New Directions for Student Support Initiative*

Texas’ Statewide Summit
In Austin on September 27, 2004

The Texas Summit was held in Austin on September 27, 2004.**

Summit goals include:

1. Clarifying basic frameworks for new directions in student support
2. Highlighting where it is happening
3. Mobilizing local action toward new directions for student support
4. Providing resource aids for moving forward
5. Developing a mechanism within the state for supporting new directions for student support.

Objectives for the day were to:

C Clarify new directions thinking about the nature of student support through clarifying four fundamental problems that must be addressed in pursuing New Directions (i.e. the policy problem, the intervention frameworks problem, the infrastructure problem, the systemic change problem).

C Highlight ways to enhance the policy and practice priority status of this component of schools

C Foster an exchange of information about policy and practice around the country

C Facilitate proactive strategic planning and problem-solving for next steps state-wide and at local levels related to moving student support from the margins to a central position in school improvement policy and planning

*The New Directions for Student Support Initiative is sponsored by the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. Appendix A lists the co-sponsors and offer a brief description of the initiative. More information on the Initiative is at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

**Appendix B is a list of attendees, as well as a list of others throughout the state who were
unable to attend, but indicated interest in new directions.

**Participant Perspectives**

Based on the discussion and written input, participants stressed:

1. **Evidence of a “Plateau Effect” Increases the Urgency for Pursuing New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching**

   The urgency for systemic changes stems from the data on test scores, dropouts, graduation rates showing the reality of how many students are not profiting from the exclusionary focus on improving instruction. Moreover, evidence is increasing that achievement test score averages tend to plateau after a few years of initial gains.

   Without a major focus on effectively addressing barriers to learning and teaching, too little attention is devoted to classroom and school-wide programs for engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning. Comprehensive approaches to these matters, not just greater attention to controlling behavior, must be a central focus of leaving no child behind.

   Given there will be mid-course corrections to the No Child Left Behind Act, it is imperative to stress new directions for learning supports as essential to efforts to raise test scores and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Based on student data, a learning support component should be included in all school improvement planning and implementation.

2. **New Directions: Not New Resources**

   New directions is about leadership for systemic changes that use existing resources more effectively.

   Strong leadership at the school and district is needed to

   C develop mechanisms for consistent planning to integrate a broad range of resources and personnel for learning supports (e.g., horizontal and vertical teams such as a Learning Supports Resource Team at each school and a Learning Supports Resources Council for each feeder pattern)

   C facilitate integration of instructional and learning supports personnel at building and district levels to map existing resources for learning supports, do a gap analysis, set priorities for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, and so forth

   C determine the cost-benefits of sharing resources to achieve economy of scale (e.g., the high school and it’s feeder schools in a neighborhood)

   C review school improvement plans to determine if they appropriately include a focus on learning supports, and if not, take steps to correct the oversight

   C reach out strategically, as needed, to community resources. In doing so, focus on *integration of resources* at each school, not just coordination.
3. Across the State, Existing Practices Provide a Foundation Upon which to Build

Schools across Texas offer examples of outstanding programs to build on in pursuing systemic changes, especially with respect to prevention and early intervention. It is the case that these are fragmented because they are marginalized in schools and districts. This can change by adopting an umbrella concept such as addressing barriers to learning and use of broad frameworks to connect learning supports and instruction. Throughout, it is important to show clear connections to data on what students need to be successful. Under one umbrella, the focus can be on a comprehensive approach to learning supports that enables students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Next Steps in Moving Forward in Texas

Participants were eager to move ideas into action and to set priorities on where to start. The following were key comments and suggestions:

C Reach Out Again to Influential State Professional and Community Organizations
(e.g., school boards; PTA; Teachers Associations; Administrators Associations; all pupil service organizations; United Way, League of Women Voters, Mayors, Chambers of Commerce etc.).

The goal is to enhance their involvement in the New Directions for Student Support Initiative. Encourage them to share information through their websites, newsletters, and at meetings. (Once a state-wide Steering group is functional, the UCLA Center can facilitate communications from the Steering Group to relevant organizations.)

C Embed New Directions for Student Support in Training and in Accountability Documents

It was recognized that work would have to be undertaken with University preservice and inservice programs (and with researchers as well). And, it was suggested that eventually the initiative should explore ways to have the Association of School and College Accreditation address this matter.

C About creating readiness and building capacity for change

Immediate contact should be made with all state associations concerned with schools. In this era of dwindling resources, it is essential to stress that enhanced student outcomes can be achieved through positive systemic changes that use existing resources in more effective ways. Early emphasis should be on emphasizing need and feasible strategies, including clarifying the flexibility that exists under current local, state, and federal policies for reshaping learning supports. Clarify strategies for braiding resources and provide ongoing technical assistance to move forward. All this can help show that working toward a cohesive and comprehensive learning
supports component is permitted and encouraged.

C **Determine if the State Education Agency can play a greater leadership role related to new directions for student support**

For example, identify what systemic changes would foster new directions for students support (credentialing/licensing requirements; job descriptions, inservice training for learning support and instructional staff, development of standards and expanded accountability for student support, etc). Regional Centers might provide the support for mapping existing resources and moving toward comprehensive and integrated learning supports.

C **Prepare a document that clarifies Texas’ New Directions for Student Supports Initiative**

Have a work group develop a brief document clarifying what would New Directions would mean and look like in terms of content and infrastructure at a school and at the district level. Develop examples for rural, suburban, and urban districts

C **Share the information at multiple venues** (association meetings, staff development conferences, inservice training, etc).

Begin a process that brings a broad range of key leaders on board (e.g., Superintendents, School Boards, Directors of Special Education/Student Support/Title I, Unions, etc.). This means formulating an effective message to them and outlining ways to proceed that they will see as a good use of their time and energy. This should be the focus of an early work group. A goal here is to ensure that a learning supports component is included in every school’s school improvement plan.

C **Build leadership capacity**

Ask those involved in pre- and in-service professional preparation and those providing technical assistance (institutions of higher education, TA centers) to include a focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and on responding to such barriers with a comprehensive learning supports component. Enlist their involvement in the Texas New Directions for Student Support Initiative.

To facilitate capacity building, work groups could identify:
- efforts around the state that reflect major systemic changes toward new directions for student support and best practices related to resource use and learning supports component development
- benchmarks to keep systemic changes on track (e.g., establishment of supportive policies, waivers to facilitate braiding of funds, inservice training).
- out-of-state places moving in new directions for student support (e.g., Iowa, Hawai`i, Madison, etc.).
Who is Ready to Take the Lead in Moving the Initiative Forward?

Participants discussed the need for mechanisms focused specifically on moving forward with the new directions initiative. (How to set the process in motion? Who would take the lead?)

It was recognized that a steering and work groups are needed.

(1) Steering Group to Guide Next Steps

This group should assume ownership of the initiative and commit to championing, leading, and guiding the process in ways that ensure effective systemic change and sustainability. It’s first functions would include:

> identifying, establishing, and providing direction to work groups
>
>ratifying the “brief” that provides an overview of the need for and general concepts for moving in new directions.
>
>supporting, reviewing and, as appropriate, ratifying work group products.

The UCLA Center will facilitate organization of the Steering Group over the next 1-2 months.

Note: For a steering group to be most effective, its ultimate membership should consist of high level “power brokers” who have the vision, commitment, position, and status to lead in new directions and also clear away barriers to progress. And, it helps to have some staffing resources to support implementation of steering functions and facilitate work group efforts can be volunteered by the organizations represented on such a group.

The following Summit participants indicated willingness to be part of a statewide steering group:

Ramon Abarca, Superintendent, Uvalde Consolidated ISD
Kathy Armenta, Associate Clinical Professor, University of Texas School Social Work
Sally Arthur, Director Educational Support Services, Humble ISD
Carol Bennets, Katy ISD
Stephanie Blanck, Special Education Director, Georgetown ISD
Nancy Chavkin, Prof./Director, Richter Institute for School Work Research, Texas State Univ.
Jill Darling, Student Assistant Programs Director, Richardson ISD
Lupita Garcia, Director Parent/Student Services, Irving ISD
Estella Garza, Coordinator, San Antonio ISD
Maria (Chris) Garza, Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans
Evelyn Henry, Director, Houston ISD
P. J. Holland, Director of Student Development, McKinney ISD
Peggy Hood, Assistant Director Special Education, Humble ISD
Linda Meigs, SAIL Coordinator, Georgetown ISD
Brenda Melton, Past President American School Counselor Association, San Antonio ISD
John Moore, Executive Director, Office of Educational Support Services, Austin ISD
Robert Muller, Executive Director, Student Services, Killeen ISD
Debra Rimmer-Mayorga, Interim Asst. Superintendent Student Support Services, Houston ISD
Cynthia Schiebel, Director Student Support Services, Eanes ISD
Jennifer Scott, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative and Pupil Services, Longview ISD
If you would like to join the steering group, please fax us the response form enclosed.

Others interested in working on next steps, include:

Stan Brein, Grant Specialist, Austin ISD
Sandra DeLaCruz, Executive Director Pupil Support, Grand Prairie ISD
Pam Faulkner, SDFSC Coordinator, ESC2
Sancy Fuller, Special Populations Coordinator, McKinney ISD
Steve Hamman, Assistant Director of Special Education, Austin ISD
Robert Jaklich, Executive Director, Harlandale ISD
Janie Livas, Director of Federal Programs, Edcouch Elsa ISD
Angie Pena, Special Education Director, Edcouch Elsa ISD
John Washington, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services & Community Relations, Garland ISD
Willie Zavala, Superintendent, Harlandale ISD

Others “nominated” to join the efforts:

Mary Cardiff, Round Rock ISD
Linda Bloomquist, Williamson Co Prob. Dept.
Pat Workman, Director of Special Student Services, Richardson ISD
Cory Green, Texas Education Agency
Marcus Nelson, Austin ISD
Nolan Estes
Annell Todd
Michelle McComb, Texas Department of Health
Gwen Johnson, Houston ISD
Ted Moore, McKinney ISD
Mike Moses
Rosemarie Allen, Dallas ISD
Shirley Neely, Commissioner, Texas Education Agency
George Fair, UT, Dallas
Betty Baitland, Sptd., Fort Bend ISD
Gene Green, U.S. Congress

Organizations that should be included:

Texas Association of Student Assistance Professionals
State Attorney Generals Office
Texas School Nurse Administrators
National Education Association
American Federation of Teachers
Association of Compensatory Education
Healthy Student, Healthy Schools
Commissioners Cabinet
Texas legislature
National Association of Student Assistance Professionals
Juvenile Justice Programs
Texas School Counseling Association
Texas Association of School Psychologists
Texas School Nurse Association
Texas Social Work Association
National Elementary School Principals Association
(2) Work groups

Work groups will be formed to flesh out specific ideas about new directions and about how to get from here to there. Facilitators for each work group should be established to ensure group effectiveness and cross-group communication and to interface with the steering group. Given that groups will include individuals from around the state, the process would use email, supplemented by U.S. mail, FAX, and phone.

Examples of work group products might be a series of briefs that provide an overview about the need and possible nature of new directions for student support.

> clarify existing resources and concerns about how they are currently deployed

> outline a comprehensive intervention learning supports framework for new directions

> describe how existing infrastructure might be reframed at all levels so that new directions are pursued effectively

> clarify what must happen to get from here to there (how to effect necessary systemic changes)

As a participant or someone who is interested in New Directions for Student Support, we encourage you to send a copy of this document to anyone or any organization that you feel should be part of the network of people and programs that is coming together around this important matter.
Appendix A

The *New Directions for Student Support Initiative* is sponsored by the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA* and is co-sponsored by:

- American School Counselors Association
- American School Health Association
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- California Association of School Psychologists
- California Center for Community School Partnerships
- California Department of Education
- Center for Cooperative Research and Extension Services for Schools
- Center for Prevention of Youth Violence, Johns Hopkins University
- Center for School Mental Health Assistance at the University of Maryland at Baltimore
- Center for Social and Emotional Education
- Coalition for Cohesive Policy in Addressing Barriers to Development & Learning
- Coalition for Community Schools
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
- Education Development Center
- Indiana Department of Education
- Johns Hopkins University Graduate Division of Educ.
- Minnesota Department of Public Instruction
- National Alliance of Pupil Service Organizations
- National Association of Pupil Services Administrators
- National Association of School Nurses
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of Social Workers
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Center for Community Education
- National Middle Schools Association
- Policy Leadership Cadre for MH in Schools
- Regional VII Comprehensive Center
- School Social Work Association of America
- Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

*The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Department of Psychology, UCLA.

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Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration (Project #U93 MC 00175), with co-funding from the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
Both are agencies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
About the Summits Initiative

The Summits Initiative: *New Directions for Student Support* is designed as a strategic effort to move student support efforts in new directions and into a central position in improving schools and enhancing outcomes for all students. It represents a major response to the growing and widespread imperative for closing the achievement gap and leaving no child behind.

The initiative already has mobilized a great deal of interest and energy from educational leaders and school staff and from their organizations across the country. (There are currently 31 co-sponsoring groups.) At this stage, the emphasis is on increasing proactive advocacy for *New Directions for Student Support*, building a leadership network nationally and in every state, and delineating specific recommendations and action steps for getting from here to there.

The Initiative began in October 2002 with a national Summit. This was followed by a series of regional summits. Based on the exceptional response, the decision was made to proceed with state-wide summits. Indiana was the fourth of these, following Minnesota, Wisconsin, and California. Several other states are in the planning stages. At an appropriate time, a policy makers’ summit on student support will be organized to clarify new directions and encourage adoption of major recommendations.

Throughout the process, efforts across the country to move in new directions are being identified and showcased. Technical assistance and training for localities and states is being provided. And, mutual support networks are being developed for sharing of effective practices, lessons learned, and data on progress.

*While all Summit information can be accessed at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu) and many stakeholders already have received the introductory pamphlet on the initiative and some other documents, attached to this report are several key documents for sharing with others. These are (1) an overview about the initiative and the concept paper entitled *New Directions for Student Support*, (2) a document outlining *Guidelines for a Student Support Component*, and (3) the Executive Summary of the Report from the National Summit. Please feel free to copy and share any of these and refer colleagues to the information on the website (which includes examples of “Where it’s Happening” and a growing tool kit to facilitate the process).*
Appendix B
Summits Initiative:
New Directions for Student Support
Texas, September 27, 2004

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Summits Initiative:
New Directions for Student Support
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