

Task Forces Forming to Provide Recommendation for Re-opening Schools: Student/Learning Supports Leaders Need to be at the Table

If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. - Shirley Chisholm

As states explore what must be done to reopen schools, task forces are being established to formulate recommendations and plans.*

We note from their how their composition differs that they are likely to have different priorities.

While all will stress the importance of getting students back to school,

>some will approach school reopening primarily from the perspective of opening up the economy. Their immediate agenda for schools is child-care so parents can go back to work. Other matters undoubtedly will be discussed but as secondary concerns at this time

>some will have the ongoing physical health of students as their prime concern, with staff as a secondary consideration, and mental health problems perhaps as a third matter

>some, of course, have as their main agenda the urgency to return to school-based instruction

Our early analysis suggests that, as usual, the need to address the many students who will return with significant learning, behavior, and emotional problems is hardly an agenda item. We don't see an indication that those with expertise related to student/learning supports are well represented on the task forces.

The recommendations being made by tasks forces will influence budget decisions. As we have stressed, rather than wait to react as disproportionate reductions in force increase educational inequities, student/learning support staff, teachers, administrators, and all others concerned about equity of opportunity need to be proactive at this time. Task forces need to elevate priorities related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students. (See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/budgetx.pdf> .)

In general, we recommend that task forces have a work group consisting of those with expertise related to student/learning supports to recommend how schools will transition in and provide supports for all students and especially those who are experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.**

What lies ahead as schools re-open will certainly require innovation in order for schools to cope effectively. Student/learning supports will be needed more than ever. To meet the challenges, task force plans must focus on redeploying whatever school resources are available for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and then braid in whatever the community can add to help fill gaps. School re-opening presents challenges and opportunities. An agenda item for these task forces is to recommend how to weave currently fragmented sets of intervention into a unified system.

*Here are some links to descriptions of state task forces:

>New York State

<https://www.wkbw.com/news/coronavirus/new-york-state-education-department-to-create-task-force-to-guide-reopening-of-schools>

>Florida

<https://theapokvavoice.com/task-force-schools-reopening-affordable-child-care-keys-to-reviving-floridas-economy/>

- >Virginia
COVID-19.<https://www.wsls.com/news/local/2020/04/16/virginia-leader-named-co-chair-of-task-force-to-help-reopen-schools/>
- >North Carolina
<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article242377921.html#storylink=cpy>
- >South Carolina <https://columbiabusinessreport.com/news/education/78434/>
- >California <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr20/yr20rel27.asp>

**For an example of the type of group that has the necessary expertise, see the discussion of a Learning Supports Leadership Team – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource_coord_team.pdf