
A New School Year; Opportunities to Anticipate and Address Problems

>As school starts, are staff waiting to react rather than working to prevent problems?

As the school year begins, everyone knows that some students will experience difficulty adjusting. Some will be newcomers to the school; some may be newcomers to the country; some may not speak English. Some will be quite anxious. Some bring histories of learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

What plans are in place to address barriers to learning and teaching by

- starting off the year in a welcoming, supportive, and caring way, with special attention to those who are vulnerable?
- preventing predictable problems that arise during the first month of a new school year?
- responding with student/learning supports as soon as a problem arises?
- providing special assistance to those who have severe and chronic problems?

We suggest that if good plans are not in place, staff need to begin immediately to strengthen the system of student/learning supports.

And from our perspective, it is an opportunity to start moving toward a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system. In this respect, see *Relaunching Student and Learning Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/relaunch.pdf>

Excerpt about *Making it Happen*:

- (1) Work with the leadership of student and learning supports to generate the Relaunch Plan.
Highlight the pressing challenges that need to be addressed this year and outline a strategic plan for actions at all levels (i.e., school, feeder pattern/family of schools, district).
- (2) Use available data to show: (a) the imperative for and value of student and learning supports (b) the increasing value of moving toward unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.
- (3) Request time with the Superintendent's cabinet, at the Principals meeting, with key staff leaders, and with the board of education to do a brief presentation on Current Status and the Relaunch Plan.
- (4) Ensure there is policy commitment for what has been proposed.
- (5) Arrange for a series of kick-off/showcasing announcements and presentations to all school personnel and to community collaborators and stakeholders (e.g., bulletin/memo/letter announcements from the board/superintendent/principals; leadership presentations). Be sure to include presentations at the teachers meetings that feature the learning support staff at that school/feeder pattern.