

Below are the main talking points we use in initial discussions with policy makers and the media about the need to transform student and learning supports.

EIGHT POINTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT WHY SCHOOLS NEED TO TRANSFORM STUDENT AND LEARNING SUPPORTS

(1) An improved system of student and learning supports is an essential step in increasing attendance and graduation rates, teacher retention, student progress, reducing achievement gaps, and more.

(2) Transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development, and enhancing school climate; equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights.

(3) To date, all school improvement policy discussions and planning have marginalized efforts to fundamentally change how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re engage disconnected students. The result is an unsystematic, piecemeal, and fragmented set of relatively ineffective student and learning supports.

(4) As states and districts pursue higher curriculum standards and as Congress focuses on reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it is imperative to end such marginalization in order to enhance equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school and beyond and to ensure teachers have essential supports when they encounter learning, behavior, and emotional problems. (Teachers cannot do it alone!)

(5) Ending the marginalization of student and learning supports requires moving school improvement policy from a two to a three component framework. The current emphasis is mainly on instructional and management concerns; the third component that needs to be developed is a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system to enable schools to address the complex array of factors interfering with student performance and achievement.

(6) Available research underscores the need for such a shift in school improvement policy and practices. Research also provides frameworks for rethinking student and learning supports and moving in new directions.

(7) The specific aims are to transform student and learning supports in ways that

- (a) unify the many discrete practices and
- (b) guide development of a comprehensive learning supports component at school, district, and state levels.

(8) Trailblazing work along these lines is underway across the country. For example, the state education agency in Alabama has adopted a three component approach to school improvement and is well underway in guiding 40 of its districts in developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports. See

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

For more information on all this, see the webpages for the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports -

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

If anyone would like us to elaborate on these talking points, we can be reached at adelman@psych.ucla.edu or Ltaylor@ucla.edu .