

Student Success Requires a *Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable* System of Learning Supports

In discussing the 2020 standards related to school psychologists, NASP's director of professional policy and practice, Stacey Skalski, said:

The work of school psychologists is essential now as schools respond to students' hardships and fears caused by the pandemic, community demands for social justice and disruptions due to natural disasters.

That's certainly the case.

And it is the case for all those who work in and with schools to provide student/learning supports for students and families.

Current events have underscored what has been evident for some time: continuing with prevailing approaches that have long been fragmented and counterproductively competitive is a recipe for maintaining a terribly unsatisfactory status quo. We stress that:

- While various groups call their approach *comprehensive*, the reality is that nature and scope of what they propose is too limited to address the needs of many schools.
- References to "integrated" approaches tend to emphasize coordinating services rather than *unifying* student/learning supports in ways that transcend professional affiliations.
- *Equity* of opportunity for success at school and beyond for too many student is simply not feasible as long a student/learning supports are fragmented and school improvement policy and practice continue to marginalize the work.

The problems encountered by students and schools are complex and overlapping. The number of students not doing well at some schools is staggering. Student/learning supports as they currently operate can't meet the need, especially in schools serving low wealth families. And with ever tightening school budgets the situation is worsening. Rivalry for sparse resources will increase counterproductive competition among school support staff and with community-based professionals who link with schools.

As John Maynard Keynes cogently stressed: *The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.*

It has become critical at this time to end the counterproductive competition that arises from maintaining separate, narrow agenda for student/learning supports. The focus must be on how to provide the type of *learning supports* for all students and especially for those already manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Schools need a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students.

In this context many schools are discussing MTSS and hopefully will incorporate a broad focus in doing so. See our recent brief discussions about this:

>MTSS: *It's just a starting point for transforming student/learning supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/MTSSbuild.pdf>

> *Much Discussion of MTSS, Little Discussion of Student/Learning Support Staff and Developing MTSS into a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/july19init.pdf>

For more in-depth discussion and as resources for staff development and school planning, see three related free books

> *Improving School Improvement*

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

> *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

Access them by going to: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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