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Subject: Learning Supports Input to the LCAP Template Process

From: Pupil Services Coalition

LEARNING SUPPORTS (aka: Student and Learning Supports)

Several organizations concerned with the equal opportunity for progress and success of all students in CA schools have organized into the Pupil Services Coalition (PSC). This coalition is composed of organizations representing some 330 thousand CA school professional educators and other interested human services professionals. Represented are Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credentialed practitioners (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists), Credentialed School Nurses and Health professionals, CA Teachers, Child Welfare and Attendance professionals, CA Professional Social Workers, among others.

The mission of the PSC is the proper integration of **Learning Supports (LS)** (aka: **Student and Learning Supports (SLS)**) in all schools as a unified and integral third component (on a par with the teaching and management components) of all LCAPs that are ultimately focused on providing the best possible learning and teaching environment to all students with an augmented focus on disadvantaged students. In that research evidence demonstrates that Student Supports at all levels is essential for academic success, it must be included in the LCAP Template requiring districts to consider funding Student Supports personnel in their accountability program. Learning Supports is not an expendable resource; its personnel should no longer continue to be among the first laid off when the budget is tight. The Learning Supports umbrella has lately been gaining a good amount of traction in parts of the country. "Learning Supports are the resources, strategies, and practices within a continuum of interventions that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school. Its aim is to systematically identify and address barriers to learning and teaching, and re-engage students that have disconnected from the learning process." (UCLA Center). The focus is on a broad range of barriers (neighborhood, family, school, and individual) and is intended to provide ways to help students overcome barriers and to reengage in classroom and school learning. The principal emphasis is to help each pupil to be successful in school. All



Learning Supports programs should be designed in concert with the educational views of other members of the school staff and community: teachers, administrators, parents, key social agencies, and other community stakeholders.

Personnel of Learning Supports are composed of CA Credentialed School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Nurses, PPS interns, and other Learning Supports professionals. Credentialed Learning Supports professionals are experienced in performing activities and services such as: Supervising LS staff; enhancing home-school-community relations; mental health assessment, referral, and follow-through; personal and group counseling; properly guiding career and academic program choices, meeting foster youth needs; working with English learners and their families to access school and community resources and encourage their input; helping low income students and their families access resources in and out of school and encourage their input; and working to help students overcome the myriad barriers to learning and teaching that periodically confront all students and families and particularly the identified subgroups of students.

We recommend that the Learning Supports component in districts and schools be administered by Credentialed Pupil Personnel Services Professionals (i.e., School Social Worker, School Counselor, School Psychologist) and Credentialed School Nurses. These Masters-level professionals are trained in approved university programs and credentialed by the CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to perform in the Learning Supports arena. This supervision need not be "reinvented" since it is in place and is authorized in the PPS Credential regulations: "Any individual holding any of the (PPS) authorizations described in this section may serve as an administrator of a pupil personnel services program per Ed. Code Sec. 44270.2." Teachers and management cannot be expected to take on an overload of additional responsibilities of providing Learning Supports functions. We recommend that Learning Supports personnel, Teachers, and Management personnel (demonstrated to be the three essential components of successful schools) work together in a team to coordinate activities and resources with parents and community to support effective learning, teaching, and student success.

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FACT SHEET

Among the eight State Priorities that must be addressed in school success plans (LCAPs), Learning Supports directly and indirectly supports all eight and is particularly directly focused on:

1. **Student Engagement.**
2. **School Climate.**
3. **Parent Involvement.**
4. **The extent to which pupils have access to, and are enrolled in, a broad course of study.**

To meet these priorities as intended in the LCFF, it is recommended that LEAs incorporate Learning Supports with part of the enhanced funding that is based on their demographic profile of the targeted students they serve. This should contribute to meeting districts' enhanced accountability requirements, since Learning Supports is the component capable of reaching those students who face the barriers that administrators and teachers cannot be expected to handle effectively.

1. **Student Engagement:** This is measured by multiple indicators and includes, but not limited to, rates associated with attendance, chronic absenteeism, drop out (middle and high school) and, high school graduation.

Learning Supports needs to be adequately funded in order to bring consistent improvement to these vital areas. And LS needs to be a unified component working intimately with teaching and management in order to effectively improve school climate. The Credentialed PPS practitioners' team (i.e., School Social Workers, School Counselors, School Psychologists) and School Nurses, are trained and experienced in mental health and physical health assessment and referral. Those PPS Professionals who additionally hold the Credential in Child Welfare & Attendance (CWA) are trained and experienced in attendance improvement best practices, and they are authorized to serve as a district's required Welfare and Attendance Officer. PPS practitioners are well equipped to deal with the myriad other indicators that arise as barriers to student engagement.

Just as efforts to enhance instruction emphasize well delineated and integrated curriculum content, so must efforts by Learning Supports be provided to address external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with that curriculum. Attendance is related to student engagement and is an appropriate focus of Learning Supports in order to ensure achievement, graduation, and preparation for life after secondary education - college,



career-technical, military, work.

2. **School Climate:** This is measured by multiple indicators and includes, but not limited to student suspension and expulsion rates as well as other measures assessing safety and school connectedness.

Again the Credentialed PPS practitioners and School Nurses, as leaders of the Learning Supports component, are especially trained and experienced to work with teachers and management to ensure a healthy school climate. The focus is to fundamentally change school improvement policy and practice so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and beyond.

The aim here is to provide resources and expertise for: (a) **Prevention** - promoting healthy development and preventing problems; (b) **Early Identification and Intervention** - responding as early after problem onset as is feasible; and (c) **Extended Assistance** - providing for those whose serious, pervasive, and chronic problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

At schools, the content (or curriculum) of Learning Supports for addressing a full range of factors interfering with School Climate can be summarized into at least six classroom and school-wide arenas. (UCLA/SMHP). These focus on:

- (1) Enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems).**
- (2) Supporting transitions (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions).**
- (3) Increasing home and school connections.**
- (4) Responding to, and where feasible, preventing crises.**
- (5) Increasing community involvement and support (outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers).**
- (6) Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.**

3. **Parent Involvement:** This includes efforts made to seek parent input in making decisions for the school district and each individual school, including how the district will promote parental participation in programs for economically disadvantaged students, English learners, foster youth, and individuals with exceptional needs.



The PPS professionals as the core of Learning Supports are trained and experienced in working with families from the targeted groups both at school and in their homes and communities. The Learning Supports intervention framework combines cultural awareness and a continuum of home, school, and community interventions to support diverse and multicultural parental input. Learning Supports works to enhance home involvement and engagement in schooling thus increasing and strengthening the home and its connections with school. In working with the family and parents in particular, community engagement with schools is important to guide families who need community support, like freeing up time, to be more involved with their children's education. Student and family assistance will be needed to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed.

4. **The extent to which pupils have access to, and are enrolled in, a broad course of study:** This includes core subject areas (i.e., English, mathematics, social science, science, visual and performing arts, health, physical education, career and technical education, etc.) particularly the programs and services developed and provided to economically disadvantaged pupils, English learners, foster youth, and individuals with exceptional needs.

Student Supports personnel, particularly Credentialed PPS Professionals, are experienced and trained in working with disadvantaged students as part of the effort for proper course of study enrollment for school achievement and success for all students. It is recommended that Student Supports personnel be funded and staffed with Credentialed PPS Professional leaders to work in coordination with teachers and management to insure this priority is accounted for, kept in focus, and properly met.

Summary and Recommendation:

In order for districts to meet LCFF's enhanced accountability requirements of reaching all students and especially effectively reaching the targeted disadvantaged students, Learning Supports (aka: Student and Learning Supports) must be staffed and funded with part of the enhanced funding districts are provided. Activities and expenditures will vary as do district student characteristics and populations. As the number of Teachers and the number of Management personnel vary, so will the number and composition of Student Supports personnel vary according to student demographics.

In order to meet the mandates of LCFF and provide better and effective schools for success of all students, especially those disadvantaged who have habitually fallen behind, all districts must employ and provide access in all schools to Credentialed Learning Supports personnel



and their team. As mentioned expenditures will depend on the size of schools and the composition of student characteristics.

We are concerned that if Learning Supports is not incorporated as a unified component in schools, working with teachers and management, and with parents, agencies, and community stakeholders, the intent of this new and creative legislation will fall short of its intent to help all students.

We recommend that all districts and schools be required to staff and fund the necessary activities of Learning Supports in order to effectively help provide students' learning, physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports that affect their progress. This in turn should help districts meet their enhanced accountability requirements. The activities and expenditures can be determined in conjunction with leadership of the Learning Supports professionals, which many districts and schools currently employ. Leadership of the Pupil Services Coalition and the PPS Professionals in particular are available for collaboration in helping determine Learning Supports costs associated with student composition and needs, staffing, and activities.

References:

Standards and Accountability: A prototype set of standards and related measurement indicators for a Learning Supports component is available to guide and ensure accountability through the auspices of the UCLA/SMHP:

(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf>)

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