> **Featured**
>
> >*What's the current state of student supports? the future?*
>
> >*Community Schools and MTSS Provide a Platform for Transforming Student/Learning Supports*
>
> >**Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

For discussion and interchange:

   Request from a colleague:

   >*What's the current state of student supports? the future?*

A colleague at a regional education agency asked about the current state of student supports and future directions.

As those who have followed the Center's work know, these are matters that we address regularly. For example, see

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

>*Is current advocacy for more and more student support professionals interfering with efforts to transform student/learning supports?*

At this time, we are seeking to gather and share current perspectives from across the country.

We started by sending this message to leaders of student support associations/guilds and others on the Center's listserv. Below is a sample of what we received back so far, ***but we really want to hear much more from the field!*** Please send your comments to Ltaylor@ucla.edu.

   Comments from the Field:

(1) "What we're hearing from our members, district directors and state coordinators of school counseling:

   >We have seen a trend in schools and districts hiring community providers to complement the work of school-employed folks and provide those more intensive services for students who qualify for them.

   > We hear states such as Arizona, Oklahoma, Florida and Michigan have faced a pretty big shortage issue for a few years now.

   > In some places, enrollment is lower for school counseling programs.

   > There are many examples of peer and cross age counseling programs becoming more prevalent. There is a current national initiative out of the Biden administration to grow these programs. I haven't heard of any districts or school counselors saying the program is displacing or replacing school counselors or other school based support personnel. Additionally, the same administration have pumped dollars into innovative ways to address the shortages of school counselors, psychologists and social worker.

   >ASCA has worked collaboratively with NASP and SSWAA and included messaging about increasing all of the services in all schools. It is a prominent talking point whenever we present to national and federal partners, state leaders and the press."

(2) "Our biggest issue is lack of applicants. We used to have a lot of people apply for any position we opened, now we are lucky to get one or two applicants. Also turn over is high as we have a hard time competing with other local businesses."

(3) "In my school our budget for guidance was cut. We did have a counselor for 3 days a week, but one day was cut to save money. This was not in the best interest of our students, as the counselors 3 days were not enough for her to see all the students who had emotional needs. I would love to find a grant to at least bring her back for her 3rd day. If you know of any grants available, please let me know."

(4) "We are focusing very strategically on Tier 1... to help us organize into one focus... Laying a foundation for teaching behavior which is everyone's responsibility.
We need an organizing factor for building capacity at all levels regardless of what the organizing factor is called (RTI, MTSS, PBIS etc) we need to have a focus that teaches all role groups continuously how to integrate academics and behaviors. Our logic model has training for all sections and really needs to be implemented. I would love to be part of a larger group focusing on this. I have done a lot of Belief work that helps us deal with the elephant in the room. Our beliefs that it is someone elses job to do behavior.
Anyway, that is my focus and work and it takes a voyage to build the village. We have MH pros in all schools and everyone abdicated their role in behavior. Now we have to regroup and organize to support kids at all levels. We are having so many problems with contracts from outside agencies doing nothing. Last year we served 900 kids in SBBH and the outside mental health agency served 40 and have wait lists up to 3-4 weeks. It is not good. My mind set is we will not have resources so it needs to be all of us working together, still offering support but also building capacity."

(5) "This is what I've learned from districts in my area: In general, school districts in our area are struggling to find qualified staff to fill teaching positions. Teachers left the field and/or retired in droves at the end of the last couple of school years. Reasons for leaving include stresses complicated by post-Covid learning losses, increased accountability for what is being taught, new and confusing state laws banning books, and outlawing supports for students who identify differently from the sex they were assigned at birth. These particular laws apply beyond the classroom to curricular activities, health related issues, and sports requiring changing and adopting new school policies. Administrators are also trying to fill positions for custodial staff, bus drivers and food service providers. At the same time, student mental health issues, gang violence, guns in schools and bullying are on the rise.
While I don't have a crystal ball, my experience tells me a couple of things. First, the good news is that systems are slow to change. So if districts already have learning supports in place, it is likely they will be maintained in some fashion by virtue of the fact that administrators are busy with more pressing matters. The bad news is that if there are no supports in place, they are not likely to be implemented in the short term. I anticipate that community-based mental health services will increase in the larger cities and town and that some virtual services will become available in rural areas as student behavior declines and gun violence increases. (The current political climate favors funding mental health over regulating guns.)
Now more than ever, common sense dictates that all educators need to publicize the challenges their students face daily (as well as the ones teachers face). We all need to be advocates for supporting student learning based on student needs. We no longer have the luxury of advocating for a single issue or advocating for more staff from a single guild. It's time we implement a SYSTEM of supports based on discernable and verifiable student needs. The UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools has pointed the way. It's up to us to follow their lead and offer help to those trying to support student learning."

(6) "Great discussion topic! I'm an MTSS Coach for several school districts… My view is specific to ensuring that students receive the support they need from individuals who have been properly trained on how to support students-and training could take many forms! There are far too many support staff who are not receiving the necessary training and support to adequately provide for the needs of the students in their care thus potentially causing issues with fidelity of interventions as well support staff burnout and high turnover. Specific to mental health: One has to also consider the legal protections provided to certain state licensed and state credentialed support staff, especially under confidentiality (ed code/law) and how students privacy rights may be further protected if they receive services from these individuals who yes, do qualify for higher pay."

For more on these matters, see the Center Quick Find –
>*Staffing Student Supports: New Directions*

For discussion and interchange:

>*Community Schools and MTSS Provide a Platform for Transforming Student/Learning Supports*

Current efforts related to community schools and MTSS are just a beginning. While the way these initiatives are implemented is important, it is the way that they evolve that will determine whether they significantly improve schools.

With specific reference to community schools, we stress that defining the initiative as a "community-based effort to coordinate and integrate ... services" raises some concerns that limit their evolution. Of particular concern, the narrow focus on services and the emphasis on linking community services to schools inadvertently has worked against efforts to catalyze a much needed transformation in how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

This need not be the case.

Our Center highlights how Community Schools and MTSS can be platforms for transforming student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system that weaves together school and community resources. See

>*Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports*
>*Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning*

Given the current threats to public education, current initiatives must evolve into the type of fundamental systemic changes that are essential for enhancing the potency of schools in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

What are your experiences and views about the above matters?

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Landscape of school based mental health services

Amid counselor shortage, rural schools are training students to help

Mental health care provider and school counselor shortages

School Counselors and Social Workers Struggle to Meet Student Needs

School Staffing Shortage Is Worsening the Mental Health Crisis

A Toolkit for School Systems to Advance Comprehensive School Employee Wellness

A Four-Day School Week? Here Are the Costs and Benefits

Addressing Working Conditions to Improve Teacher Retention: An Exploration of the Research

Make Joy a Priority in District Recovery

Research and Evidence-Based Best Practices for Preparing Educators for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – **https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm**

10/4 Why leaders should be curious about their students
10/4 Strategies for Educators and School-Based Staff
10/6 Cultivating a community of leaders
10/7 Building leadership capacity
10/10 Resolving special education disputes
10/10 Boosting student and staff motivation
10/10 Understanding Doubled Up
10/11 Combatting teacher shortages
10/12 Building trust with teachers and staff 10/16 Personalized learning
10/17 How to lead to improved student outcomes
10/17 Prevention youth hate crimes and bullying
10/18 Exploring IEPs
10/18 Strategies for Student and Teacher Support Teams
10/18 School Avoidance in Youth With Mental Health Needs
10/23 Nurturing school culture
10/24 Keeping schools and communities safe
10/25 Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility
10/25 Shifting from Trauma-Informed to Healing Centered Practices in Schools
10/25 Adolescent Drug Prevention
10/25 Professional learning: what works and what doesn't
10/30 Healthy teams

To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)**

- **Let us know your views about the topics shared and about what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)**

- **For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

- **Looking for information? (We usually can help.)**

- **Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)**

We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu
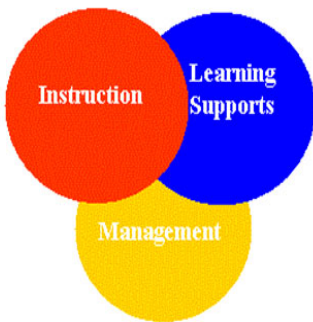
For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
go to https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange on our website at https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)