

July, 2009

From: Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor
Co-Directors of the Center at UCLA

Re: Update *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support & Collaboration* with Scholastic Inc. on the *Rebuilding for Learning Initiative*

With the increasing interest in addressing barriers to learning and engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning, the initiatives for moving in new directions are having a growing impact.

Here some major things that are happening:

(1) Strategic Focus on the States

As states play a greater leadership role in capacity building for school improvement and transformation, the opportunity increases for focusing strategically on how they address mental health in schools and behavior, learning, and emotional problems.

Examples of recent and ongoing work by the initiatives related to influencing leaders at the state level:

(a) *Analyses of and for State Education Agencies* – The UCLA center prepared a major policy and practice brief entitled: ***State Education Agencies & Learning Supports: Enhancing School Improvement*** <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/seals.pdf> . It has been distributed widely across the country. The Center has followed this up with distribution of a set of guidance notes on how to take first steps in making such a system an essential component for school improvement and student success – online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/firststeps.pdf>) The next follow-ups will come from the work with CCSSO and AASA (see below).

(b) *National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Forum for State Health Policy Leadership* – The center did a webinar presentation to state legislators for NCSL on June 12. This provides another entree for sending legislators additional information about new directions.

(c) *Louisiana* – Work is underway in Louisiana to develop a statewide design for a system of learning supports that eventually can be replicated in every school. The center is doing this as our first on site collaboration with Scholastic Inc. In March, an overview of this transformative work was presented to Superintendent Pastorek and his senior staff by the team from UCLA and Scholastic. It was well received. At the conclusion of the meeting, Deputy Superintendent Tyler was given the charge to implement the initiative as a part of the department's focus on school improvement. While the Scholastic-UCLA team will play a key supportive role, this is a Louisiana Department of Education effort. Donna Nola-Ganey has been asked to take the lead in convening a design team to produce a design document followed by a strategic plan for systemic change and widespread replication. The team has begun its work. The work is driven by the reality that school improvement efforts need leadership and guidance related to enabling all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at schools, thereby reducing dropout rates and the achievement gap. The aim is to provide schools with a design for braiding and developing all available resources in ways that better address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

In connection with this work, the center has just completed and delivered a working draft of a *Guide for Team Designing a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Reengage Disconnected Students*. If you are interested in seeing this guide, let us know.

(d) *Iowa* – the chief state school officer continues to move forward with the design for a system of learning supports based on the new directions work. The UCLA Center co-directors went to Iowa for a July 8th special meeting focused on aligning and coalescing various special efforts underway in the state. Leaders were brought in from across the country, as well as consultants from the REL Midwest, West Wind Education Policy Inc., and the National Implementation Research Network with the goal of “moving Iowa closer to its vision of a cohesive system of PK-12 education that ensures all Iowa students develop the knowledge and skills needed for the world of work, for lifelong learning, and for civic responsibility in the 21st Century, as outlined in the Iowa Core Curriculum.”

(e) *Wisconsin* – In returning to Wisconsin, the initiatives are taking a different approach. The focus is on beginning regionally with leadership institutes. The first is on July 22 for superintendents in Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 2 and with invitations to key leaders from the several other districts (e.g., Oshkosh) and the Department of Public Instruction, the state administrator’s association, and the 12 CESA executive directors.

(f) *National Administrators Associations* – Both the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) have indicated interest in using new directions prototypes delineating a comprehensive system of student and learning supports to advance the work of the country’s educational leadership. In August, CCSSO plans to use a webinar to feature the work. Then, a cadre of states will be chosen to work with the UCLA-Scholastic Team as a first phase of roll-out. Discussions with AASA are underway to identify next steps for their constituencies. The work with CCSSO and Scholastic is helping to guide us to which states are the logical next ones to approach (e.g., Ohio, Vermont, etc.). And, Scholastic has synthesized frameworks for new directions into a new handbook for Leadership Institutes entitled: *Rebuilding for learning: Addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging students*. (2009, H. Adelman & L. Taylor).

(2) Guest Columns

Requests are coming in to do guest columns about the work. This month two were published: One in the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) magazine *The School Administrator*; the other in the American Academy of Pediatrics’ *Developmental and Behavioral Newsletter*.

(3) Learning Supports and Small Schools

In May, the center completed and distributed a policy and practice analysis brief entitled:

Learning Supports and Small Schools
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/learningsupportssmallschools.pdf>

The focus of this brief report is on: *How do small schools provide student and learning supports and how can they do it better?* The report begins with a brief description of the current movement toward establishing small schools. Then, the problem small schools confront in trying to address barriers to learning and teaching is outlined. Finally, recommendations are offered for how small schools can enhance learning supports.

This brief draws on previous policy and practice analyses done by the Center, other reports and analyses available online, and some perspectives solicited directly from colleagues working at state departments, districts and schools, and professional associations.

(4) ESEA Reauthorization

The initiatives continue to focus on the ESEA reauthorization. In this context, there are frequent calls for “a comprehensive approach” to student supports. However, it continues to be the case that, too often, what is being identified as comprehensive is not comprehensive enough.

The *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* & the collaboration with Scholastic Inc. on the *Rebuilding for Learning Initiative* stress what does and doesn’t constitute a comprehensive *system*, and we are soliciting and synthesizing other views about how to get beyond limited and limiting approaches that tend to focus primarily on:

- >connecting some community services to schools
- >enhancing coordination of fragmented efforts
- >grouping existing programs under some form of a sequential tiered continuum
(A continuum is necessary but insufficient for moving beyond a fragmented listing of the many programs, services, and initiatives related to student and learning supports.)

All these are relevant matters. But, a comprehensive approach must include a concept that organizes what might be thought of as the content focus of student and learning supports. See, for example,

- >[What is a Comprehensive Approach to Student Supports?](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whatiscomp.pdf)

For a fuller appreciation of what is involved in developing a comprehensive *system*, see:

- >[Frameworks for Transforming How Schools Offer Student and Learning Supports](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemictransformation.pdf)

Also, see the resources for new directions that have been gathered together as a “toolkit.”

All are free and easy to access online at

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

(5) Schools as Centers of the Community

In support of new directions, the Spring Issue of Center Journal/Newsletter was devoted to how the work relates to the federal emphasis on the place of communities in school reform. The lead article is entitled: *Schools as Centers of the Community: Moving Forward in Hard Times*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Newsletter/spring09.pdf>

(6) Ready to Move Forward? Let Us Hear from You!

If you are associated with a state or district that is ready to move forward and want to explore ways we might be able to help, contact Ltaylor@ucla.edu

And, let us know about any places that have gone beyond the three tier continuum in framing a comprehensive system.

Also, remember that the Center continues to develop new and free resources related to efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching, including motivational factors. (For easy online access, go to the Center homepage at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> – click on *Resources and Publications*; for the new resources, click on *What’s New*.) The online clearinghouse Quick Finds also provide ready access to key Center resources as well as to links to resources and other centers around the country.)



***ABOUT THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE:
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT SUPPORT**

For details about the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support*, go to
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ndannouncement.htm>

A brief overview is provided below:

In 2002, our Center at UCLA launched the National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support. We began with a national Summit and followed this (in 2003) with several regional Summits to raise awareness and create readiness for change. In 2003 we also began a targeted set of state Summits (these have occurred in 13 states to date)

Then, in 2005, we added strategies not only to enhance dissemination but to encourage and support diffusion as we provide indepth follow up for those places indicating readiness to move forward in developing a comprehensive new directions approach. To date, this work has included providing (1) Leadership Institutes for district teams and (2) onsite capacity building with specific state departments of education and districts.

In 2006, encouraged by the growing success of the New Directions initiative, the Center at UCLA established a public-private collaboration with Scholastic, Inc. as part of Scholastic's Community Affairs *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative. In 2007 and the first part of 2008, Scholastic has been (1) preparing a handbook based on our work related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging students and (2) developing a special website. In the last part of 2008, we will begin to conduct a series of Leadership Institutes beginning in the Gulf states and also for national and state superintendents/administrators associations, Council of Chief State School Officers, etc.

Over 2007 and 2008, we increased our outreach to district superintendents/leaders and began to focus on higher education's role in personnel preparation for educators.

Superintendents Initiative. With respect to district leaders, widespread outreach mailings were sent including a range of brief resources and with follow up materials sent to those who responded. As of August, 2008, the focus on connecting with superintendents will be expanded into a formal *Superintendents Initiative*. The initiative will be inaugurated with national distribution of a Center report entitled: *Transforming School Improvement to Develop a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: What District Superintendents Say They Need to Move Forward*.

Higher Education Initiative. With respect to higher education's role in personnel preparation for educators, July 2008 inaugurated a *Higher Education Initiative*. This began with a first Leadership Institute for Higher Education Personnel Preparation and with the national distribution of the report entitled: *Preparing All Education Personnel to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*. In addition to policy makers, a key audience for this report is deans, department chairs, and faculty in personnel preparation and leadership programs, district personnel responsible orientation/induction, inservice, and continuing education.

In October, 2008, the Center at UCLA formally announced the public-private collaboration it has formed with Scholastic, Inc.'s Community Affairs Unit which will connect with and enhance the New Directions initiative. (Scholastic has created an initiative called: *Rebuilding for Learning*.™)

It is designed to help state and school district leaders "rebuild" school and district infrastructure. The UCLA Center is collaborating with this initiative to improve learning supports for all children.)

See information online at

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/rebuild/rebuilding.htm>

Each year, the Center has continued to produce resources and tools for those ready to move in New Directions for Student Support (e.g., see the online toolkit at

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>)

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