



**29 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



October 19, 2015

Request from a Colleague:

>Doing research on schools/districts that have moved from reactive services to proactive prevention

>Center Response

>Follow-up about the request

>Request to listserv participants

Featured Center Resources:

>Reframing the job descriptions of student and learning supports staff to enhance their role in school improvement and prevention of problems

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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.

Rrequest: “I am conducting a study to identify strategies that student support staff and school staff have used to successfully overcome common barriers to the implementation of comprehensive school-based mental health services. Among the questions are, ‘How do support staff working in school districts accomplish the transformation from services to program focused on promoting mental health? How does the staff sustain and improve their approach?’ I am interested in identifying school districts that are successfully removing barriers to learning.”

Center Response: Good to see research being undertaken with respect to these important matters, especially the focus on factors interfering with moving toward prevention.

As you know, our Center’s initiative for transforming student and learning supports tries to move folks toward (1) unifying all such supports (including embedding a full range of mental health concerns) and then (2) developing a comprehensive and equitable system. We find that when the focus is narrowed to mental health (and especially MH services) this adds another factor interfering with developing a subsystem for prevention. This is because many important barriers to learning and teaching are given short shrift, and critical and sparse resources are spent on too few students.

That said, we used your request as a reason to reach out to folks to seek the names of districts/schools where student support staff are taking a leadership role in moving the work along. We were informed that in most districts trying to improve how barriers to learning are addressed, administrators and education leaders have stepped forward and are playing critical leadership roles; however, we also were told that student support staff generally have yet to do so. Not sure why this is the case. Perhaps student support staff are so-consumed with working on specific types of problems and a case load of students that they limit their involvement in school improvement and new directions for student support.

One aim of our Center is to end the marginalization and subsequent fragmentation and counterproductive competition among student support staff and to help them move into leadership roles in transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. See the info related to the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html> and see the Featured Set of Center Resources presented in this Community of Practice.

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Follow-up comment from the colleague making the request: “I have always considered the focus on barriers and prevention strategies to be promoting mental health. You reframed mental health into a focus on transitions, classroom strategies to promote learning, crisis prevention/response, and home/school collaboration, etc.

I don't know what is keeping student support staff on the sidelines. The journals and newsletters have had plenty of attention to population-based services in the past decade.

One goal of my project is to provide student support staff with examples of school

districts that made the transition from reactive services to prevention and a tiered approach. I would like to include interviews at exemplary sites with the student support staff. Talking to administrators, school social workers, school psychologists, and counselors who experienced the transition would potentially serve the same purpose, i.e., understanding how the site overcame the barriers of personnel time, skill deficits, etc.”

R **request to listserv participants:** If you know of a district doing exemplary work in moving toward prevention as part of its efforts to improve student and learning supports, please share so we can let this researcher and others know. Also, what can you share about student support staff playing a leadership role in improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students? We want to feature their work. Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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F **eatured set of center resources:**

>Reframing the job descriptions of student and learning supports staff to enhance their role in school improvement and prevention of problems

While student support personnel are hired for specific tasks and work with specific populations, the experience of doing the work often leads them to recommend better ways of doing things to their directors and administrators. Unfortunately, their current job descriptions do not encourage them to play a role in school improvement planning or in working to enhance prevention efforts.

Here is an excerpt from a student support provider’ response to the question: *What is a typical day in your work life like?*

“Crazy busy. I review email and prep for the day (e.g., make copies for counseling, make sure materials are ready fo IEP meetings, etc.) I attend Student Success Team before school, sometimes after school and other times during school hours. I see students for counseling, do observations for assessments or for behavior/emotional maintenance checkup, consult with teachers/parents/ paraeducators/school staff, conduct evaluations, write reports, develop goals/behavior intervention plans and make sure they are implements, and help teachers with classroom management. I review records and consult with outside practitioners. Should situations arise, do threat assessment, crisis management, and support admin. ..”

As an alternative to 100% + time being devoted to such activity, we have proposed that time be reserved in the work day for student support staff at a school to work together as a learning supports leadership team focusing on system development. This includes mapping resources used for student and learning supports (people, programs, services) and then analyzing strengths, weakness, gaps. Such analyses can draw on available data

and on their experiences working with students. Based on the analyses, they can clarify priorities for improvement (e.g., addressing critical school concerns such as attendance and behavior problems; providing supports for transition and classroom-based supports; planning ways to intervene as soon as problems are identified; providing supports for students who are falling behind; enhancing peer supports for students with social/emotional problems; etc.). With priorities in mind, they can recommend how existing resources can be reallocated to enhance system development.

Center resources relevant to enabling student support staff to enhance their role in school improvement and prevention of problems include:

- >*Framing New Directions for School Counselors, Psychologists, & Social Workers* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/framingnewdir.pdf>
- >*New Directions for Student Support: Rethinking Student Support to Enable Students to Learn and Schools to Teach* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/Toolkit/rethinkingstudsupport.pdf>
- >*What is a Learning Supports Leadership Team?* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>
- >*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](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fully%20integrating%20student-learning%20supports.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>
- >*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>

MORE ON REQUEST!

*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***

***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/>)**