



## ***National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support\****

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**January, 2008 Update**

To: Network for the National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support

**Re: Not Waiting for the ESEA Reauthorization**

In a December 23, 2007 article, the *New York Times* reported:

“This was to be the year that Congress renewed the law [the No Child Left Behind Act] that has reshaped the nation’s educational landscape by requiring public schools to bring every child to reading and math proficiency by 2014. But defections from both the right and the left killed the effort. ...

These political realities are making it extremely difficult to rebuild the bipartisan majorities that first approved the law during Mr. Bush’s first year in office, when he worked on the legislation with Mr. Miller and Senator Edward M. Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat who is now the chairman of the education committee. Mr. Miller, a passionate advocate of school accountability, took the lead this year in trying to draw up a bill that would change troublesome provisions but preserve its core goals. ...

But virtually every proposed change in the law ignited fierce battles, and when Mr. Miller released a draft bill for comment in late August, it pleased no one. ...

Mr. Kennedy now plans to take the lead with the bill early next year. “We have to convince people that the bill we introduce, that this will not be a rubber stamp of the current law,” he said in an interview. ...

Three of the Democratic presidential candidates, Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Obama and Senator Christopher J. Dodd, are on the education committee. Mr. Kennedy acknowledges that campaign criticism of the law could complicate his effort, but pointed out that even though the candidates have criticized the law, most have also expressed support for its core goals. ...

Even though the candidates hedge their criticism of the law with statements supporting accountability, it is hard to imagine their accepting revisions that fall short of a thorough overhaul” .... “I can’t imagine that Democrats could write a bill that would satisfy their caucus but not be vetoed by President Bush, at least in the current environment,” Mr. Petrilli [a vice president at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation] said.

### **THE DELAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY**

As you know, the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* has focused on efforts to communicate with Congress about including discussion of a comprehensive system of learning supports as a major agenda item in the hearings for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (e.g., No Child Left Behind).

With the delay, it seems likely that passage of a reauthorization bill will not occur until after the next president is in office. We see this as an opportunity for districts to move

ahead of the reauthorization process. By doing so, they not only can do better in ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, they also can demonstrate to Congress why it is imperative that the reauthorization bill ensures that school improvement planning encompasses development of a comprehensive system of learning supports throughout a district and a learning supports component at every school.

## READY TO MOVE FORWARD?

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

Also, remember that the Center continues to provide free and ready online access to a range of documents to support moving in new directions and a variety of resources for enhancing learning supports (e.g., see the revamped tool kit designed to support efforts to rebuild systems for learning supports – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkit.htm> ).

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### ***National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support cited in the Support for School Improvement e-Newsletter***

This monthly publication is a joint project of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Center on Innovation and Improvement and focuses on school improvement efforts at the state and district level. In its December issue, under the headline of *Closing the Achievement Gap*, this widely disseminated resource cites the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* and describes the work as enhancing understanding and action related to developing comprehensive systems of learning supports at every school. This is followed by a summary of the recent report entitled *New Directions for Student Support: Current State of the Art*. (Online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policyissues/Current%20State%20of%20the%20Art.pdf> )

The report is described as having “analyzed the integration of student supports into school improvement planning, analyzed the related organizational and operational infrastructure in a sample of districts, and surveyed whether efforts were being made to move toward developing comprehensive systemic approaches for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.”

The findings and conclusions are highlighted as follows:

- Districts need to revisit school improvement planning guides to ensure they focus on development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and do so in ways that are fully integrated with plans for improving instruction at the school. This encompasses developing guidelines for (a) operationalizing comprehensiveness in terms of a framework that encompasses a full continuum of interventions and a well conceptualized set of content arenas and (b) delineating standards and accountability indicators for each content arena.

- Districts need to designate a dedicated position for leadership of efforts to develop and implement such a comprehensive system and redesign infrastructure to ensure interventions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching are attended to as a primary and essential component of school improvement and in ways that promote economies of scale.
- Guidelines for school improvement planning should include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions for school-site leadership related to development and implementation of such a system.
- Guidelines for school improvement planning should specify ways to weave school and community resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time.
- (To researchers) Current initiatives for program evaluation and research projects should be redesigned to include a focus on amassing and expanding the research-base for building and evaluating a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, with a long-range emphasis on demonstrating the long-term impact of such a system on academic achievement

## Examples of Strategic Diffusion Efforts Across the Country Over the Year

With the goal of diffusion in mind, the emphasis for the National Initiative this past year has been on strategically enhancing readiness and promoting prototype design for systemic change. This work has been facilitated by *leadership institutes* for key individuals and teams and *personalized interchanges* at state, regional, and school district levels. Major examples include:

- > Hawai'i (in March) – a follow-up leadership institute to revitalize the state's commitment to advancing its legislated *Comprehensive Student Support System* (CSSS).
- > Vermont (in April) – a leadership institute conducted for the State Department of Education as a basis for their system design and strategic planning to revamp student supports.
- > Iowa (Jan., Feb., Sept., Nov.) – a series of leadership institute series for the Area Education Agencies to support planning and organization for working with local districts and schools to advance Iowa's initiative for a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports. (Interchanges were also conducted with the State Department of Education about future steps.)
- > Oregon (April) – leadership institute for Washington County. Participants were superintendents, as well as staff, ESD, and agency leaders involved with the USDOE initiative "Integrating Schools and Mental Health Systems."
- > Harrisburg, PA. (Sept.) – follow-up leadership institute for the school district focusing on design ideas for a comprehensive system of learning supports to enable school teams to move forward. As stated on the District's website: "This is a reworking of our current school infrastructure with the purpose of eliminating barriers to learning and improving our results in reducing the achievement gap for all students." The initial emphasis is on developing learning support resource teams at schools as a major step in strengthening a school's learning support component.

- > New Orleans (May, Sept., Oct.) – working with the Institute for Mental Hygiene as they administer a grant program for a comprehensive learning support component in two new charter schools. A leadership institute was conducted to introduce concepts and design ideas for developing a prototype system of learning supports in the schools. Follow-up work was done on two subsequent trips to visit the schools and to provide input into design, job descriptions for learning support staff, etc.
- > Louisiana State Department of Education, Division of School and Community Support – several discussions (face-to-face, phone, email).
- > California (continuous work over the year) –
  - > joint session conducted for faculty from California State University, Los Angeles' Center for Multicultural Education and Loyola Marymount University's School of Education;
  - > sessions with the California Department of Mental Health on the prevention and early intervention/school facets of the state's Mental Health Services Act .
  - > sessions with legislators related to legislation for a Comprehensive Pupil Learning Supports System (including several trips to Sacramento);
  - > Los Angeles Unified School District – covered the frameworks for learning supports for key staff at the district;
  - > sessions with the Los Angeles Mayor's Council on Education.

In addition, numerous follow-up interchanges have been made to consolidate previous work in states that have already indicated interest and activity, and another outreach mailing was sent to the remaining states.

Note: Each month, we are contacted by planners and policy makers related to advancing their local agendas for MH in schools. Recent examples include:

- > Florida State Department of Education – department made contact to discuss possibility of a state summit;
- > Oklahoma Department of Mental Health – department made contact to discuss possibility of a leadership institute;
- > New York state – several inquiries have been received about the possibility of leadership institutes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

A summary of meetings, presentations, and work sessions around the country from October, 2002 though September, 2007 is presented in a Table in the Center's *Evaluation of Impact Report* online at –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evaluation/impactevalrept.pdf>

Other information on and resources for the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* are available at –

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

### **Partnering with *Scholastic, Inc.* to Expand Impact**

Upgraded materials, leadership institutes, and support for implementation are all part of plans stemming from the new partnership between the Center at UCLA and the charitable Community Affairs & Government Relations Division of *Scholastic Inc.*

In 2006, Scholastic contacted the Center about a partnership initiative related to our focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and advancing mental health in schools. Scholastic conceives the work as *Rebuilding for Learning*<sup>TM</sup>. Their initial impetus was a desire to provide support for Gulf Coast schools in the wake of the catastrophes in 2005. However, as they indicated to us, their research made it “obvious that Gulf Coast districts were not the only ones facing serious ‘learning infrastructure’ issues that were impeding teaching and learning. [And, so] we felt that districts across the country could benefit from this work.”

The combined efforts will allow us to expand diffusion efforts. Scholastic currently is designing materials in hardcopy and will develop a website based on the Center’s frameworks for fully integrating a comprehensive system of student/learning supports into school improvement policy and practice. The materials will provide the content for a series of Leadership Institutes with a focus on education and community leaders first from the Gulf states and then from across the country. Teams from state departments and districts will receive grants from Scholastic to attend with the option of follow up grants for those moving to implementation.

Well that’s it for now.

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.

We look forward to hearing from you and to continuing to work with you in the best interests of young people, their families, schools, and neighborhoods.

And, we wish you a very happy new year.

Respectfully submitted,

Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor