



*Improving Schools,  
Engaging Students*

## *A Center Report*

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# **Transforming School Improvement to Develop a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: What District Superintendents Say They Need to Move Forward**

Summer, 2008

The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563 Phone: (310) 825-3634.

Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Project #U45 MC 00175).

Please reference this document as follows: Center for Mental Health in Schools. (2008). *Transforming School Improvement to Develop a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: What District Superintendents Say They Need to Move Forward*. Los Angeles, CA: Author.

Download at no cost from:  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superintendentssay.pdf>

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Center for Mental Health in Schools  
UCLA Dept. of Psychology  
P.O.Box 951563  
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The Center encourages widespread sharing of all resources.

## Preface

This report stems from our continuing efforts to work with districts across the country to *transform* how schools (working with families and communities) address barriers to learning and teaching.

We begin by highlighting the importance of adopting a unifying concept for the work and the necessity of reframing how current *interventions* can be woven together to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports. Then, we report what district superintendents tell us about what would help them in developing a comprehensive *system* for addressing barriers to learning and teaching at every school. And, as a beginning response to their needs, we highlight a range of resources that have been developed specifically to enhance school improvement policy and practice to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Our intent is to use this report as the beginning of a superintendents' initiative across the country designed to stimulate discussion, sharing, learning, and systemic changes related to new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. To this end, we have attached a brief response form. Please take a few minutes to return it to us.

As always, we owe many folks for their contributions to this report, and as always, we take full responsibility for its contents and especially any misinterpretations and errors.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that portions of the work were done as part of a cooperative agreement funded by the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services. At the same time, it should be noted that the report is an independent work.

Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor  
Center Co-directors

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## **Transforming School Improvement to Develop a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: What District Superintendents Say They Need to Move Forward**

**A**ppropriately, schools have invested a great deal to enhance instruction. However, many are now experiencing a plateau in achievement gains. The problem is that significant numbers of students still are not productively connecting with the instructional improvements that have been implemented.

Of particular concern are those students who are not ready, motivationally and/or in terms of acquired capabilities, to benefit from what is being taught on a given day. This includes the increasing number who teachers report have become actively disengaged from classroom learning. And, of course, the link between student disengagement and the achievement gap and dropout rates (among students and staff) has long been recognized. All this underscores why it is imperative that school improvement decision making place a higher priority on addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Currently, what education administrators and school boards across the country increasingly are asking is: *Where do we go from here?*

Analyses of school improvement plans suggest that the next step is to expand such efforts to encompass a comprehensive system of learning supports designed to address barriers to learning and teaching. This report focuses on moving in that direction.

### **What Do Superintendents Say About Building a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports?**

In the Spring of 2008, we sent out an inquiry to districts around the country to elicit information about awareness, interest, and suggestions related to the need to expand the focus in school improvement planning and implementation to include developing a comprehensive and systemic approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. We included with each a copy a document entitled: *Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* (see Resource A included at the end of this report).

The inquiry asked them to indicate (1) resources that would help their district enhance school improvement by developing a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching and (2) any other recommendations they wanted to make to our Center as it works toward helping districts enhance ways to address barriers to learning and teaching. About 80 superintendent level administrators took the opportunity to respond. Their responses are consistent with what we hear from their colleagues in our work around the country.

We rarely encounter anyone at the superintendent level who does not understand the necessity of schools doing more to address barriers to learning and teaching. As one of the respondents noted: "Identifying at-risk students/families is easy, however, most of our teachers are not trained or don't feel they have the tools to work with these students as that population continues to grow."

District leaders also have shared with us a variety of needs related to moving forward in developing a comprehensive system of learning supports.

For purposes of this report, responses to our inquiries are synthesized into five categories, encompassing needs for

- A vision and a roadmap
- Resources to make the case and promote readiness for systemic change
- Capacity building related to developing the new system, including personnel and other stakeholder development
- Access to lessons learned from others developing such a system
- Capacity building related to facilitating systemic changes

***Needed:  
A Vision and  
a Roadmap***

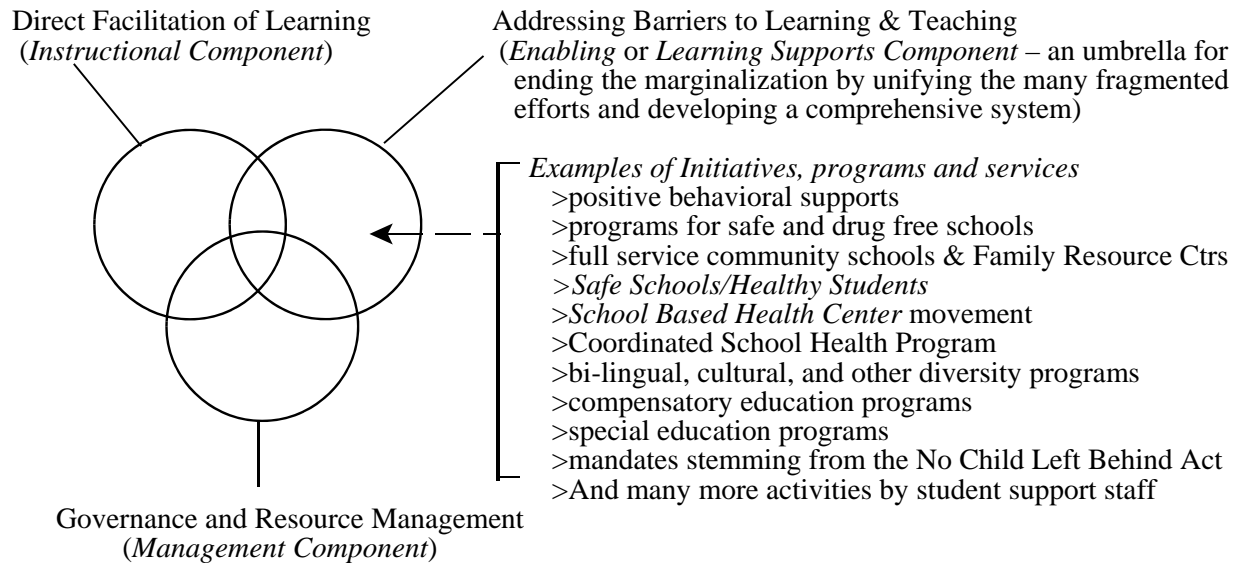
Essentially, superintendents are looking for a clear picture to convey the ideas and guide their district toward developing a comprehensive system of learning supports. One superintendent, for instance, asks for "a one-page document that can be handed to others outlining the system that needs to be in place to address the needs of students today." Another wants "simple guidelines for establishing a learning safety net."

The desire for a one page document or a five minute presentation reflects the dilemma confronting all who propose major systemic changes. That is, the demand by decision makers is for a presentation of complex sets of ideas in a highly abbreviated format and manner. Clearly, it is a virtue to strive for brief, concise, and graphic presentations; it is, however, rarely the case that complex systemic transformations can be appropriately conveyed in one page or through a five minute presentation. The material and resource references in this report provide brief overviews of concepts, guidelines, steps, and tasks. They can be drawn on and adapted for purposes of designing an Executive Summary, preparing a brief presentation, and developing a roadmap. Resource A provides one example.

Exhibit 1 provides another graphic to illustrate the vision for unifying efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching.

## Exhibit 1

### **An Enabling or Learning Supports Component as an Umbrella Concept for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Promoting Healthy Development**



And, as another tool that can be useful, Exhibit 2 outlines our delineation of major steps in establishing a comprehensive *Learning Supports* or *Enabling Component*. Finally, note that an online toolkit (see below) contains a growing set of brief resources for articulating why a comprehensive system of learning supports is imperative and for preparing a big picture roadmap for policy makers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

### **Resources: Vision and Roadmap**

The Center's online toolkit includes:

- briefs clarifying the rationale and frequently asked questions about developing a system of learning supports
- examples of policy formulations
- prototypes of guidelines and standards
- a prototype for a school district proposal

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

Exhibit 2 Overview of Major Steps Related to Establishing a Comprehensive, Multifaceted, and Cohesive Component for Addressing Barriers to Learning  
(A Learning Supports or Enabling Component)

At any site, key stakeholders and their leadership must understand and commit to systemic changes for the proposed innovation. Commitment must be reflected in policy statements and creation of infrastructure that ensures essential leadership, resources, motivation, and capability for developing an effective system of learning supports.

**First Phase – Orientation: Creating Readiness**

- Introduce basic ideas to relevant groups of stakeholders to build interest and consensus for enhancing efforts to develop a comprehensive component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and to garner feedback and support
- Establish a policy framework and commitment – the leadership should make a commitment that adopts a comprehensive approach to enabling learning by addressing barriers as a primary and essential component of school improvement
- Identify a leader (equivalent to the leader for the instructional component) to ensure policy commitments are carried out for establishing the new component

**Second Phase – Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure and Capacity**

- Establish temporary mechanisms to facilitate initial implementation/systemic change (e.g., a steering group, an organization change facilitator) and develop the capacity of these mechanisms to guide and manage change and provide essential leadership during phase-in
- Formulate specific start-up and phase-in actions
- Refine infrastructure so that the component is fully integrated with the instructional and management components
  - > Establish and train an administrative leader
  - > Ensure there is a resource-oriented mechanism (e.g., a Learning Supports Resource Team) and train those who staff it in how to perform major resource-oriented tasks (e.g., mapping, analysis, coordinating, planning, setting priorities for program development, enhancing intervention systems)
  - > Help organize work groups for each major arena of component activity and facilitate their initial mapping and analysis of resources and formulation of recommendations
  - > Develop ad hoc work groups to enhance component visibility, communication, sharing, and problem solving
- Establish a system for quality improvement and evaluation of impact and integrate it into school improvement planning, evaluation, and accountability
- Attempt to fill program/service gaps and pursue economies of scale through outreach designed to establish formal collaborative linkages among families of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern) and among district-wide and community resources (e.g., through establishing a Learning Supports Resource Council)

**Third Phase – Sustaining and Evolving: Increasing Outcomes**

- Plan for maintenance
- Develop strategies for maintaining momentum and progress

**Fourth Phase – Generating Creative Renewal and Replication to Scale**



**Needed:  
Resources  
for Making  
the Case and  
Promoting  
Readiness**

Superintendents recognize that a precursor for moving forward in developing a comprehensive system of learning supports involves clarifying why it is a high priority. This is reflected in the responses asking for more data on the need, goals, and potential impact for schools in general and for specific subgroups of students in particular. For instance, respondents want:

- “a summary of nationwide statistics regarding emotional and social issues faced by children that affect school performance (i.e., % without fathers; % with parent in jail, % being raised by grandparents)”
- “[help with] zeroing in on subgroup needs and educational impact” (e.g., documents that highlight the importance of “catching students early when risk of school failure is still remote rather imminent”)
- “examples of a set of clear goals and objectives”
- “research results that focus on the link between student disengagement and the achievement gap”
- “resources and/or additional literature or research studies that validate recommendations” for developing a comprehensive system of learning supports.

**Resources: Making the Case & Promoting Readiness**

Several of the resources developed for the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* are designed to meet this need. See

- > *Talking Points - Five Frequently Asked Questions About: Why Address What's Missing in School Improvement Planning?* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/q&aschoolimprove.pdf>
- > *Costs of Not Addressing Barriers to Learning* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/costs.pdf>
- > *Data on the Plateau or Leveling Off Effect of Achievement Test Scores* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/plateau.pdf>
- > *Data Related to the Need for New Directions for School Improvement* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/data.pdf>
- > *School Improvement Planning: What's Missing?* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsmissing.htm>
- > *Steps and Tools to Guide Planning and Implementation of a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/stepsandtoolstoguideplanning.pdf>

***Needed:  
Capacity Building  
Related to  
Developing the  
New System,  
including  
Personnel and  
Other Stakeholder  
Development***

With respect to establishing a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching, capacity building was far and away the biggest concern, and professional development was mentioned as a particularly pressing need. As one superintendent stated: “Our district's biggest challenge is training for staff and school and district leadership.” Another lamented that most building principals have too limited knowledge about what needs to go on in the classroom and school-wide to ensure student success at school. Concern also was expressed about how little professional development is research-based and implemented with a sustained focus on systemic concerns. And, there was a reminder not to forget about the development of non-professional staff.

Exhibit 3 highlights the range of capacity building concerns cited.

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Exhibit 3

**Superintendent Level Concerns About Capacity Building**

***Enhancing the Content Focus of Personnel Development***

In order to close the achievement gap, reduce the need for social retention, and lower the dropout rate, districts need to:

- provide more on specific classroom and school-wide strategies for at risk and special needs students/families
- move teacher prep programs beyond their limited focus on curriculum, instruction, cultural differences, and engagement in learning to include more on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and how to re-engage students who have become disengaged
- clarify how barriers to learning can be addressed most effectively in secondary schools and rural school systems
- share current best practices for closing achievement gap for English language learners and Special Education students, for Latinos and African American, as well as recent research studies on schools or school districts that have narrowed or closed the achievement gaps.
- develop a shared understanding of the vision, goals, and objectives for addressing barriers to learning and teaching
- develop age or grade level examples (barriers to learning are different depending on age and ability to move through or around barriers, e.g., a teen can get to community resources, a preschooler may have to have adult help.)

(Exhibit cont.)

### ***Enhancing Processes to Improve Delivery of Personnel Development***

The following are the key process suggestions cited for improving a district's capability related to personnel development for addressing barriers to learning and teaching:

- embed information about developing a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching into existing professional development networks for teachers, support staff, and administrators
- focus on enhancing what state regional education units and county offices of education cover in their work related to developing a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching
- develop workshops and institutes specifically for teachers, support staff, and administrators and others that bring together school, district, and community agencies to form stronger bonds and partnerships
- provide a tool-kit of strategies and other resource aids (e.g., guidance manuals, documents, frameworks, etc.)
- ensure there is a set of options on mentoring and collegial support systems to address these matters (with regular updates on successful efforts)
- provide video or teleconference opportunities
- enhance use of internet and web-based resources for professional development and to provide national, state, regional, and local links (e.g., host web trainings, conferences, and forums; develop and post free and low cost online resources; develop an internet network for sharing resources in interactive ways; provide direct links to sights where data can be shared and solutions worked out; post results of exchanges so partners can get an idea of various steps that may be involved in seeking resolution; develop resources for use by students and families at schools and at home)

### ***Other General Capacity Building Suggestions***

- include the emphasis on addressing barriers to learning and teaching in school improvement plans
- make available specific step-by-step guidelines for development of a system of learning supports that uses all relevant resources in the most effective way
- identify who is in charge of developing the learning supports components

(Exhibit cont.)

- develop ways to ensure that barriers are identified and addressed early on and with appropriate follow-through
  - implement formative evaluative practices for personnel to guide school improvement related to these matters
  - develop policies and strategies for involving a wide range of community stakeholders
  - seek passage of legislation which gives districts the ability to effectively build a system of learning supports that covers the promotion of healthy social and emotional development and interventions for mental health problems
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### **Resources: Enhancing Capacity Building**

See the tool kit that has been developed for the  
*National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support.*  
*Online at* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

We just missed the school bus.

Don't worry. I heard the principal say no child will be left behind!



***Needed:  
Access to  
Lessons  
Learned  
from Others  
Pursuing  
Development  
of Such  
a System***

The responses from superintendents clearly convey a hunger for learning from others. These leaders especially want to know about places to observe where it's happening.

In particular, they mention wanting to know about:

- success stories from districts where systems to address barriers to learning and teaching are in place
- research on effective models or at least on what works best (e.g., they want access to a research depository that makes available best practices and action research studies that address successful comprehensive systems of learning)
- information on the wisest use of available dollars to enable student success at school (e.g., best practices in aligning school funding for learning supports)
- best practice information on effective professional development and a list of exceptional presenters and trainers
- exemplar lessons of best/research-based practices for such topics as engaging and re-engaging students, suicide prevention, depression awareness and prevention, mental health issues affecting academic achievement, using student data from Response to Intervention strategies, and formal assessments to guide practice and show student growth

**Resources: Learning from Others Pursuing Development of a System of Learning Supports to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching**

To provide a starting place for learning from others, the Center has compiled and regularly updates information on trailblazing and pioneering efforts that are playing a role in designing new directions for student support. See *Where's it Happening? Examples of New Directions for Student Support and Lessons Learned*.

*Online at* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/wheresithappening.htm>

Included are examples of broad-based systemic designs and initiatives being carried out at school, district, and state levels and discussion of major lessons learned to date.

For information on best and empirically supported practices, see the document entitled: *Annotated "Lists" of Empirically Supported/evidence Based Interventions for School-aged Children and Adolescents*.

*Online at* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/aboutmh/annotatedlist.pdf>)

Other information on practices can be accessed through the Center online clearinghouse Quick Find Search. For the menu of over 130 specific topics, go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/websrch.htm#quick>

**Needed:  
Capacity  
Building  
Related to  
Facilitating  
Systemic  
Changes**

When it comes to systemic changes, the focus of superintendent' responses was not on framing the process; rather, they want guidance and strategies for how best to accomplish specific facets of the work. Toward this end, there is interest in creating networks dedicated specifically to sharing ideas and resources for systemic changes for transforming schools. They particularly want interactive networks (e.g., roundtable discussion groups, e-format conferences, special topic discussions).

In providing examples of specific systemic change concerns, the superintendents noted they needed to build their capacity for:

- increasing the readiness and commitment of the school board and community
- leveraging public and community partner support and assistance
- finding funding sources (e.g., Title I and IDEA resources that can be used for developing systems of learning supports; redeploying existing resources; filling gaps through community collaboration; leads to available grants and funding from the private sector)
- establishing policies and techniques for community collaboration that cultivate stronger bonds between schools, communities, and state agencies and promote transparency among all partners
- ensuring that the changes develop interdependent adults rather than system dependent adults
- countering the drain on scarce resources for systemic improvements resulting from legislative action that increases costs without providing extra dollars
- establishing formative and summative evaluation processes for systemic change

**Resources: Enhancing Capacity for Systemic Change**

The tool kit developed for the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* has a section devoted to concerns about systemic change.

Online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitd.htm>

Also, the Center is compiling *A Series of Information Resources on Enabling System Change*. See, for example:

>*Systemic Change for School Improvement*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/systemicchange.pdf>

>*Change Agent Mechanisms for School Improvement:*

*Infrastructure not Individuals*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/change\\_agents.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/change_agents.pdf)

>*Policy Implications for Advancing Systemic Change for School Improvement*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/Policy Implications.pdf>



## Next Steps

Part of our work around the country involves being a resource to district superintendents as they move forward to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching. This report represents a step in expanding that work.

Our intent is to use this report as the beginning of a nationwide *Superintendents Initiative* designed to enhance discussion, sharing, learning, and systemic changes related to new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

The focus of the *Superintendents Initiative* is to catalyze action. As a step in this direction, we are asking everyone to share this report with district superintendents and school boards. As this report indicates, there are superintendents who are ready to move forward. The hope is that an increasing number of those in superintendent level positions will be encouraged to initiate steps to move in new directions for providing student and learning supports. Thus, while the focus at this moment is on dissemination of information and ideas, the ultimate aim is to promote diffusion of a comprehensive and innovative system that enables all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

To aid districts in moving forward, we will facilitate development of networks for sharing information, data, ideas, processes, and lessons learned and will conduct leadership institutes. And, we will continue to develop resources to guide policy and practice, and as feasible, we will help to personalize efforts to fit the circumstances of the locale and setting.

With all this in mind, we have attached a brief response form to determine your interest in the initiative. Please take a few minutes to return it to us.



## Concluding Comments

While improved instruction is an absolute necessity, for too many youngsters it is not sufficient. The complexity of factors interfering with learning and teaching, especially for students growing up in poverty, underscores the need for a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports

The way a field frames its efforts determines how policy makers and planners address such efforts. If the current marginalization of student supports is to end, a framework that presents a coherent picture of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive set of interventions must be formulated and operationalized. Minimally, such a framework must delineate the essential scope and content focus of the enterprise. Clearly, this is a fundamental concern for school improvement. And, it should be a high priority for policy makers and, indeed, for anyone concerned about the future of students, their families, schools, and neighborhoods.

As John Dewey concisely pointed a century ago:

What the best and wisest parent wants for his [or her] own child,  
that must the community want for all of its children.  
Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely;  
acted upon, it destroys our democracy.



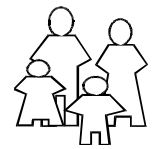
### For More on All this

Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. (2006). *The School Leader's Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Center for Mental Health in Schools. (2008). *Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports*. Los Angeles, CA: Author. *Online at* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemictransformation.pdf>







## Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

To provide some additional guidance for transforming student and learning supports, the Center at UCLA has compiled a new resource aid summarizing a set of frameworks. As with most Center resources, the document is immediately accessible online at no cost and with no restrictions on its use.\* The document outlines frameworks for reframing intervention, expanding school improvement policy, reworking infrastructure, and rethinking the implementation problem. Here, our focus is only on the matter of rethinking *intervention*. From our perspective, the primary message to carry away from the following discussion is the need to develop a comprehensive *system* of learning supports at every school.\*\*

### The Aim is to Build a Comprehensive System

As can be seen in Exhibit A, we begin by outlining *levels* of intervention. We do so to emphasize that a continuum is one facet of establishing, over time, a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach that strives to

- promote healthy development and prevent problems
- intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible
- assist with chronic and severe problems.

In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, we also emphasize that such a continuum encompasses efforts to enable academic, social, emotional, and physical development and to address behavior, learning, and emotional problems at every school and in every community.

As graphically illustrated in Exhibit A, (a) each level represents a subsystem, (b) the three subsystems overlap, and (c) all three require integration into an overall system.

### A Comprehensive System Requires Weaving School and Community Resources Together

The school and community examples listed in the exhibit highlight programs focused on individuals, families, and the contexts in which they live, work, and play. There is a focus on mental and physical health, education, and social services. Some of the examples reflect categorical thinking about problems that has contributed to fragmentation, redundancy, and counterproductive competition for sparse resources.

Moving away from fragmented approaches requires weaving together school and community efforts at each level of the continuum in ways consistent with institutionalized missions and sparse resources.

And, system building requires concurrent intra- and inter-program integration over extended periods of time.

Note that the continuum helps highlight the principle of using the least restrictive and nonintrusive forms of intervention necessary to respond appropriately to problems and accommodate diversity.

### Eventually, a Comprehensive System will Reduce the Number of Students Requiring Specialized Supports

Many problems are not discrete and must be addressed holistically and developmentally and with attention to root causes. An appreciation of these matters helps minimize tendencies to develop separate programs for each observed problem. In turn, this enables increased coordination and integration of resources which can increase impact and cost-effectiveness.

As graphically illustrated by the tapering of the three levels of intervention in the exhibit, development of a fully integrated set of interventions is meant to reduce the number of individuals who require specialized supports. That is, the aim is to prevent the majority of problems, deal with another significant segment as soon after problem onset as is feasible, and end up with relatively few students needing specialized assistance and other intensive and costly interventions. For individual students, this means preventing and minimizing as many problems as feasible and doing so in ways that maximize engagement in productive learning. For the school and community as a whole, the intent is to produce a safe, healthy, nurturing environment/culture characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, support, and high expectations.

## Each Level has Content

As can be seen in Exhibit B, we stress that a conceptualization of intervention that only focuses on a continuum is incomplete. For example, “mapping” done with respect to three levels of intervention does not do enough to escape the tendency to generate laundry lists of programs/services at each level. By combining the three system levels with the *content* focus of interventions, we generate a matrix framework to provide a prototype for a comprehensive system of learning supports. Such a matrix can guide and unify school improvement planning for developing such a system. The matrix provides a unifying framework for mapping what is in place and analyzing gaps. Overtime, such mapping and analyses are needed at the school level, for a family of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern of schools), at the district level, and community-wide.

## Continuum + Content = An Enabling Component

In our work, we operationalize a comprehensive system of learning supports as an *Enabling or Learning Supports Component* (see Exhibit C). This helps to coalesce and enhance programs with the aim of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. A critical matter is defining what the entire school must do to enable *all* students to learn and *all* teachers to teach effectively. School-wide approaches are especially important where large numbers of students are affected and at any school that is not yet paying adequate attention to equity and diversity concerns.

As indicated in the Exhibit, an enabling component involves first addressing interfering factors *and then* (re-)engaging students in classroom instruction. The

reality is that interventions that do not include an emphasis on ensuring students are engaged meaningfully in classroom learning generally are insufficient in sustaining, over time, student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.

In essence, beginning in the classroom with differentiated classroom practices and by ensuring school-wide learning supports, an Enabling Component

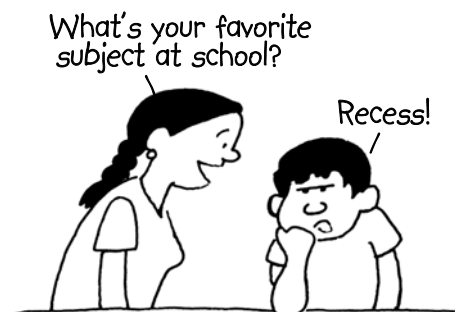
- addresses barriers through a broader view of “basics” and through effective accommodation of individual differences and disabilities
- enhances the focus on motivational considerations with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation as it relates to individual readiness and ongoing involvement and with the intent of fostering intrinsic motivation as a basic outcome
- adds remediation, treatment, and rehabilitation as necessary, but only as necessary.

To conclude: Clearly, these are important matters for the future of students, their families, schools, and neighborhoods. How a field frames its efforts determines how policy makers and planners address such efforts. If the current marginalization of student supports is to end, a framework that presents a coherent picture of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive set of interventions must be formulated and operationalized. Minimally, such a framework must delineate the essential scope and content focus of the enterprise.

\*The document entitled: *Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports* can be accessed directly – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemictransformation.pdf>

\*\*The Center has designed a *toolkit* to provide ready access to a set of resources for developing a comprehensive system of student/learning supports. Online at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

The toolkit contains the *Frameworks* document and also has a set of self-study surveys related to developing a comprehensive system of student/learning supports. One of these is a survey of “systems” designed to help determine the degree to which a comprehensive system is being developed. (Directly accessible at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Surveys/Set1.pdf> )



## Exhibit A

### Levels of Intervention:\*

#### Connected Systems for Meeting the Needs of All Students

#### **School Resources**

(facilities, stakeholders, programs, services)

Examples:

- General health education
- Social and emotional learning programs
- Recreation programs
- Enrichment programs
- Support for transitions
- Conflict resolution
- Home involvement
- Drug and alcohol education

- Drug counseling
- Pregnancy prevention
- Violence prevention
- Gang intervention
- Dropout prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Learning/behavior accommodations & response to intervention
- Work programs

- Special education for learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and other health impairments

#### **Community Resources**

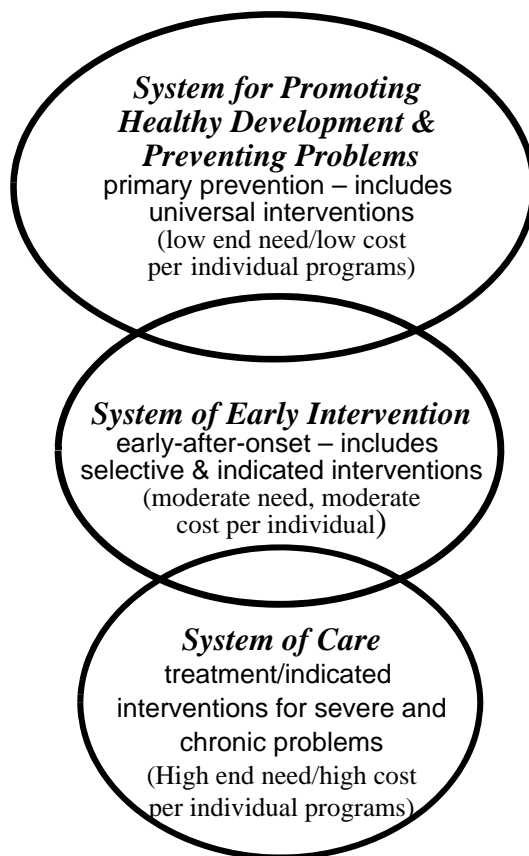
(facilities, stakeholders, programs, services)

Examples:

- Recreation & Enrichment
- Public health & safety programs
- Prenatal care
- Home visiting programs
- Immunizations
- Child abuse education
- Internships & community service programs
- Economic development

- Early identification to treat health problems
- Monitoring health problems
- Short-term counseling
- Foster placement/group homes
- Family support
- Shelter, food, clothing
- Job programs

- Emergency/crisis treatment
- Family preservation
- Long-term therapy
- Probation/incarceration
- Disabilities programs
- Hospitalization
- Drug treatment



Systemic collaboration is essential to establish interprogram connections on a daily basis and over time to ensure seamless intervention within each system and among *systems for promoting healthy development and preventing problems, systems of early intervention, and systems of care.*

Such collaboration involves horizontal and vertical restructuring of programs and services

(a) within jurisdictions, school districts, and community agencies (e.g., among departments, divisions, units, schools, clusters of schools)

(b) between jurisdictions, school and community agencies, public and private sectors; among schools; among community agencies

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\*Various venues, concepts, and initiatives permeate this continuum of intervention *systems*. For example, venues such as day care and preschools, concepts such as social and emotional learning and development, and initiatives such as positive behavior support, response to intervention, and coordinated school health. Also, a considerable variety of staff are involved. Finally, *note that this illustration of an essential continuum of intervention systems differs in significant ways from the three tier pyramid that is widely referred to in discussing universal, selective, and indicated interventions.*

**Exhibit B**

**Matrix for Reviewing Scope and Content of a Component to Address Barriers to Learning\***

**Scope of Intervention**

		System for Promoting Healthy Development & Preventing Problems	System for Early Intervention (Early after problem onset)	System of Care
Organizing around the <b>Content/ "curriculum"</b> (for addressing barriers to learning & promoting healthy development)	Classroom-Focused Enabling			
	Crisis/ Emergency Assistance & Prevention			
	Support for transitions			
	Home Involvement in Schooling			
	Community Outreach/ Volunteers			
	Student and Family Assistance			
		Accommodations for differences & disabilities	Specialized assistance & other intensified interventions (e.g., Special Education & School-Based Behavioral Health)	

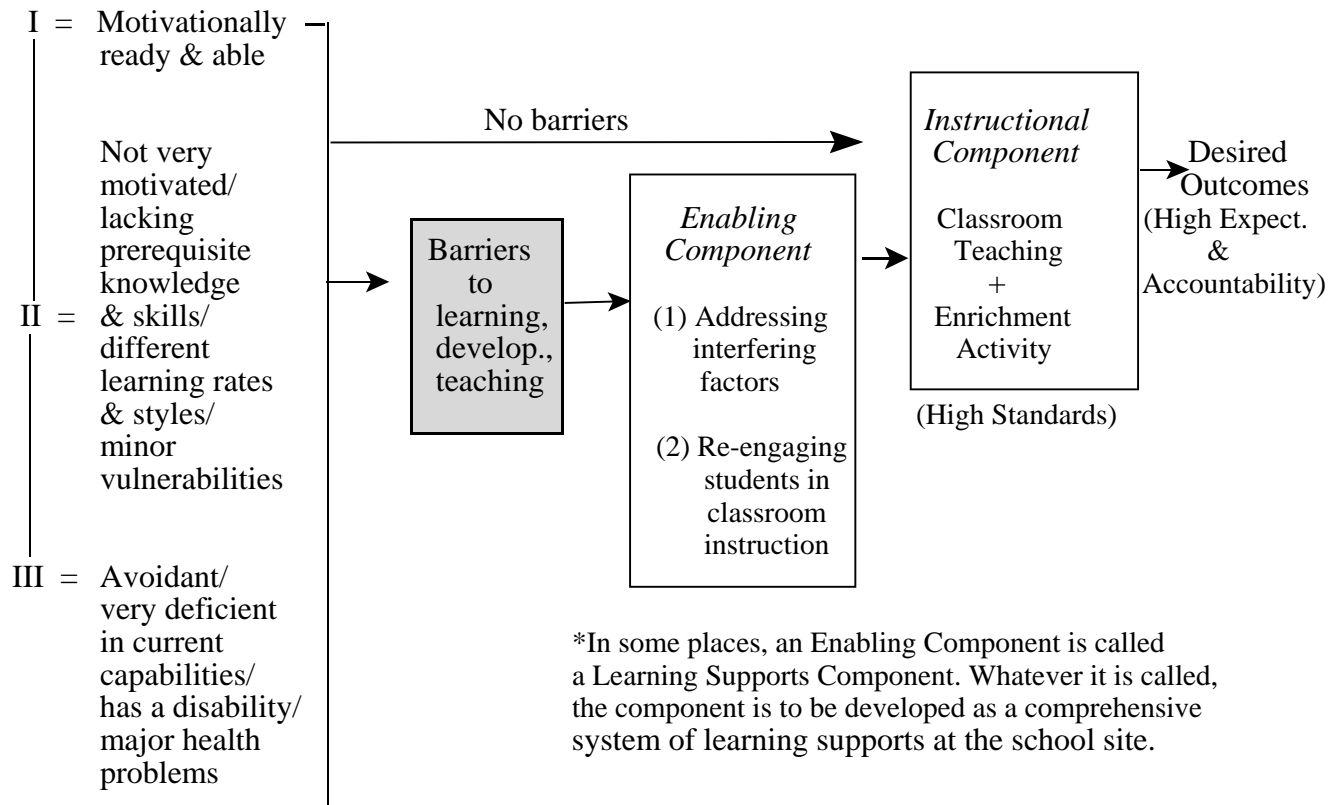
\*Note that specific school-wide and classroom-based activities related to positive behavior support, "prereferral" interventions, and the eight components of Center for Prevention and Disease Control's Coordinated School Health Program are embedded into the six content ("curriculum") areas.

## Exhibit C

### An Enabling Component to Address Barriers and Re-engage Students in Classroom Instruction\*

#### Range of Learners

(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction at any given point in time)



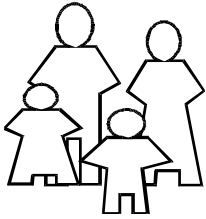
#### \*Examples of Risk-Producing Conditions that Can be Barriers to Learning

##### Environmental Conditions\*\*

##### Person Factors\*\*

<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>School and Peers</i>	<i>Individual</i>
>extreme economic deprivation	>chronic poverty	>poor quality school	>medical problems
>community disorganization, including high levels of mobility	>conflict/disruptions/violence	>negative encounters with teachers	>low birth weight/neurodevelopmental delay
>violence, drugs, etc.	>substance abuse	>negative encounters with peers &/or inappropriate peer models	>psychophysiological problems
>minority and/or immigrant status	>models problem behavior		>difficult temperament & adjustment problems
	>abusive caretaking		>inadequate nutrition
	>inadequate provision for quality child care		

\*\*A reciprocal determinist view of behavior recognizes the interplay of environment and person variables.



***Improving Schools, Engaging Students***

Support for the Center\* comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact the Center at:

E-mail: [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu) Ph: (310) 825-3634 Toll Free Ph: (866) 846-4843

Or write to:

Center for Mental Health in Schools,  
Dept. of Psychology, UCLA,  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

*Or use our website:*

**<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>**

**Most Center resources are immediately accessible online at  
no cost and with no restrictions on use.**

>For access to the latest Center developed resources, go to –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/review.htm>

\*The Center for Mental Health in Schools is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

## RESOURCE B

### **Guidelines for an Enabling or Learning Supports Component\***

#### ***1. Major Areas of Concern Related to Barriers to Student Learning***

- 1.1 Addressing common educational and psychosocial problems (e.g., learning problems; language difficulties; attention problems; school adjustment and other life transition problems; attendance problems and dropouts; social, interpersonal, and familial problems; conduct and behavior problems; delinquency and gang-related problems; anxiety problems; affect and mood problems; sexual and/or physical abuse; neglect; substance abuse; psychological reactions to physical status and sexual activity; physical health problems)
- 1.2 Countering external stressors (e.g., reactions to objective or perceived stress/demands/ crises/deficits at home, school, and in the neighborhood; inadequate basic resources such as food, clothing, and a sense of security; inadequate support systems; hostile and violent conditions)
- 1.3 Teaching, serving, and accommodating disorders/disabilities (e.g., Learning Disabilities; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; School Phobia; Conduct Disorder; Depression; Suicidal or Homicidal Ideation and Behavior; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; Anorexia and Bulimia; special education designated disorders such as Emotional Disturbance and Developmental Disabilities)

#### ***2. Timing and Nature of Problem-Oriented Interventions***

- 2.1 Primary prevention
- 2.2 Intervening early after the onset of problems
- 2.3 Interventions for severe, pervasive, and/or chronic problems

#### ***3. General Domains for Intervention in Addressing Students' Needs and Problems***

- 3.1 Ensuring academic success and also promoting healthy cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and resilience (including promoting opportunities to enhance school performance and protective factors; fostering development of assets and general wellness; enhancing responsibility and integrity, self-efficacy, social and working relationships, self-evaluation and self-direction, personal safety and safe behavior, health maintenance, effective physical functioning, careers and life roles, creativity)
- 3.2 Addressing external and internal barriers to student learning and performance
- 3.3 Providing social/emotional support for students, families, and staff

#### ***4. Specialized Student and Family Assistance (Individual and Group)***

- 4.1 Assessment for initial (first level) screening of problems, as well as for diagnosis and intervention planning (including a focus on needs and assets)
- 4.2 Referral, triage, and monitoring/management of care
- 4.3 Direct services and instruction (e.g., primary prevention programs, including enhancement of wellness through instruction, skills development, guidance counseling, advocacy, school-wide programs to foster safe and caring climates, and liaison connections between school and home; crisis intervention and assistance, including psychological and physical first-aid; prereferral interventions; accommodations to allow for differences and disabilities; transition and follow-up programs; short- and longer- term treatment, remediation, and rehabilitation)

(cont.)

- 4.4 Coordination, development, and leadership related to school-owned programs, services, resources, and systems – toward evolving a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of programs and services
- 4.5 Consultation, supervision, and inservice instruction with a transdisciplinary focus
- 4.6 Enhancing connections with and involvement of home and community resources (including but not limited to community agencies)

## **5. *Assuring Quality of Intervention***

- 5.1 Systems and interventions are monitored and improved as necessary
- 5.2 Programs and services constitute a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum
- 5.3 Interveners have appropriate knowledge and skills for their roles and functions and provide guidance for continuing professional development
- 5.4 School-owned programs and services are coordinated and integrated
- 5.5 School-owned programs and services are connected to home & community resources
- 5.6 Programs and services are integrated with instructional and governance/management components at schools
- 5.7 Program/services are available, accessible, and attractive
- 5.8 Empirically-supported interventions are used when applicable
- 5.9 Differences among students/families are appropriately accounted for (e.g., diversity, disability, developmental levels, motivational levels, strengths, weaknesses)
- 5.10 Legal considerations are appropriately accounted for (e.g., mandated services; mandated reporting and its consequences)
- 5.11 Ethical issues are appropriately accounted for (e.g., privacy & confidentiality; coercion)
- 5.12 Contexts for intervention are appropriate (e.g., office; clinic; classroom; home)

## **6. *Outcome Evaluation and Accountability***

- 6.1 Short-term outcome data
- 6.2 Long-term outcome data
- 6.3 Reporting to key stakeholders and using outcome data to enhance intervention quality

\* Adapted from: *Mental Health in Schools: Guidelines, Models, Resources, and Policy Considerations* a document developed by the Policy Leadership Cadre for Mental in Schools. This document is available from the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA; downloadable from the Center's website at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policymakers/guidelinesexecsumm.pdf> A separate document providing the rationale and science-base for the version of the guidelines adapted for learning supports is available at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/guidelinessupportdoc.pdf>



## RESOURCE C

### **Major Examples of Activity in Each Content Arena**

#### (1) Classroom-Based Approaches encompass

- Opening the classroom door to bring available supports in (e.g., peer tutors, volunteers, aids trained to work with students-in-need; resource teachers and student support staff work in the classroom as part of the teaching team)
- Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce need for out of class referrals (e.g. personalized instruction; special assistance as necessary; developing small group and independent learning options; reducing negative interactions and over-reliance on social control; expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices; systematic use of prereferral interventions)
- Enhancing and personalizing professional development (e.g., creating a Learning Community for teachers; ensuring opportunities to learn through co-teaching, team teaching, and mentoring; teaching intrinsic motivation concepts and their application to schooling)
- Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs (e.g., varied enrichment activities that are not tied to reinforcement schedules; visiting scholars from the community)
- Classroom and school-wide approaches used to create and maintain a caring and supportive climate

Emphasis at all times is on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others at school and reducing threats to such feelings.

#### (2) Crisis Assistance and Prevention encompasses

- Ensuring immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning
- Providing Follow up care as necessary (e.g., brief and longer-term monitoring)
- Forming a school-focused Crisis Team to formulate a response plan and take leadership for developing prevention programs
- Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts
- Creating a caring and safe learning environment (e.g., developing systems to promote healthy development and prevent problems; bullying and harassment abatement programs)
- Working with neighborhood schools and community to integrate planning for response and prevention
- Capacity building to enhance crisis response and prevention (e.g., staff and stakeholder development, enhancing a caring and safe learning environment)

#### (3) Support for Transitions encompasses

- Welcoming & social support programs for newcomers (e.g., welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions; peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers)
- Daily transition programs for (e.g., before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool)
- Articulation programs (e.g., grade to grade – new classrooms, new teachers; elementary to middle school; middle to high school; in and out of special education programs)
- Summer or intersession programs (e.g., catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs)
- School-to-career/higher education (e.g., counseling, pathway, and mentor programs; Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions; students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions (e.g., students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- Capacity building to enhance transition programs and activities

(cont.)

#### (4) Home Involvement in Schooling encompasses

- Addressing specific support and learning needs of family (e.g., support services for those in the home to assist in addressing basic survival needs and obligations to the children; adult education classes to enhance literacy, job skills, English-as-a-second language, citizenship preparation)
- Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home (e.g., opportunities at school for family networking and mutual support, learning, recreation, enrichment, and for family members to receive special assistance and to volunteer to help; phone calls and/or e-mail from teacher and other staff with good news; frequent and balanced conferences – student-led when feasible; outreach to attract hard-to-reach families – including student dropouts)
- Involving homes in student decision making (e.g., families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving)
- Enhancing home support for learning and development (e.g., family literacy; family homework projects; family field trips)
- Recruiting families to strengthen school and community (e.g., volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities; families prepared for involvement in school governance)
- Capacity building to enhance home involvement

#### (5) Community Outreach for Involvement and Support encompasses

- Planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources (e.g., public and private agencies; colleges and universities; local residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations; community policy and decision makers)
- Systems to recruit, screen, prepare, and maintain community resource involvement (e.g., mechanisms to orient and welcome, enhance the volunteer pool, maintain current involvements, enhance a sense of community)
- Reaching out to students and families who don't come to school regularly – including truants and dropouts
- Connecting school and community efforts to promote child and youth development and a sense of community
- Capacity building to enhance community involvement and support (e.g., policies and mechanisms to enhance and sustain school-community involvement, staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement, “social marketing”)

#### (6) Student and Family Assistance encompasses

- Providing extra support as soon as a need is recognized and doing so in the least disruptive ways (e.g., prereferral interventions in classrooms; problem solving conferences with parents; open access to school, district, and community support programs)
- Timely referral interventions for students & families with problems based on response to extra support (e.g., identification/screening processes, assessment, referrals, and follow-up – school-based, school-linked)
- Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance (e.g., school-based, school-linked, and community-based programs and services)
- Care monitoring, management, information sharing, and follow-up assessment to coordinate individual interventions and check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective
- Mechanisms for *resource* coordination and integration to avoid duplication, fill gaps, garner economies of scale, and enhance effectiveness (e.g., braiding resources from school-based and linked interveners, feeder pattern/family of schools, community-based programs; linking with community providers to fill gaps)
- Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services
- Capacity building to enhance student and family assistance systems, programs, and services

## SUPERINTENDENTS' INITIATIVE

### Interested in Networking/Sharing/Learning More About New Directions for Student Support?

Check off any of the following that are a good match with your interests:

\_\_\_ receiving regular information about the matters discussed in the report

\_\_\_ being part of a national listserv connecting professionals concerned  
with these matters

\_\_\_ convening a leadership institute focused on these matters

\_\_\_ having a further in-depth interchange with our Center about these or other  
matters of mutual interest and concern.

Other ideas:

Also, if you know of any districts that are already focusing on addressing barriers to learning and teaching in a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated way, please let us know so that we can contact them and let others know about them.

It is important to get the report into the hands of decision makers. You are free to share the report yourself. And, if there are others to whom you would like us to send the report, indicate their names and contact information below:

Finally, if you are in the process of taking any strategic local action related to these matters, please share it with us to share what is happening with others as a catalyst for change.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

*Thanks for completing this form. Return by FAX to (310) 206-8716.*

The Center for Mental Health in Schools is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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