

July 13, 2006

RE: Report from the July 11 Leadership Institute at UCLA for the "Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems" Grantees

To: All who attended and wanted to attend

From: Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor

Below is a brief report from the event.

A major follow-up action participants wanted was to establish an interactive listserv as one way to continue to exchange information and ask for assistance. Our Center has moved to create this, and we are using the listerv to share this report. So if you have anything at this point you want to share with each other, you can simply reply to this message, and it will go to all currently listed.

Should you want your name removed from the listserv, just send an email to Linda Taylor to let her know – ltaylor@ucla.edu )

In attempting to capture the key points from July 11, we have briefly summarized what was shared about (1) current activity, (2) common challenges and possible solutions, and (3) opportunities for further collaboration and mutual support. Many lessons learned can be extrapolated from what has happened to date.

### **Current Activity**

In sharing current efforts, it was clear that projects were at different stages of development and that each was pursuing a range of possible opportunities for integrating schools and mental health systems. As a whole, the projects are

- >building on existing partnerships and initiatives and strengthening best practices –  
These efforts include a range of activity at different stages of development designed to bring together existing systems for mental health, juvenile justice, faith based organizations, social service agencies, local police, and others. For some, this is being done by focusing on current concerns in schools such as bullying, depression, anger control, etc.
- >pursuing development of a strong set of interacting mechanisms to increase "buy-in," systemic integration, and promote sustainability –  
These efforts include forming work groups, expanding collaborative groups, finding champions, engaging key administrators, and in some cases, families and students. One prominent example is the development by several projects of Learning Supports Resource Teams to carry out resource-oriented systemic analyses. (There was discussion of the importance of carefully defining the functions related to all infrastructure mechanisms, the difference between advisory, steering, collaborative bodies, and work groups.)
- >identifying the most pressing systemic problems and most promising opportunities through review of existing data –  
Several projects are engaged in surveying students, families, and staff. Besides assessing needs and opportunities, these efforts also are used to mobilize partners to work together on community-specific concerns and to develop protocols for working on these problems.

- >experiencing systemic challenges related to population differences (e.g., changes in the local demographics, high numbers of students from other countries/cultures, other diversity considerations, locales with large populations, large geographic areas, large numbers of schools/districts) –  
A focus on these matters is embedded in all aspects of the work. Also included here is the challenge stemming from how school and agency systems address families’ attitudes about mental health and their willingness to participate in information-sharing and referral follow-through.
- >finding they can play unique roles for systemic change (e.g., as conveners, facilitators, change agents, coaches, brokers) –  
Such roles are understood as providing opportunities to create sustainable mechanisms at schools and district.
- >working closely with school support staff and teachers and often building capacity –  
Examples include providing opportunities for the training-of-trainers so that the staff development component becomes part of the ongoing activity of school staff.
- >exploring the best ways to let others know about their work –  
This includes contributing to school newsletters, working with school/district websites, powerpoint presentations, brochures, and so forth. Such promotional work is seen as enhancing existing programs, as well as moving project objectives forward.
- >developing program evaluation as a process for planning and guiding project activities –  
The discussion underscored the value of evaluation as a way to further focus on matters such as “What do we want to see changed? Where will the resources come from?”. There also was discussion of qualitative and quantitative measures and short-term and long term outcomes. And, two projects specifically offered their expertise to help others with evaluation issues.

## **A Few Major Challenges and Possible Ways to Handle Them**

- >*Establishing Meaningful Interagency Agreements* –  
Examples were shared; others will be shared by projects and the Center on request. Various process possibilities were explored. For example:
  - >>building on and strengthen existing agreements between the schools/districts and community partners
  - >>evolving agreements naturally over the course of building working relationships (e.g., begin with an agreement to explore partnerships and update it based on specific arrangements that are successfully implemented – by the end of the grant have an agreement in place that shows an ongoing working relationship that more specifically defines commitments and responsibilities of each partner)
- >*Facilitating Meaningful Involvement of School Administrators* –  
The challenge of ensuring the ongoing, substantive involvement of superintendents, principals, and middle managers was recognized as crucial and key to school-community systemic integration of mental health in schools. In this respect, it was suggested that efforts be made to deemphasize that the initiative is a project and to take steps to fully integrate the work into ongoing school improvement planning.
- >*Understanding the differences in the culture of schools and the culture of agencies* –  
The challenges here include enhancing institutional cultural understanding, overcoming problems stemming from "outsiders" coming to work at schools (including concerns about turf and threats to jobs), and more. It was stressed that a first step involves acknowledging such matters and taking time to learn about the institutional cultures of those systems that are to be integrated. The second step includes engaging all major

stakeholders (unions, school student support staff, administrators, school boards, agency managers, etc.) in address these concerns.

>*Capacity Building, for project staff and others –*

A major challenge here is to enhance the ability of project staff to play an effective role as systemic change agents. This is a topic that needs to be explored as projects continue to interact. With specific respect to capacity building related to crisis response training; one site offered to provide such training with a focus on embedding crisis response into the larger structures of school, city and state plans and mechanisms. A significant challenge in all this is how to integrate evidence based programs into current existing best practices and keep training highly relevant and motivating.

>*Sustainability –*

As project staff learn more about the challenges and opportunities in their locales, they are moving toward a stronger position to do long term strategic planning for sustainability. Every discussion of integrated activity related to overlapping concerns and areas of intervention provide an opportunity to explore ways to braid funding (e.g., Title I, special ed., safe and drug free school and community programs, tobacco cessation, behavioral health, children's initiatives stemming from departments of mental health, etc.). It was stressed that sustainability is facilitated when stakeholders appreciate how schools can help support the community and how the community can support schools.

## **Ongoing Networking and Support**

Participants all felt the need for ongoing interaction to share information and expertise and request assistance related to challenges. It was decided to establish an interactive listserv for grantees. With the sending of this report, such a listserv is operational. As soon as feasible, sharing should include relevant samples of resources, guides, brochures, etc.

It was suggested that outreach be made to others who would be interested in joining the listserv and sharing their information and expertise. If you know of others you want to include, reach out to them and if they want to join, let Linda Taylor know, and she will add them.  
(Ltaylor@ucla.edu )

It also was suggested that Listserv interactions be augmented by periodic conference calls on specific concerns and issues. As these arise, the UCLA Center will be pleased to host the call.

There also was a stated desire for additional face to face meetings (regional and at various sites) for major capacity building efforts (e.g., related to enhancing abilities as systemic change agents, how to include a focus on policy). This can be a topic for future discussion on the listserv.

And, of course, as we stressed, the UCLA Center can always be contacted for assistance.

## **Some Resources Related to the Above**

Given the discussion about systemic approaches related to crisis, you may want to take a look at the Center's Quick Find on Crisis Prevention and Response –

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107_01.htm)

Given the discussion of infrastructure mechanisms to facilitate system integration, you might look at

>Another Initiative? Where Does it Fit? A Unifying Framework and an Integrated Infrastructure for Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Promote Healthy Development  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf>

>About Infrastructure Mechanisms for a Comprehensive Learning Support Component  
[http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/infra\\_mechanisms.pdf](http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/infra_mechanisms.pdf)

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