

## **Update: Minnesota Initiative: New Directions for Student Support - 9/7/04**

Hope you had some time to rest up over the summer and are ready for the new school year and for moving in New Directions for Student Support.

This is a follow up on the previously agreed upon strategies for moving the initiative forward in Minnesota.

First however, related to the imperative for moving in New Directions for Student Support, you might be interested in the following which was included in the Center's monthly electronic ENEWS.

### **The Plateau Effect**

Reports from across the country are verifying the earlier predictions that key facets of the No Child Left Behind reforms would result in modest immediate test score increases followed by a longer-term plateau. In an article in the Los Angeles Times (8/22/04), Bruce Fuller notes that after a steady few years climb in student achievement during the 1990s, states have experienced faltering achievement levels (e.g., Florida, Michigan, Texas). For those showing gains in the 1990s, he stresses "scores have barely budged in recent years." The most recent example is "the same sort of fade-out" in California where Jack O'Connell, the state's chief school officer, confirmed that a majority of California's schools have hit a plateau or worse. (Last year's test scores showed a decline in student proficiency in just under half the elementary schools in the state.)

Given the "*plateau effect*," two issues are emerging:

- (1) How to interpret why it's happening and
- (2) What to do about it.

In keeping with our Center's long-term focus on this matter, we continue to suggest that the plateau is inevitable as long as schools do not develop a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to student learning, and therefore, the problem requires an enhanced focus in policy and practice that results in every school moving toward a learning support system that is fully integrated into school improvement planning and implementation (see —<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/whynewdirectionsimperative.htm>).

What's your view about these two matters?

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Now on to some specific info on the Minnesota Initiative for New Directions for Student Support.

**#1. About the Social Marketing Campaign** aimed at specific groups and key leaders.

>>>Reports from around the state indicate those on this listserv have begun sharing info at conferences over the summer, and some have done presentations on New Directions for Student Support. Let us know what your experience was in sharing info and any support you need in taking next steps.

>>>Recently, a mailing was sent to key education leaders throughout Minnesota providing info

on the New Directions initiative and asking: "Where are you and Where are you going with regard to New Directions for Student Support?" To this point, all respondents have indicated that: "I think it is important to move in new directions;" and some have indicated "My school/district is ready."

As a follow-up, all respondents have been sent a few resources for enhancing readiness and momentum for new directions for student support. The emphasis is on how to proceed with much needed new directions in an era of scarce resources, that is, without an allocation of additional funds.

Here is what was sent and how it was described:

>I. *About Enhancing Readiness* – For those in situations where more attention to enhancing readiness is necessary, tools for enhancing readiness are listed below.

It may be useful to download, adapt, and share any of the following:

>>Brief "white papers" are in the document "New Directions for School & Community Initiative to Address Barriers to Learning : Two Examples of White Papers to Inform and Guide Policy Makers." Each of these brief papers offers a short overview along with talking points. (One is designed for urban districts and one for suburban districts.) Download at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/newdirectionsofschoolandcommunity.pdf>

>>Brief article from school board journal – "So you want higher achievement scores? Its time to rethink learning supports" (2002) by H.S. Adelman, & L. Taylor in The State Education Standard, (Autumn 2002) National Association of State Boards of Education, Alexandria, VA. (On our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> "Summits: Concept Papers")

>>A question and answer formatted brief document: "New Directions for Student Support: A Comprehensive Student Support System - Q & A" <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/q&a.pdf>

>>Also see the documents developed for the Outreach Campaign - online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/outreachcampaign.htm>

>>Others that can be useful with select audiences are:

"Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance Schools' Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning" - online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/boardrep.pdf>

"Where's it Happening? New Directions for Student Support" - online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/overview.pdf>

## >II. *Enhancing Momentum*

For schools or districts ready to move, the various tools listed above also can be helpful; some other tools specifically related to enhancing momentum are listed below:

>>Expanding on the "white papers" is the concept paper "New Directions for Student Support" - online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentssupport/newdirections.pdf>

>>"About Infrastructure Mechanisms for a Comprehensive Learning Support Component" has

ideas for leadership, resource coordination, and working with a feeder pattern to improve learning support. Download at - [http://smhp.psych.edu/pdffdocs/infrastructure/infra\\_mechanisms.pdf](http://smhp.psych.edu/pdffdocs/infrastructure/infra_mechanisms.pdf).

>>For a range of specific aids, see "Resource Aids for Rethinking Student Support to Enable Students to Learn and Schools to Teach" - (a tool kit that includes a copy of the above Concept Paper) - online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/studentsupport/studentsupport.pdf>

For example, one of the tools is the "Guidelines for a Student Support Component" - online separately at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/studentsupportguidelines.pdf> (The guidelines have a supporting document outlining rationale and research- online at -- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/guidelinessupportdoc.pdf>)

With respect to policy, see the "Example of Legislation for a Comprehensive Student Support Component" <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> "Summits: Example of Legislation"

For those who are interested in moving forward, we underscore that the UCLA Center is federally-funded and thus has a variety of ways (materials, TA, training) to help efforts to move in new directions for student support. (Most of the Center's resources are available at no cost and others require only reimbursement of Center costs).

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**#2.** The second strategic focus of the Minnesota Initiative for New Directions for Student Support is to identify any school districts that have begun to make systemic changes in policy and/or practice. The goal remains that of sharing info on such work as it moves along.

It is time for everyone to make inquiries about "Where It's Happening in MN!"

What are local schools and districts doing to strengthen learning support in major ways (e.g., please share any policy statements for a learning support component; infrastructure designs for pursuing such a component; comprehensive learning support frameworks and any related guidelines, standards, accountability indices, leadership job descriptions, etc.)?

As we receive the info, we will circulate it, and details on major examples of new directions also will be compiled into the online document entitled "Where's it Happening? New Directions for Student Support." And, of course, these are highlighted at each statewide summit.

One of the districts featured in "Where's it Happening?" is St. Paul Public Schools. The contact person, Kevin Hogan, has informed us that the work continues under an organizational restructuring. There is now a separate Office of Student Services in St. Paul headed by Raymond Yu. The office will coordinate the work of counseling and guidance, student wellness, student placement centers, and soon the social workers will be joining. Kevin is optimistic about this restructuring in moving student support in more effective directions. If you want to learn more, you can contact Kevin at [kevin.hogan@spps.org](mailto:kevin.hogan@spps.org).

Good luck with the new school year. And, let's work to make great stride with the MN initiative for New Directions for Student Support.

We look forward to your info and ideas.

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