



# National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support

## Current Status January, 2006



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## ***Rethinking Student Support to Enable Students to Learn and Schools to Teach***

*Despite decades of discussion about ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, reformers have paid little attention to rethinking the way schools provide student supports. This national initiative is leading the way to change this state of affairs.*

### **Current Status of the Initiative**

#### **Summits**

After holding the national and several regional Summits, the initiative is now moving rapidly to schedule statewide Summits for *New Directions for Student Support*. As can be seen from the information on the internet, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Texas, California, Indiana, New York, Connecticut, Iowa, and Pennsylvania already have convened their Summits and are exploring ways to take next steps. Minnesota and Texas have followed-up their Summits with Leadership Institutes. A New Jersey Summit is scheduled for January 30, 2006. Other states are in the planning stages; others have contacted us to begin the discussion.

In addition to all this, various states and districts across the country already are initiating significant changes. For example, Hawai'i has pioneering legislation for its statewide efforts to establish a Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS), and Iowa has developed its design for systems of learning supports and is beginning implementation. In California, there is proposed legislation to establish a Comprehensive Pupil Learning Supports System.

Information about the activity around the country is online at  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/currentstatus.htm>

#### **Leadership Institutes**

The input we have received makes it clear that the next phase in states that have held statewide summits is to expand leadership capacity building and networking. Therefore, in August, we began conducting Leadership Institutes for New Directions for Student Support. The first was in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; the second was in September in Dallas, Texas. While the original intent was to work specifically with teams from schools and education agencies in each state, we have agreed to open the Leadership Institutes to individuals and teams from other states who are ready to move in New Directions for Student Support. We are now determining future interest.

See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/upcomingevents.htm#leadership>

#### **Policy Recommendations to Date**

At the 2002 National Summit, a set of recommendations were formulated calling for elevating policy to ensure development to full potential of student learning support systems (see Exhibit on following pages). Support for each has been forthcoming at the ensuing regional and state summits.

## **Exhibit 1**

### **Recommendation from the National Summit on New Directions for Student Support**

**Recommendation #1:** *Build multifaceted learning support systems that are developed into a comprehensive, cohesive component and are fully integrated with initiatives for improving instruction at every school.*

Policy action is needed to guide and facilitate development of a potent component to address barriers to learning at every school. Such policy should specify that an enabling or learning support component is to be pursued as a primary and essential facet of effective schools and in ways that complement, overlap, and fully integrate with initiatives to improve instruction and promote healthy development.

*Guidelines* accompanying policy actions for building a comprehensive component should cover how to:

- a) *phase-in* development of the component at every school in ways that build on what exists – incorporating best practices into a *programmatic approach*; (Such an approach should be designed to [1] enhance classroom based efforts to enable learning, including re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom learning and promoting healthy development, [2] support transitions, [3] increase home involvement, [4] respond to and prevent crises, [5] outreach to develop greater community involvement, and [6] provide prescribed student and family assistance.)
- b) expand standards and accountability indicators for school learning supports to ensure this component is fully integrated with the instructional component and pursued with equal effort in policy and practice; (This includes standards and indices related to enabling learning by increasing attendance, reducing tardiness, reducing problem behaviors, lessening suspension and dropout rates, abating the large number of inappropriate referrals for special education, etc. It also encompasses expanded standards and accountability related to the goals for increasing personal and social functioning, such as enhancing civility, teaching safe and healthy behavior, and character education.)
- c) restructure at every school and district-wide in ways that
  - redefine administrative roles and functions to ensure there is dedicated and authorized administrative leadership;
  - reframe the roles and functions of pupil services personnel and other student support staff in keeping with the functions that are required to develop the component;
  - redesign school infrastructures to (a) enable the work at each school site and (b) establish formal connections among feeder pattern schools to ensure each supports each other's efforts and achieves economies of scale;
  - redesign the central office, county, and state-level infrastructures so they support the efforts at each school and promote economies of scale;
  - establish a mechanism (e.g., a team) at every school, for each feeder pattern, and district-wide that plans, implements, and evaluates how resources are used to build the component's capacity;
  - build the capacity of administrators and staff to ensure capability to facilitate, guide, and support systemic changes related to initiating, developing, and sustaining such a component at every school;
  - broaden accountability at school and district-wide, assuring specific measures are (a) consonant with expanded standards and indicators and (b) yield data to evaluate the relationship between student support and academic achievement and enable cost-benefit analyses.
- d) *weave resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time*. Specifically, school and district staff responsible for the component should be mandated to collaborate with families and community stakeholders to evolve systems to 1) promote healthy development, 2) prevent problems, 3) intervene early to address problems as soon after onset as feasible, and 4) assist those with chronic and severe problems.

***Exhibit (cont.)***

**Recommendation #2:** *Amass and expand the research-base for building such a learning support component and establish the evaluation processes for demonstrating the component's long-term impact on academic achievement.*

Given the need to build on an evolving research base and given the demand by decision makers for data showing that student support activity improves student achievement, it is recommended that a large scale initiative be developed to address these matters.

Guidelines for such an initiative should specify that it is to

- clarify the need for learning supports and delineate frameworks that can guide development of a cohesive approach for addressing such needs; (Specific attention should be paid to the need to close the achievement gap, the promise to leave no child behind, and the necessity of addressing barriers to learning.)
- use the delineated frameworks to amass and extrapolate from existing data the current research-base for the component and for specific programs and services;
- provide a guide for districts as they refine their information management systems; the guide should delineate the broad base of data essential for evaluation and accountability of learning supports and ensure the data can be disaggregated appropriately;
- evaluate learning support activity by contrasting a sample of districts using traditional approaches with those pursuing new directions;
- describe and analyze models for new directions and document best practices.

To ensure the work is done in ways that mobilize the field, local, state, and national support would be invaluable. For example, the U.S. Department of Education could expand the work of its regional centers to encompass this initiative. State education agencies can encourage districts to play a role by expanding the accountability framework for schools and encouraging use of initial findings mainly for formative evaluation purposes until a comprehensive learning support component is in place.

## Resources to Advance New Directions

A Tool Kit of resources for the Initiative continues to expand (online and in hardcopy)  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkit.htm>

Recently added:

- >>“Example of a Formal Proposal for Moving in New Directions” (e.g., proposal to a Superintendent, Student Support Director, Principal, Board, etc. about Integrating a Comprehensive Approach for Addressing Barriers to Learning into School Improvement Planning)
- >>“Infrastructure for Learning Supports at District, Regional, and State Offices”  
As you can tell, things are moving along a good clip. As always, we value your input on how to maximize the initiative’s impact, including info on upcoming events where there could be an opportunity to engage decision makers in exploring New Directions.

## Some Practical Strategies that Can and Are Being Used to Create Readiness and Building Capacity

- (1) *Contacting and Making Presentations to Key Decision Makers.* Information, reports, tools, and more are being sent and presentations are being made by core group members to legislators, superintendents, principals, boards, at association meetings, etc.
- (2) *Direct Work with Districts.* This involves strategic work with those ready to move forward in new directions. (If you are associated with a district that is ready to move forward and want to explore ways we might be able to help, contact [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu) )
- (3) *Focusing on School Improvement Planning Guides and the Need for a Unifying Framework.* The goals is to ensure that school improvement planning guides fully incorporate learning supports to address barriers to student learning and development. From the responses to our Center’s recent policy reports on this matter, it seems clear many leaders in the field are ready to tune in to this need. The documents, which focus specifically on incorporating new directions thinking into school improvement planning, have been circulated widely. To access them, see
  - >School Improvement Planning: What’s Missing?  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsmissing.htm>
  - >Addressing What’s Missing in School Improvement Planning: Expanding Standards and Accountability to Encompass an Enabling or Learning Supports Component  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/enabling/standards.pdf>
  - >Another Initiative? Where Does it Fit? A Unifying Framework and an Integrated Infrastructure for Schools to Address Barriers to Learning & Promote Healthy Development  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf>
  - >Systemic Change for School Improvement: Designing, Implementing, and Sustaining Prototypes and Going to Scale  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/systemicreport.pdf>
- (4) *Getting Corwin Publications on New Directions into the Hands of Leaders.* Finally, we note that the two books published in July by Corwin Press in support of the New Directions Initiative are being sent to a sample of leaders who could play a key role in moving the Initiative forward. If there is someone to whom you think it would be valuable to send copies of the books, please let us know. If you aren’t familiar with these two resources, see
  - >The School Leader’s Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning – <http://www.corwinpress.com/book.aspx?pid=11343>
  - >The Implementation Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning – <http://www.corwinpress.com/book.aspx?pid=11371>