approaches for *systemic change* in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability.

Prototype frameworks for each of these concerns have been developed.

You can obtain a quick overview from our policy and practice notes entitled:

>*Evolving School Improvement Planning for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evolving.pdf>

More in-depth presentations and details are available in our two most recent books:

(1) *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
available for free at this time -- download from the link on the Center's homepage --
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

and

(2) the just published *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* –
<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

Our hope is that the above exchange will lead not only to further discussion, but an evolution in thinking about MTSS and in policy for transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students and families.

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Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

What can you add to this discussion about MTSS and transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students and families?

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Center Resources

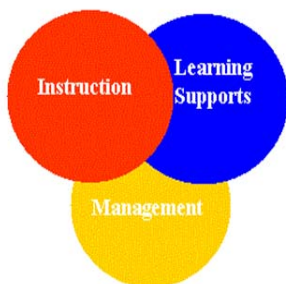
>Did you miss the quarterly ejournal for Winter 2018? It had articles on:

Contents:

- *Evolving School Improvement Plans to Better Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
- *Updates on Advancing Efforts to Transform Student & Learning Supports*
- *Who Else is Working to Transform Student/Learning Supports*
- *Two Cautionary Notes:*
 - >About Piecemeal Approaches
 - >About Settling for an Integrated Services Initiative
- *Center Assistance for Transforming Student/ Learning Supports*

You can access this resource and more from the Center’s homepage <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

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When it comes to improving student/learning supports, much more is needed than what is being touted as initiatives for “Integrated Student Support” (ISS). All such efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students need to be embedded into a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dec8.pdf>

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

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

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 on *Facebook* (access from the Center’s home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development, and enhancing school climate.

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students“ But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.

Carnegie Task Force