



**School Practitioner
Listserv**



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

March 14, 2016

Concern from and Challenge for the Field:

- >Anticipating the shortfall from ESSA’s Block Grant**
 - Center Perspective
 - Perspectives from the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources:

- >On financing & funding a system of learning supports**

About the Report on:

- >ESSA, Equity of Opportunity,
and Addressing Barriers to Learning**

**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 and Challenge for the Field:

Sounding an alarm, a broad coalition of groups released the following statement of concern about President Obama's FY 17 education funding request as related to Title IV.

"...We applaud President Obama for his overall strong support for education in his FY17 budget proposal. "We are disappointed, however, that the President's budget only includes \$500 million for the Student Support & Academic Enhancement Grant program (ESSA, Title IV, Part A). Title IV, Part A represents a significant consolidation of previous programs, and this proposal is less than one-third of ESSA's \$1.65 billion authorization level.

Indeed, we contend that the President's Title IV, Part A funding request fails to adequately reflect the importance that Congress attached to this program when it made it the third largest authorized program in ESSA. "We are also concerned that this funding proposal represents short-sighted policy: it will undermine the long-term success of Title IV because the amount proposed in the President's budget will not allow states and districts to make meaningful investments in a range of programs that will help students receive a wellrounded education, improve the conditions for student learning, and invest in educational technology.

Finally, we believe that such a low funding level will actually limit schools' flexible use of Title IV program funds. The reauthorized structure of Title IV in ESSA was a strongly bipartisan proposal, garnering the support of Republicans and Democrats alike, a proposal that President Obama himself signed into law. Part of its appeal was Title IV, Part A, which provides schools a bold opportunity to use the flexibility provided in the law to do critical, innovative work. Flexibility can only go so far in supporting school districts to stretch limited dollars, and a prohibitively low budget request like this one sets the stage for an overall funding level that not only mitigates flexibility, but is in direct conflict with Congressional intent.

In addition to our concern with the low funding level, we oppose the requested appropriations language that would allow states to limit or target the allowable uses in Title IV, Part A. By more adequately funding Title IV, Part A, Congress can eliminate the perceived need for this prescriptive language and can instead provide a funding level that more closely aligns with the spirit of the legislation."

Center Perspective: More funding certainly is needed. But even if it is forthcoming, the challenge (and opportunity) is to begin the process of transforming student and learning supports. As our recent analysis of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) highlights, the legislation clearly underscores that barriers to learning need to be addressed so that many more students will be able to meet challenging state academic standards. At the same time, the act continues the long-standing trend to address such barriers in a piecemeal and mostly indirect manner. As a result, ESSA conveys a fragmented picture and a lack of coherence with respect to essential student and learning supports. (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essaanal.pdf>).

Given this, there will be continued counterproductive competition between programs and staff for whatever sparse resources are generated. In this context, it is important to remember that the bulk of education funding comes from state and local sources (the federal contribution is unlikely to be more than 10%).

Regardless of funding levels, the challenge is to unify and develop student and learning supports into a comprehensive, equitable, and systemic component and weave together available resources. The transition to local control provides the opportunity to plan beyond the limitations of federal formulations and funding and move away from existing fragmented and marginalized approaches for dealing with factors interfering with student success.

An example is seen in an early effort made by the Louisiana State Department of Education. Several years ago, the Department focused on braiding funding to better support student success by weaving together and redeploying existing resources. The Department developed a manual and tools to assist local education agencies in understanding how to braid multiple funding sources to accomplish efforts such as the development of the state's design for a Comprehensive Learning Supports System -- see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fundingstream.pdf>.* (The Louisiana Department of Education was one of the states that pioneered development of a comprehensive system of learning supports to transform its approach to providing student and learning supports.) As the state superintendent of Education at that time stressed:

“If we really want to eliminate the achievement gap, we must also ask schools to develop comprehensive plans to address the [many] needs of our students. ... Most of our schools have resources in place, but we need to reorganize those resources to proactively meet the needs of the entire student body....”

***Funding Stream Integration to Promote Development and Sustainability of a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports**
(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fundingstream.pdf>)

An introduction to the work states:

With each year's budget projections getting smaller and smaller, we are forced to think of more efficient ways to do business. We know the tremendous responsibility we have to do the right thing for our children. ... and we have to make tough choices - and make them now. ... Leadership is the key in integrating educational funds to achieve the sustainability of "system change" for improved student outcomes. We must put aside our "turfs" and our "purse-strings," in order to overcome the challenges that dwindling resources present for school improvement planning. It is critical for all leaders at the district level to support this effort, in order to empower all personnel to collaborate in new and effective ways. Leaders must remain engaged in this new way of planning and allow personnel the flexibility to think outside of the box to transform the way we do business. ... Managing change is difficult and to be successful, we have to meet the needs of all children, regardless of the ways we choose to fund programs. Far too often, in our silos we have said, "No, we can't do that because..," rather than working together to eliminate the silos. We are [too] comfortable with the inflexibility we have created....

In Louisiana and currently in Alabama and other states, the planning process involves resource mapping and analysis using a mapping tool developed by the Center. See

>*Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>

This tool will be useful in developing proposals that clarify how Title IV block grant funding will be woven together with available state and local funds.

Perspectives from the Field: What do others have to say? Here is a sample:

(1) “In the cases where district staff tried to map resources, they were able to get a current status or picture of existing efforts that was of interest to schools. Buildings could then see what others were doing and use the data they had on students to see where they needed to focus energies. They could also turn to colleagues in other districts for guidance on developing new initiatives when they knew what was going on in other places. It took some work but I think it was helpful.

Since then I've learned a bit more about 'resources' and would also encourage schools to define resources in 3 ways: money, human and in-kind. While money is critical, the other two can be easily

overlooked. For example, while working in a district, I developed a successful mentoring program with only human resources and support from staff and administration.

Whatever resources are used should be tracked and considered along side the outcomes that are used to measure success of the program. That's the only way to know whether a program or effort is effective and an efficient use of resources. If a school or state will first set parameters or standards for 'quality' programs or efforts (scientific evidence), I believe there will be less competition for resources and more focus on finding the best possible alternatives for students.

Review the evidence and outcomes for each program or strategy. Then, select the ones (or find better ones) that were evidence-based and producing desired results, making sure that they were implemented with fidelity. If data and science are used to determine appropriate ways to meet student needs and measure progress, there is less room for disagreements and competition. And, if the Learning Supports staff are smart about it, they will make time to create community awareness about their success and their on-going needs to engage community and build partnerships to enhance existing resources."

(2) "Most of the problem lies around the limitations set by the different funding sources. Federal grants like ESSA, IDEA, Title programs, etc. are very strict regarding how funds can be used, as well, as who they can be used for. Thus, it becomes a real nightmare when you're trying to braid funds or resources because not only do you have to know the limitations of each of these programs, but you also have to keep track of students who are eligible for multiple programs to make sure you are servicing them appropriately and within the required guidelines. In my experience with the state projects, this was the biggest challenge we faced. That is the very reason why we were advocating for a stronger focus on systems changes to address those 'barriers.' We truly felt that anything less would only result in a 'bandaid' approach. To clarify what our 'systems approach' was focused on, our step-by-step tool kit actually provided schools with a comprehensive approach to improving system efforts and included the following:

- >Improving on data collection efforts in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the school's/district's 'state of affairs':
 - o In general, schools only tend to focus on their state accountability data, which is required. They don't know how to identify and analyze other relevant sources of information (e.g., number of students on psychotropic medications, number of students receiving school health services for other medications, number of threat or risk assessments completed, number of students with chronic illness, number of students receiving pregnancy-related services more than once, etc.) which can provide much needed information about staff, student, and school needs.
- >Analyzing data that has been collected and using it to determine the impact of the data:
 - o Most schools don't think about the impact the data may have on things like school funding, student and school performance, school reputation, community support, etc. Thus, the goals they set tend to be marginal at best and only focus on academic outcomes. At present, there is a tremendous focus on behavior and discipline, as well, but there still appears to be a disconnect between this data and its impact on academic achievement. Thus, schools are unable to set goals that are truly comprehensive and attainable.
- >Learning to use data to set goals for improvement:
 - o Not only should a school's/district's data lead to goals for improved policies and operating guidelines, but it also should lead to goals for improved staff training, access to needed resources and necessary staff/student supports.
- >Learning how to identify a comprehensive set of assets (internal and external) and incorporate those assets into the school's/district's comprehensive improvement plan:
 - o Many times schools don't consider community resources as an asset because they tend

to focus only on their internal assets. Even if they recognize their external assets, they are reluctant to consider them as an asset because of boundary issues and concerns. However, if they approached this through a systematic process, there is no reason why they can't collaborate with these assets to address boundary issues through policies and operating guidelines.

> Braiding services and resources:

o This is not completely unattainable, but it is a challenge. It is much easier to do this however, if the school has gone through the previously identified processes above. Once they've done this, they have greater insight into their system's needs, resources, and limitations. Without this knowledge, they are less willing to even begin discussion of this topic.

All that being said, I also would point out that in my 25 years of experience in public schools, the greatest impact on student and school outcomes seemed to occur when interventions were provided within the classroom. Thus, while it is important to make systems changes, it is equally important to have direct supports and services in the classroom. One, without the other, is insufficient."

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Invitation to listserv participants: *What's your take on all this?* Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured set of Center Resources

>On financing & funding a system of learning supports

See the Center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on

>*Financing and Funding* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1404_02.htm

Quick Finds link to Center developed documents and relevant resources from many other sources.

Among the Center developed resources are:

>*Rethinking District Budgets to Unify and Sustain a Critical Mass of Student and Learning Supports at Schools*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/financebudget.pdf>

>*Cut-Backs Make it Essential to Unify and Rework Student and Learning Supports at Schools and Among Families of Schools*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/cutbacks.pdf>

>*Analyzing What is Being Spent in Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/budgetmapping.pdf>

>*Financial Strategies to Aid in Addressing Barriers to Learning*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/financial/fund2000.pdf>

>*What will it cost? – No New Dollars!*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/what will it cost.pdf>

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Did this report slip by you?

**>ESSA, Equity of Opportunity,
and Addressing Barriers to Learning**

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essaanal.pdf>

We are receiving a lot of responses about the usefulness of this report; it is being widely shared. Our hope is that you will find it worth sharing with others.

Among the Report's Conclusions

- The legislation clearly underscores that barriers to learning need to be addressed so that many more students will be able to meet challenging state academic standards.
- At the same time, the act addresses such barriers in a piecemeal and mostly indirect manner.
- As a result, ESSA conveys a fragmented picture and a lack of coherence with respect to essential student and learning supports.
- Student and learning supports need to be unified and developed into comprehensive system if they are to significantly enhance equity of opportunity as an essential component in enabling every student to succeed.
- If states and LEAs are to move away from existing fragmented and marginalized approaches for dealing with factors interfering with student success, they will need to use the transition to local control as a time to plan beyond the limitations of federal formulations.

Thinking Out of the Box

The analysis indicates the imperative for transformative system change. From this perspective, the report also highlights frameworks and prototypes that can be used as planning aids and guides in developing a unified, comprehensive, equitable, and systemic approach for addressing barriers to learning and re-engaging disconnected students*

*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/>)