

26 years &
counting



Addressing Barriers

to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link



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Common Core State Standards: What about Student and Learning Supports?

It is not enough to say that all children can learn or that no child will be left behind; the work involves . . . achieving the vision of an American Education system that **enables** all children to succeed in school, work, and life.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Mission Statement (emphasis added)

The state standards movement for education clearly is speeding along. Almost all states already have adopted *common core standards* for English and math (Thatcher, 2012). And while still under discussion, facets of the *model core teaching standards* generated by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2011) already are reflected in various policy actions.

There are, of course, ongoing debates about the state standards movement. At this juncture, we set these aside to stress *what's missing*.

Stated directly, the movement ignores the need to provide a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports to *enable all students* to benefit from the upgraded curriculum. This perpetuates a long-standing documented failure of school improvement planning and many blueprints for education reform (e.g., see Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2012).

The implications seem clear: *Given the accelerating policy attention to core standards, it is imperative to move forward quickly to develop a set of standards for student and learning supports and integrate them into the state standards movement for education.* This article is devoted to clarifying the need and to offering a draft set of such standards to encourage discussion and action.

Common Core State Standards Address Only Disabilities as Barriers to Learning

It is noteworthy that common cores state standards include a brief “application to students with disabilities.” As McNulty and Gloeckler (2011) state: “Language in the Common Core State Standards outlines the areas that must be available to students receiving special education services in order for them to demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in English language arts (including reading, writing, listening, and speaking) as well as in mathematics.” Areas emphasized are (1) supports and related services to meet unique needs of students with disabilities and “enable their access to the general education curriculum” (e.g., instructional strategies based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, accommodations, assistive technology devices and services),

(2) an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to facilitate attainment of grade-level academic standards, and (3) qualified personnel “to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services.”

Because of IDEA, applications to students with disabilities are mandated. But what about the many others who, at some time or another, bring problems with them that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach? In some geographic areas, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities. Such problems are exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school. In some locales, the reality often is that over 50% of students are not succeeding. And, in most schools in these locales, teachers are ill-prepared and poorly supported to address the problems in a potent manner.

To be clear about the phrase *barriers to learning and teaching*: While there are many schools where the majority of students are doing just fine, in any school there are youngsters who are failing; and in too many schools, particularly those serving lower income families, large numbers of students are doing poorly. Much of what is addressed by the state standards movement is relevant to correcting the problem. What’s missing, however, is critical, and improving the standards requires a full appreciation of barriers to learning and teaching (see Exhibit 1). Teachers who do not understand the implications of such risk-producing conditions are unlikely to design an effective program for a significant number of students.

Exhibit 1. Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning

E n v i r o n m e n t a l C o n d i t i o n s*

P e r s o n F a c t o r s*

Neighborhood

Family

School and Peers

Individual

- >extreme economic deprivation
- >community disorganization, including high levels of mobility
- >violence, drugs, etc.
- >minority and/or immigrant status

- >chronic poverty
- >conflict/disruptions/violence
- >substance abuse
- >models problem behavior
- >abusive caretaking
- >inadequate provision for quality child care

- >poor quality school
- >negative encounters with teachers
- >negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models

- >medical problems
- >low birth weight/ neurodevelopmental delay
- >psychophysiological problems
- >difficult temperament & adjustment problems
- >inadequate nutrition

*A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.

Model Core Teaching Standards Also Have a Limited View of Barriers to Learning

Aligned with the *common core state standards* are the CCSSO *model core teaching standards* (CCSSO, 2011). CCSSO states that these “outline what teachers should know and be able to do to ensure every K-12 student reaches the goal of being ready to enter college or the workforce in today’s world.” CCSSO emphasizes these standards are based on “common principles and foundations of teaching practice that cut across all subject areas and grade levels and that are necessary to improve student achievement.”

In 2010, our Center analyzed the draft that was offered for public comment (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2010a). Now that CCSSO has issued the 2011 version (see Exhibit 2), what follows provides a bit of an update.

Exhibit 2. Excerpted from: *Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue* (CCSSO, 2011)

CCSSO states: “A transformed public education system requires a new vision of teaching.” “... one that empowers every learner to take ownership of their learning, that emphasizes the learning of content and application of knowledge and skill to real world problems, that values the differences each learner brings to the learning experience, and that leverages rapidly changing learning environments by recognizing the possibilities they bring to maximize learning and engage learners.”

CCSSO offers ten individual standards organized into four priority areas:

- I. *The learner and learning*
 - Standard #1: Learner Development
 - Standard #2: Learning Differences
 - Standard #3: Learning Environments
- II. *Content knowledge*
 - Standard #4: Content Knowledge
 - Standard #5: Application of Content
- III. *Instructional practice*
 - Standard #6: Assessment
 - Standard #7: Planning for Instruction
 - Standard #8: Instructional Strategies
- IV. *Professional responsibility*
 - Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice
 - Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration

These standards are intended to “promote a new paradigm for delivering education and call for a new infrastructure of support for professionals in that system.”

In applying the standards, it is emphasized that “while each standard emphasizes a discrete aspect of teaching, teaching and learning are dynamic, integrated and reciprocal processes. Thus, of necessity, the standards overlap and must be taken as a whole in order to convey a complete picture of the acts of teaching and learning.”

Key themes running through the teaching standards are:

- (1) Personalized Learning for Diverse Learners
- (2) A Stronger Focus on Application of Knowledge and Skills
- (3) Improved Assessment Literacy
- (4) A Collaborative Professional Culture
- (5) New Leadership Roles for Teachers and Administrators

**A Broader
Perspective for
Analyzing What
Allows a Teacher
to Be Effective**

In general, the state standards movement for education does not offer applications that *enable all students* to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. As a result, the movement not only will not stem the tide of inappropriate referrals for special education, it is likely to increase the number of referrals. The problem stems from the architects' narrow vision for school transformation.

To date, almost all school improvement efforts have been dominated by a two component model. One component emphasizes instruction, the other management/governance. As we have documented in our previous policy analysis reports (e.g., Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2010b), research has clarified the need for a third component to directly and comprehensively focus on (a) addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (b) re-engaging students who have become disconnected from classroom instruction.

Analyzing the *common core state standards* and the *model core teaching standards* from the perspective of the third component underscores the ongoing problem of marginalized attention to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. This problem runs throughout the state standards movement.

Exhibit 3 graphically portrays the reality that many students encounter barriers preventing them from benefitting from good instruction. For all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, every teacher must play a significant role in the classroom and schoolwide with respect to helping students around those barriers and then re-engaging them in classroom instruction (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2008; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2010b; Chu, 2010).

**A Learning
Supports
Component
to Directly
Address
Barriers &
Enable
Learning**

As indicated in Exhibit 3, pioneering efforts have designated the third component as an enabling or learning supports component (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; EDC evaluation of Gainesville Public Schools, 2012; Iowa Department of Education, 2004; Louisiana Department of Education, 2010). The concept of an enabling or learning supports component has fundamental implications in expanding understanding of the teacher's role and functions in transforming schools.

Exhibit 4 illustrates that operationalizing the component involves developing a full continuum of integrated *systems* for intervention designed to:

- (a) promote healthy development and prevent problems,
- (b) respond as early after problem onset as is feasible, and
- (c) provide for those whose serious, pervasive, and chronic problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

Exhibit 3. An Enabling or Learning Supports Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction*

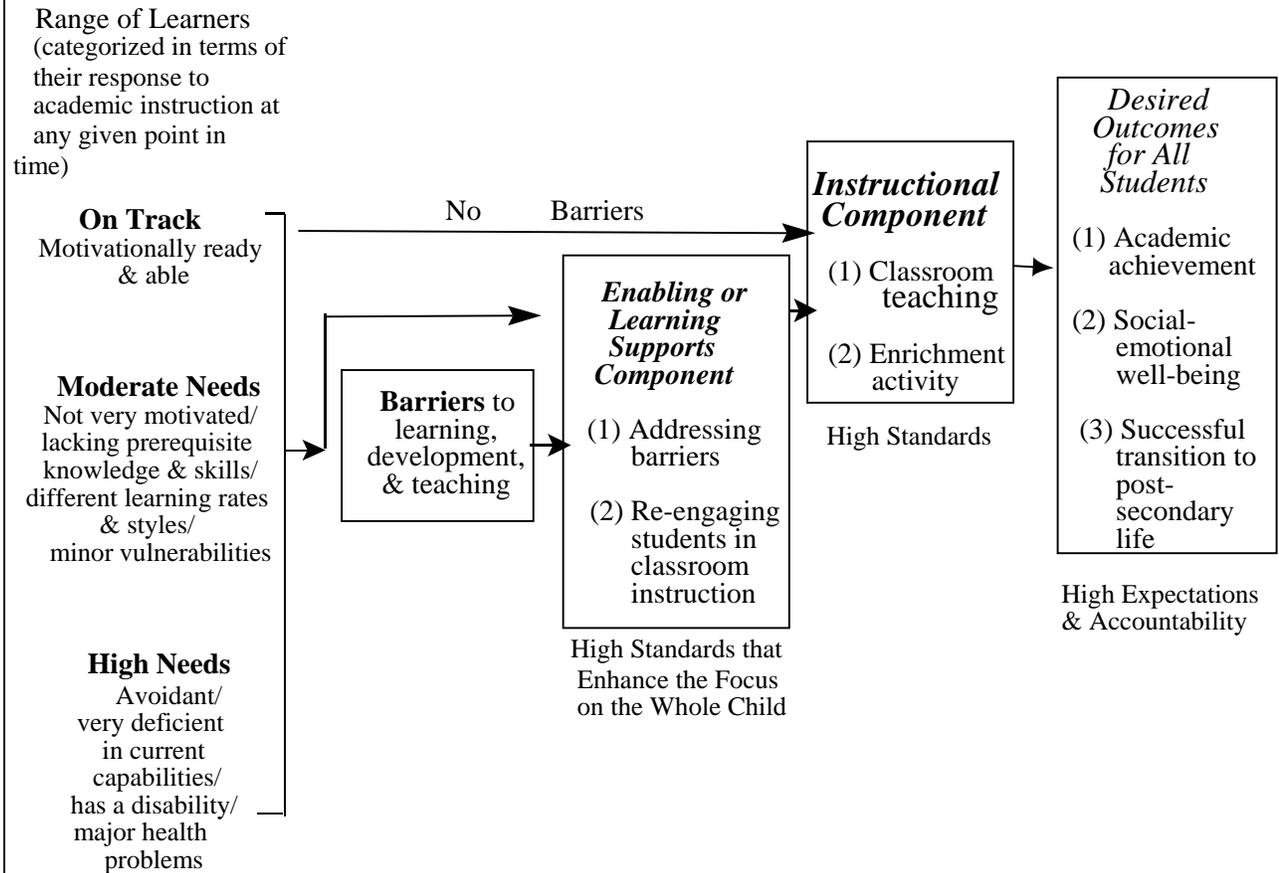
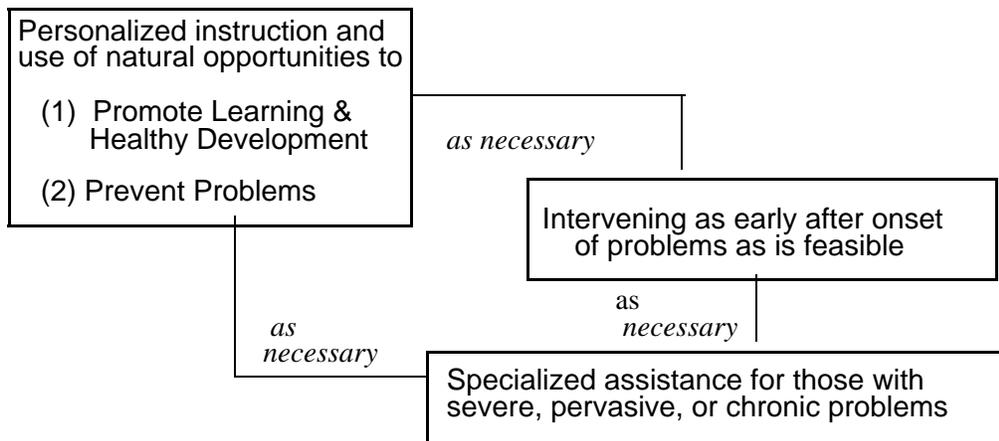


Exhibit 4. A Full Continuum and Sequence of Interventions at a School



Content of a Learning Supports Component

Operationalizing the component also involves rethinking the many fragmented programs and services designed as student and learning supports. Just as efforts to *enhance* instruction emphasize well designed curriculum content, a delineated and integrated content focus is essential for *enabling* learning by addressing external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with instruction.

For example, at schools, the content focus for addressing a full range of interfering factors can be coalesced into the following six classroom and school-wide arenas.

- (1) *enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (e.g., personalized instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and accommodations and specialized assistance in the classroom for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)
- (2) *supporting transitions* (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other daily and periodic transitions)
- (3) *increasing home and school connections* (e.g., with all student caretakers)
- (4) *responding to and where feasible, preventing crises* (e.g., minimizing impact of crises, eliminating violence and harassment, ensuring safety)
- (5) *increasing community involvement and support* (e.g., outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers for a variety of roles and functions and integration of resources)
- (6) *facilitating student and family access to effective special assistance and services as needed* (e.g., in the classroom, referral out for school, district, or community assistance)

From the perspective of the above concepts and frameworks, significant deficiencies in the core state standards movement become evident. In particular, this perspective raises the questions:

How do the standards emphasize the teacher's role and functions in addressing barriers and re-engaging students?

How do the standards emphasize the role and functions of student and learning support staff in addressing barriers and re-engaging students?

Major Deficiencies in the Core State Standards Movement

It is to be expected that there will be inherent disconnects when curriculum and instructional standards are developed separately. The fundamental problem with the current core state standards movement, however, goes well beyond the disconnects; the problem is the failure of the standards to deal with the reality of factors that *interfere* with successful teaching and working with students manifesting *moderate-to-severe learning, behavior, and emotional problems*. Thus, the standards fall far short of providing a focus on how the field can ensure *all* students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. In addition, the standards pay too little attention to matters related to enhancing the professional and personal well-being of teachers.

A few key examples are illustrative.

Engagement & Re-engagement

A fundamental concern for effective teaching is enhancing student *engagement* and *re-engaging disconnected students*. Yet, both the common core standards and the model core teacher standards inadequately focus on these matters. We note that there are statements sprinkled throughout the teacher standards stressing the importance of active engagement and self motivation (i.e., building “student self direction and ownership of learning,” understanding the “relationship between motivation and engagement”). However, the standards are built mainly on the implicit assumption that all students are *motivationally* ready to learn what the teacher has planned to teach and that the teacher only needs to enhance that motivation. This assumption is evident from the fact that the standards primarily emphasize creation of *developmentally* appropriate instruction. Note that references to individual learner differences are keyed to developmental differences with little attention to the importance of motivational differences.

And, as the common core state standards initiative website states, the standards are designed to “help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms” (<http://www.corestandards.org/>). The problem is that the “best lessons and environments” require considerable attention to engagement and re-engagement, and this means the standards also need to design curriculum to address *attitudinal/ motivational* considerations.

The systematic design of instruction to match differences in *both* motivation and capability is what differentiates *personalized* instruction from traditional approaches to differentiated instruction that mainly emphasize *individualized* instruction in developmental terms.

**You aren't paying attention to me
Are you having trouble hearing?**

**I hear okay.
I'm having trouble listening?**



The reality is that teachers need to pursue instructional processes and content in ways that appropriately match student differences with respect to current levels of motivation as well as developed abilities. And, in a significant number of instances, a teacher's ability to first and foremost address low, negative, and avoidance/reactive motivational differences is the key to whether a student learns what is being taught. Appreciation of these matters calls for (a) curriculum standards that are designed to enhance positive attitudes and intrinsic motivation as well as knowledge and skills and (b) teaching standards that can guide teachers to fully engaging students *and* to re-engaging those who have become disengaged from classroom instruction. And, given the inappropriate overemphasis and overreliance on reinforcement theory in all facets of schooling, the teaching standards also need to include a specific focus on minimizing *extrinsic* motivational strategies and fully incorporating what *intrinsic* motivation research has emphasized about learning and teaching over the last 50 years (Deci & Ryan, 2002; National Research Council, 2004).

**Assessment to
Address
Interfering
Factors**

Another major deficiency is that teacher assessment standards do not attend to interfering factors. The emphasis is on assessing what was taught, learned, and not learned. And with respect to what is not learned, subsequent planning focuses mainly on directly re-teaching the content and skills using developmentally appropriate scaffolding.

Teachers must do much more. They need to know how to analyze the authentic responses made to instruction and other interventions. With respect to what is taught and not learned, their analyses must consider (a) motivational as well as developmental considerations related to content, processes, and immediate outcomes and (b) whether assessing and addressing the problem requires a deeper look. For instance, they need to be able to determine whether the problem stems from the student not having acquired readiness skills and/or because of "critical student dispositions" that have produced avoidance motivation to curricula content and instructional processes. And, when problems persist, they must consider what other external and internal factors may be interfering with learning and whether accommodations are necessary. All this is consistent with a sequential intervention approach that first *personalizes* instruction and then assesses learning and behavior problems using a hierarchical set of interventions (see Exhibit 5).

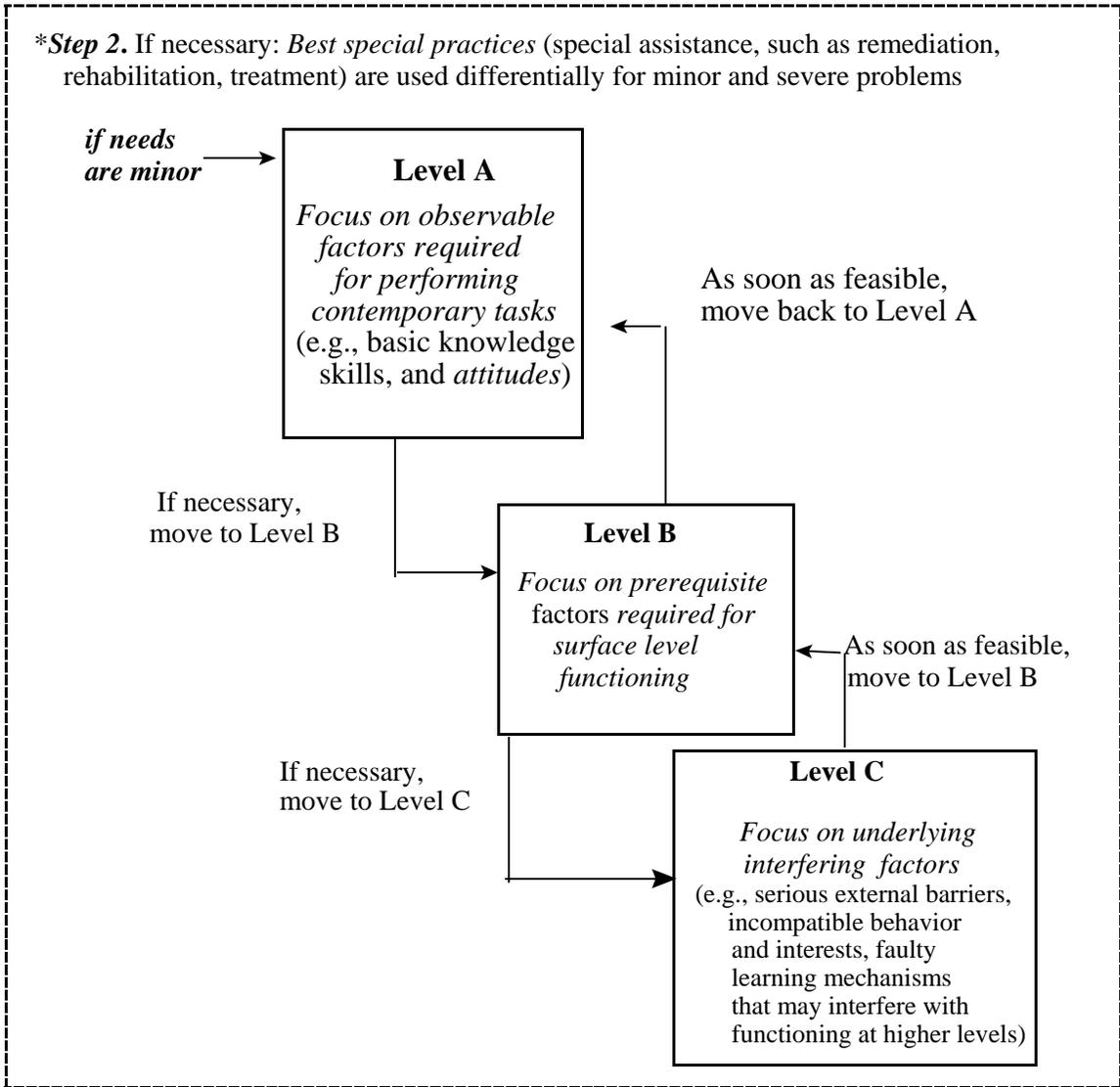
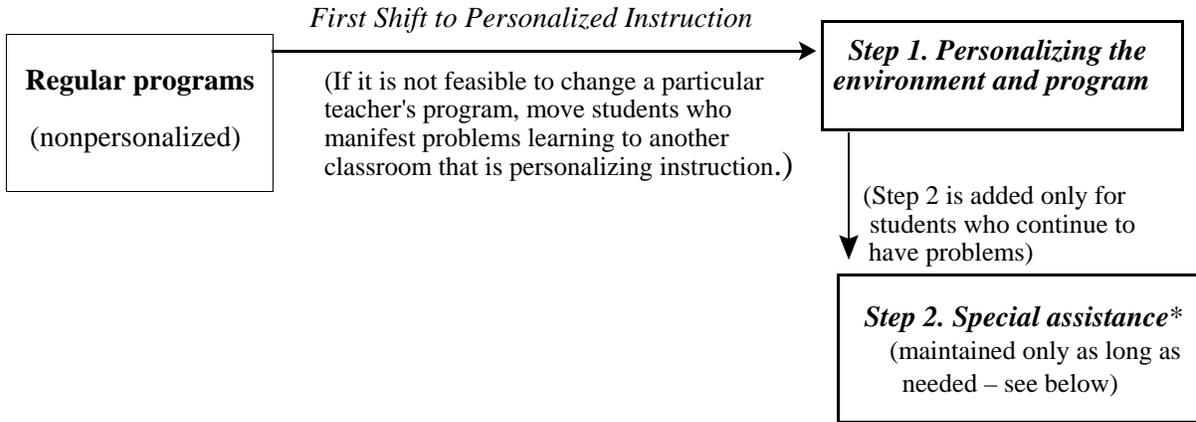
**Assessment is a
sequential and
hierarchical
intervention
process**

To do all this effectively, teachers usually need assistance. Indeed, in many instances, identifying and addressing barriers and needs and re-engaging disconnected students can only be appropriately accomplished through collaborative processes. Thus, the standards need to specifically reflect collaboration for assessment (e.g., with students themselves, family members, learning and student support staff). And because strategies such as "Response to Intervention" (RtI) begin in the classroom, standards for assessment should involve an emphasis both on what should happen prior to referral for specialized assistance and what should be done during the referral process if referral proves necessary.

See the sidebar on page 10 for additional concerns about the model core teaching standards.

Exhibit 5

Sequential and Hierarchical Classroom Approach to Address Engagement Problems and Identify the Level of Special Assistance Needed by a Student



Toward Improving the Model Core Teaching Standards

In addition to the deficiencies already noted, our 2010a analysis (soon to be updated) stressed:

- >the assessment standards don't address the negative dynamics stemming from evaluative feedback
- >the teacher's role in developing *schoolwide* climate is given short shrift
- >the teacher's role in planning and developing a system of learning and student supports is ignored

We also noted that, while the standards reflect a growing understanding that teachers need to and should work in a variety of ways with others who have responsibility and concern for the progress and well-being of students, they focus too narrowly on the nature and scope of the collaborative concerns at schools. In particular, there is no mention of:

- collaborative and team teaching to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students
- working with learning and student support staff in the classroom and in enhancing schoolwide interventions to prevent and respond quickly after the onset of learning and behavior problems
- working with students and families to prevent and respond quickly after the onset of learning and behavior problems
- understanding and working to minimize barriers to effectively working together, including avoiding contrived collegiality.

To illustrate how the 10 standards could readily address “learning supports,” we suggested specific modifications and provided examples with respect to the “Performance” items and the sections on “Essential Knowledge” and “Critical Dispositions.”

And because professional and personal support to enhance teacher status, development, learning, and well-being is of critical importance to effective teaching, we also suggested adding the following as an eleventh standard.

Standard #11: Teacher Status, Development, Learning, and Well-being – The teacher is treated and supported in ways that reflect an appreciation that, over the long-run, both the *professional* and *personal* status, development, learning, and well-being are critical to teacher effectiveness and retention.

- (a) The teacher's professional status is recognized by her/his involvement in schoolwide decisions related to matters such as policy making, recruitment, hiring, induction and mentoring processes, resource allocation, continuing education, staff terminations.
- (b) The teacher's professional development, learning, and well-being are enhanced through the establishment and design of personalized continuing education opportunities that enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes in ways that advance classroom and school wide practices.
- (c) The teacher's professional development, learning, and well-being are enhanced through the establishment of a comprehensive system of student and learning supports designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.
- (d) The teacher's personal status, development, learning, and well-being is supported by adequate financial compensation, physical and mental health and retirement plans, and involvement in activities that maximize feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to significant others and that minimize threats to such feelings.

Moving on to Develop a Set of Standards for Student and Learning Supports

Ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to learn at school requires a comprehensive approach to countering interfering factors

Our analysis in no way is meant to minimize the importance of core curriculum and teaching standards. Every teacher must have the ability and resources to bring a sound curriculum to life and apply strategies that make learning meaningful, and core standards can contribute to this.

What our analysis stresses is that the current state standards movement needs to do much more to account for what is involved in *enabling* learning in the classroom. It is easy to say that schools must ensure that *all* students succeed. If all students came motivationally ready and able to profit from “high standards” curricula, then there would be little problem. But *all* encompasses those who are experiencing *external* and *internal* barriers that interfere with benefitting from what the teacher is offering. Thus, providing all students an equal opportunity to succeed requires *more than* higher standards and expectations, greater accountability for instruction, and better teaching (and certainly more than increased discipline, reduced school violence, and an end to social promotion).

Standards clearly must account for student differences and diversity (including interests, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations). Differentiated instruction is essential. However, differentiated instruction must account for more than developmental differences. An emphasis is needed on teaching in ways that also account for motivational differences. Besides differences in interests, this includes teaching in ways that overcomes low or negative/avoidance motivation, provides structure in terms of personalized support and guidance, and designs instruction to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving. Some students also require added support, guidance, and special accommodations. For practices such as *Response to Intervention (Rti)* to be effective, all professional personnel working to improve schools must be grounded in such matters.

Good learning derives from instruction that is a good match for both motivation and developed capabilities. And ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to learn at school also requires a comprehensive approach to countering factors that interfere with learning and teaching. Many students need learning supports to help them in addressing interfering factors; some need special interventions to re-engage them in classroom learning. Teaching standards must include a focus on this matter so that teachers are prepared to play an effective role in addressing such factors – especially variables contributing to low or negative/avoidance motivation for schooling.

As we stated in the introduction, the implications seem clear: Given the accelerating policy attention to core standards, it is imperative to move forward quickly to develop a set of standards for student and learning supports and integrate them into the state standards movement for education.

Guidelines

Over the last decade, a solid foundation was laid for a common set of standards for student and learning supports (see Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2008). Exhibit 6 outlines a set of guidelines developed as part of the new directions for student support initiative. These are particularly useful in underscoring what is missing in the current state standards movement.

Exhibit 6

Guidelines For an Enabling/Learning Supports Component

The following guidelines are based on a set of underlying principles for designing comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approaches to student support (for specific rationale statements and references for each guideline, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/guidelinesupportdoc.pdf>). Clearly, no school currently offers the nature and scope of what is embodied in the outline. In a real sense, the guidelines define a comprehensive vision for defining and implementing student support in schools. They also provide the basis for developing standards, quality indicators, and accountability measures.

1. Major Areas of Concern Related to Barriers to Student Learning

- 1.1 Addressing common educational and psychosocial problems (e.g., learning problems; language difficulties; attention problems; school adjustment and other life transition problems; attendance problems and dropouts; social, interpersonal, and familial problems; conduct and behavior problems; delinquency and gang-related problems; anxiety problems; affect and mood problems; sexual and/or physical abuse; neglect; substance abuse; psychological reactions to physical status and sexual activity; physical health problems)
- 1.2 Countering external stressors (e.g., reactions to objective or perceived stress/demands/crises/deficits at home, school, and in the neighborhood; inadequate basic resources such as food, clothing, and a sense of security; inadequate support systems; hostile and violent conditions)
- 1.3 Teaching, serving, and accommodating disorders/disabilities (e.g., Learning Disabilities; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; School Phobia; Conduct Disorder; Depression; Suicidal or Homicidal Ideation and Behavior; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; Anorexia and Bulimia; special education designated disorders such as Emotional Disturbance and Developmental Disabilities)

2. Timing and Nature of Problem-Oriented Interventions

- 2.1 Primary prevention
- 2.2 Intervening early after the onset of problems
- 2.3 Interventions for severe, pervasive, and/or chronic problems

3. General Domains for Intervention in Addressing Students' Needs and Problems

- 3.1 Ensuring academic success and also promoting healthy cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and resilience (including promoting opportunities to enhance school performance and protective factors; fostering development of assets and general wellness; enhancing responsibility and integrity, self-efficacy, social and working relationships, self-evaluation and self-direction, personal safety and safe behavior, health maintenance, effective physical functioning, careers and life roles, creativity)
- 3.2 Addressing external and internal barriers to student learning and performance
- 3.3 Providing social/emotional support for students, families, and staff

(cont.)

Guidelines (cont.)**4. Specialized Student and Family Assistance (Individual and Group)**

- 4.1 Assessment for initial (first level) screening of problems, as well as for diagnosis and intervention planning (including a focus on needs and assets)
- 4.2 Referral, triage, and monitoring/management of care
- 4.3 Direct services and instruction (e.g., primary prevention programs, including enhancement of wellness through instruction, skills development, guidance counseling, advocacy, school-wide programs to foster safe and caring climates, and liaison connections between school and home; crisis intervention and assistance, including psychological and physical first-aid; prereferral interventions; accommodations to allow for differences and disabilities; transition and follow-up programs; short- and longer- term treatment, remediation, and rehabilitation)
- 4.4 Coordination, development, and leadership related to school-owned programs, services, resources, and systems – toward evolving a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of programs and services
- 4.5 Consultation, supervision, and inservice instruction with a transdisciplinary focus
- 4.6 Enhancing connections with and involvement of home and community resources (including but not limited to community agencies)

5. Assuring Quality of Intervention

- 5.1 Systems and interventions are monitored and improved as necessary
- 5.2 Programs and services constitute a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum
- 5.3 Interveners have appropriate knowledge and skills for their roles and functions and provide guidance for continuing professional development
- 5.4 School-owned programs and services are coordinated and integrated
- 5.5 School-owned programs and services are connected to home & community resources
- 5.6 Programs and services are integrated with instructional and governance/management components at schools
- 5.7 Program/services are available, accessible, and attractive
- 5.8 Empirically-supported interventions are used when applicable
- 5.9 Differences among students/families are appropriately accounted for (e.g., diversity, disability, developmental levels, motivational levels, strengths, weaknesses)
- 5.10 Legal considerations are appropriately accounted for (e.g., mandated services; mandated reporting and its consequences)
- 5.11 Ethical issues are appropriately accounted for (e.g., privacy & confidentiality; coercion)
- 5.12 Contexts for intervention are appropriate (e.g., office; clinic; classroom; home)

6. Outcome Evaluation and Accountability

- 6.1 Short-term outcome data
- 6.2 Long-term outcome data
- 6.3 Reporting to key stakeholders and using outcome data to enhance intervention quality

Standards for a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Support

Based on the guidelines outlined in Exhibit 6 and prototype frameworks developed by our Center (see reference list), the following draft standards are offered as a basis for discussion and eventual establishment of common core state standards for student and learning supports.*

Area: *Framing and Delineating Intervention Functions*

Standard 1. Establishment of an overall unifying intervention framework for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

An *Enabling or Learning Supports Component* is a systemic approach that is fully integrated into the school's strategic improvement plan. The component is operationalized into a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive intervention framework. One facet of this framework is the continuum delineating the scope of desired intervention. The other facet is a conceptualization that organizes the "content" arenas for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, with due appreciation for the role played by efforts to promote healthy development. Because of the importance of each of the content arenas, specific standards for each are delineated below:

Standard 1 addendum: Specific standards for the content arenas of an enabling or learning supports component

While the number and labels for designated content arenas may differ, as Standard 1 states: Schools need to deal with a conceptualization that organizes the "content" arenas for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, with due appreciation for the role played by efforts to promote healthy development. (As one of the quality performance indicators for Standard 1 indicates, rather than a fragmented, "laundry-list" of programs, services, and activities, the learning supports need to be organized into a concise content or "curriculum" framework that categorizes and captures the essence of the multifaceted ways schools need to address barriers to learning.) To illustrate standards for content arenas, the following uses the six arenas designated in Exhibits 3 and 4.

- >**Standard 1a. Continuous enhancement of regular classroom strategies to enable learning** (e.g., improving instruction for students with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems and re-engaging those who have become disengaged from learning at school)
- >**Standard 1b. Continuous enhancement of a programs and systems for a full range of transition supports** (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes, daily transitions, etc.)
- >**Standard 1c. Continuous enhancement of programs and systems to increase and strengthen home and school connections**
- >**Standard 1d. Continuous enhancement of programs and systems for responding to, and where feasible, preventing school and personal crises** (including creating a caring and safe learning environment)
- >**Standard 1e. Continuous enhancement of programs and systems to increase and strengthen community involvement and support** (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
- >**Standard 1f. Continuous enhancement of programs and systems to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.**

*Note: Performance indicators for each standard are delineated in a Center document entitled: *Standards & Quality Indicators for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component* online at – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/qualityindicators.pdf>

Area: *Reworking Operational Infrastructure*

Standard 2. Establishment of an *integrated operational infrastructure* framework for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Developing and institutionalizing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports requires mechanisms that are integrated with each other and are fully integrated into school improvement efforts. The need at all levels is to rework infrastructure to support efforts to address barriers to learning in a cohesive manner and to integrate the work with efforts to promote healthy development and with instruction and with the management/governance mechanisms. This requires dedicated leadership (with leaders involved in governance, planning and implementation) and work groups (focused on functions such as mapping, analysis, and priority setting for resource allocation and integration, communication and information management, capacity building, and quality improvement and accountability).

Area: *Enhancing Resource Use*

Standard 3. Appropriate resource use and allocation for developing, maintaining, and evolving the component.

Appropriate use of resources is based on up-to-date gap and outcome analyses and established priorities for improving the component. Resource allocation involves (re)deployment of available funds to achieve priorities. Cost-efficiencies are achieved through collaborations that, in common purpose, integrate systems and weave together learning support resources within the school, among families of schools, from centralized district assets, and from various community entities.

Area: *Continuous Capacity Building*

Standard 4. Capacity building for developing, maintaining, and evolving the component.

Capacity building involves enhancing ongoing system and stakeholder development and performance. The work requires allocation of resources to provide effective and efficient mechanisms and personnel to carry out a myriad of capacity building functions.

Area: *Continuous Evaluation and Appropriate Accountability*

Standard 5. Formative and summative evaluation and accountability are fully integrated into all planning and implementation.

Formative evaluation provides essential data related to progress in improving processes and achieving benchmarks and outcomes. In the initial phase of component development, formative evaluation focuses heavily on feedback and benchmarks related to specific developmental tasks, functioning of processes, and immediate outcomes. Formative evaluation is an ongoing process with an increasing focus on intermediate and then long-range outcomes. Summative data on intermediate outcomes are gathered as soon as the component is operating as an integrated system. Summative data on long-range outcomes are gathered after the component has operated as an integrated system for two years. Accountability indicators should fit the phase of component development. This means the primary focus is on developmental benchmarks in the early phases. When the accountability focus is on student impact, the primary emphasis is on the direct enabling outcomes for students that each arena of the component is designed to accomplish. As these accountability indicators show solid impact, they can be correlated with academic progress to estimate their contribution to academic achievement.

School improvement discussions across the country are standards-based and accountability driven. Establishing standards for student and learning supports is essential to moving the field from its current marginalized status to a high level priority.

Concluding Comments

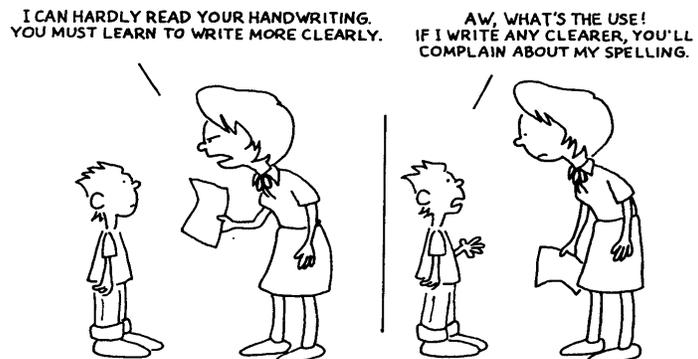
As Carol Dwyer stresses in the introduction to the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality's 2007 inaugural biennial report on preparing effective teachers for at-risk schools and students:

“Even when teachers in these schools have the experience, credentials, and content expertise comparable to their counterparts in more successful schools, they often have not had the preparation or the ongoing support that is needed to handle the enormous instructional challenges and learning environments presented by at risk schools. These challenges directly affect states' and districts' abilities to recruit and retain teachers to staff the nation's neediest schools and students.”

The next decade must mark a turning point for how schools and communities address the many barriers to learning experienced by children and youth. Needed in particular are initiatives to transform how teachers and their many colleagues work to prevent and ameliorate barriers which contribute to designating so many students as learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Such a transformation is essential to enabling and enhancing achievement for all, closing the achievement gap, reducing dropouts, and increasing the opportunity for schools to be valued as treasures in their neighborhood.

None of this argues against the necessity of improving standards for curriculum and instruction. The problem is that limiting the focus of the state standards movement does little to address barriers to learning and teaching. What our analyses underscore is the need for a third component that directly and systematically addresses interfering factors and re-engages disconnected students. The development of such a component (e.g., a comprehensive system of learning supports) will require standards that ensure teachers learn more about how to increase student engagement, address interfering factors, re-engage disconnected students, and work collaboratively with other teachers and student and learning support staff to enhance practices for prevention and for responding quickly when common problems arise.

Developing the third component also requires standards for learning and student support staff. Such standards are needed to ensure support personnel learn more about how to work with teachers and other staff (and to do so in classrooms as much as is feasible), as well as how to work more productively with a wider range of district and community resources. Finally, standards for all school leaders and administrators need to ensure they learn more about leading the way by expanding policy, enhancing operational infrastructure, and redeploying resources to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.



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Center News



Latest Brief

Blueprints for Education Reform: Have You Analyzed the Architects' Vision?
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/blueprint.pdf>

Highlights:

- I. The focus of current blueprints
- II. What's missing in most of the plans
- III. An expanded vision that directly addresses barriers to learning and teaching
- IV. Cautions that
 - >More is involved than improving coordination and services
 - >More is involved than specifying adoption of a community school approach



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(No cost resources)

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Unit II: *Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement & Re-engagement*

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

Unit IV: *Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports*

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

RTI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports: Four Units for Continuing Education

Unit I: *Response to Intervention: Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom*

Unit II: *Implementing Response to Intervention Sequentially & Effectively*

Unit III: *Response to Intervention: Beyond Personalization*

Unit IV: *Pursuing Response to Intervention as One Strategy in a Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897>

Meeting high standards requires personalized teaching and directly addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

The Center for Mental Health in Schools operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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