

To: **District and State Collaborative Network for Developing Comprehensive Systems for Learning Supports**

From: Howard & Linda

Re: More sharing of recent updates from folks across the country (January, 2014)

(1) Alabama

From the state department of education:

"We completed our seventh one-day institute yesterday and look forward to completing the remaining three on December 2, 3, and 10. Moving from the district level teams to school teams has been invigorating as we get responses back from teachers, counselors, and others at the school level. As we prepare to continue our work with the 10 pilots for the second part of the 2013-2014 school year, we look forward to the learning supports team meetings at the school level. Some districts are doing all of their schools and some are only doing schools in select feeder patterns. It varies based on the size of the district's student enrollment. Rhonda and I will actually attend school learning supports team meetings. All of the pilot districts will send their learning supports champion/team leader, attendance officer, and the person responsible for their Graduation Tracking System (GTS) to a meeting at the SDE on December 12 for us to talk about attendance and resources that we have to address it, reflections on our work to this point on the timeline, and to look at what we will be doing for the remainder of this school year.

After we have completed our meeting on December 12, we will start planning on a meeting to bring all the pilot districts back together in late April or early May. Rhonda and I will be doing three regional presentations on learning supports at the Council for Leaders in Alabama (CLAS) Assistant Principals Conference in January and February. Additionally, in February, we will host an awareness session for other Alabama school districts who are ready to start the implementation process. Because districts are so different, it is very important for us to have the opportunity to work with them individually and for us to physically go to the geographical location where they do their work. The staff members participating understand that they will have to go back to their schools and work with their colleagues to make sure the systemic change occurs and that learning supports become an inclusive part of how we do our work.

A special thank you for all the resources and information that you share with us to do our work in Alabama. We are excited when we see the enthusiasm exhibited by district/school personnel..."

(2) Arizona

From the trainer for learning supports in the Phoenix Unified High Schools District:

"We have completed 4, two hour PLC meetings with the Student Support Service staff on all 16 of our campuses. This includes 11 different job titles - with most of the 11 of the large campuses having 1 person in each position, and the 5 small schools at least having a counselor and social worker that travels between some of those, and some have their own. The categories are as follows:

- Behavior Intervention Specialist
- Community Liaison
- Counselor
- Destination Graduation Coach (Valley of the Sun, United Way position)
- ESL, Parent Student Liaison
- Native American Advisor
- Nurse
- Psychologist
- Social Worker

Student Liaison
Student Prevention Intervention Specialist

I have included the agenda for each of the meetings. We have created our first assessment for the Crisis Assistance and Prevention arena.”

(See their agenda and professional development format for learning supports by going to their section on *Where's It Happening* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm>)

(3) Minnesota

From the district Learning Supports Coordinator in Bloomington

“Principals are in the process of setting SMART goals for themselves that align with the district mission and vision. Several of our building principals have chosen goals related to the authentic implementation of Learning Supports and the three component framework within their buildings. Given that they had free rein to choose anything that aligned to the district mission/vision and Pathways to Graduation - we were so pleased they chose to have their performance as principals measured in this way.”

(3) California

From a colleague – excerpt from a draft related to state policy/funding

"Several organizations concerned with the equal opportunity for progress and success of all students in CA schools have organized into the Pupil Services Coalition (PSC). This coalition is composed of organizations representing some 330 thousand CA school professional educators and other interested human services professionals. Represented are Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credentialed practitioners (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists), Credentialed School Nurses and Health professionals, CA Teachers, Child Welfare and Attendance professionals, CA Professional Social Workers represented by their lobbyist , among others.

The mission of the PSC is the proper integration of Learning Supports in all schools as a unified and integral part (as are teaching and management) that are ultimately focused on providing the best possible learning and teaching environment to all students with an augmented focus on disadvantaged students. Learning Supports is not an expendable resource; its personnel should no longer continue to be among the first laid off when the budget is tight. The Learning Supports umbrella has lately been gaining a good amount of traction in parts of the country. "Learning Supports are the resources, strategies, and practices within a continuum of interventions that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school. Its aim is to systematically identify and address barriers to learning and teaching, and re engage students that have disconnected from the learning process." (UCLA/School Mental Health Project). The focus is on a broad range of barriers (neighborhood, family, school, and individual) and is intended to provide ways to help students overcome barriers and to reengage in classroom and school learning. The principal emphasis is to help each pupil to be successful in school. All Learning Supports programs should be designed in concert with the educational views of other members of the school staff and community: teachers, administrators, parents, key social agencies, and other community stakeholders.

Personnel of Learning Supports are composed of CA Credentialed: School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Nurses, and other Human Services Professionals and Paraprofessionals, and, where appropriate, community-based Professional Human Service Providers, including PPS and other internship students, and volunteers. Credentialed Learning Supports professionals are experienced in performing activities and services such as: Supervising LS staff;

enhancing home-school-community relations; mental health assessment, referral, and follow-through; personal and group counseling; properly guiding career and academic program choices, meeting foster youth needs; working with English learners and their families to access school and community resources and encourage their input; helping low income students and their families access resources in and out of school and encourage their input; and working to help students overcome the myriad barriers to learning and teaching that periodically confront all students and families and particularly the identified subgroups of students. ...

Among the eight State Priorities that must be addressed in school success plans, Learning Supports directly and indirectly supports all eight and is particularly directly focused on:

1. Student Engagement.
2. School Climate.
3. Parent Involvement.
4. The extent to which pupils have access to, and are enrolled in, a broad course of study.

To meet these priorities as intended, it is recommended that LEAs incorporate Learning Supports with part of the enhanced funding that is based on their demographic profile of the targeted students they serve. This should contribute to meeting districts' enhanced accountability requirements, since Learning Supports is the component capable of reaching those students who face the barriers that administrators and teachers cannot be expected to handle effectively.

1. Student Engagement: This is measured by multiple indicators and includes, but not limited to, rates associated with attendance, chronic absenteeism, drop out (middle and high school) and, high school graduation. ... Just as efforts to enhance instruction emphasize well delineated and integrated curriculum content, so must efforts by Learning Supports to address external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with that curriculum. Attendance is related to student engagement and is an appropriate focus of Learning Supports in order to ensure achievement, graduation, and preparation for life after secondary education - college, career-technical, military, work.

2. School Climate: This is measured by multiple indicators and includes, but not limited to student suspension and expulsion rates as well as other measures assessing safety and school connectedness. ... The focus is to fundamentally change school improvement policy and practice so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and beyond.

The aim here is to provide resources and expertise for: (a) Prevention - promoting healthy development and preventing problems; (b) Early Identification and Intervention - responding as early after problem onset as is feasible; and (c) Extended Assistance - providing for those whose serious, pervasive, and chronic problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

At schools, the content (or curriculum) of Learning Supports for addressing a full range of factors interfering with School Climate can be summarized into at least six classroom and school-wide arenas. (UCLA/SMHP). These focus on:

- enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems)
- supporting transitions (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)
- increasing home and school connections
- responding to, and where feasible, preventing crises
- increasing community involvement and support (outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
- facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed

3. Parent Involvement: This includes efforts made to seek parent input in making decisions for the school district and each individual school, including how the district will promote parental participation in programs for economically disadvantaged students, English learners, foster youth, and individuals with exceptional needs....

The Learning Supports intervention framework combines cultural awareness and a continuum of home, school, and community interventions to support diverse and multicultural parental input. Learning Supports works to enhance home involvement and engagement in schooling thus increasing and strengthening the home and its connections with school. In working with the family, and parents in particular, community engagement with schools is important to guide families who need community support, like freeing up time, to be more involved with their children's education. Student and family assistance will be needed to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed.

4. The extent to which pupils have access to, and are enrolled in, a broad course of study: This includes core subject areas (i.e., English, mathematics, social science, science, visual and performing arts, health, physical education, career and technical education, etc.) particularly the programs and services developed and provided to economically disadvantaged pupils, English learners, foster youth, and individuals with exceptional needs....

Summary and Recommendation:

In order for districts to meet enhanced accountability requirements of reaching all students and especially effectively reaching the targeted disadvantaged students, Learning Supports must be staffed and funded with part of the enhanced funding districts are provided. Activities and expenditures will vary as do district student characteristics and populations. As the number of Teachers and the number of Management personnel vary, so will the number and composition of Student Support personnel vary according to student demographics.

In order to meet the mandates of Local Control Funding Formula and provide better and effective schools for success of all students, especially those disadvantaged who have habitually fallen behind, all districts must employ and provide access in all schools to Credentialed Learning Supports personnel and their team. As mentioned expenditures will depend on the size of schools and the composition of student characteristics.

We are concerned that if Learning Supports is not incorporated as a unified component in schools, working with teachers and management, and with parents, agencies, and community stakeholders, the intent of this new and creative legislation will fall short of its intent to help all students.

We recommend that all districts and schools be required to staff and fund the necessary activities of Learning Supports in order to effectively help provide students' learning, physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports that affect their progress. This in turn should help district's meet their enhanced accountability requirements. The activities and expenditures can be determined in conjunction with leadership of the Learning Supports professionals, which many districts and schools currently employ. Leadership of the Pupil Services Coalition and the PPS Professional Professionals in particular are available for collaboration in helping determine Learning Supports costs associated with student composition and needs, staffing, and activities.