



National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support

Brief Progress Report (April 1, 2005)

We are pleased to report that the *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* is generating widespread interest and support across the country and is making significant progress.

The progress is seen in involvements of growing numbers of states and localities and in the addition of initiative co-sponsors (now totaling 33). The trend has been to look to the National Initiative for support in mobilizing an active network across a state. The staff at the UCLA Center continues to provide facilitative support and leadership. Each month the Center generates outreach mailings in all states and is receiving a steady flow of requests for more information and assistance from state and local education agencies and boards of education seeking to move in new directions. Listservs have been established to facilitate communications. In some states, special meetings and trainings are being organized for this summer. Legislative action has been stimulated. Corwin Press is publishing two books in July that support the initiative, and these may be the beginning of a New Directions series.

Stakeholders in each state, of course, differ in how they relate to and support the National Initiative and pursue work in their own states and localities. Efforts to facilitate development of state initiatives generally have been promising. However, even without a state summit or a formal statewide initiative, pursuit of comprehensive approaches to and related systemic changes for new directions are a significant agenda item in states as diverse as Iowa, Washington, California, and Hawai'i and in a variety of districts and cities across the country. Outreach mailings to any state invariably yield a good set of responses indicating a desire for participation in the National Initiative and interest in a statewide summit.

In general, the national, regional, and state summits have been a good stimulus and catalyst for the work. After the recent New York Statewide Summit, there was an outpouring of interest both in joining in the National Initiative and working toward establishing a statewide initiative. Iowa is preparing for a statewide summit this month which will add significant impetus to that state's implementation of their new design for learning supports. Texas is planning a special training workshop, as well as another key stakeholder information sharing session for this summer.

The work ahead involves continuing to coalesce stakeholders who are supportive of the National Initiative. It also encompasses facilitating the efforts of those who want to embrace statewide initiatives, including new states and states that began the process and have yet to gel. Minnesota, for example, got off to a shaky start and is now revisiting how to proceed. Wisconsin provides an example where there are a good number of stakeholders who want to pursue the work begun after their summit, but it also has some significant stakeholders who do not. A continuing emphasis needs to be on reaching out to bring key colleagues on board. As a network member in Connecticut stressed: "I think that more of those of us with main responsibility for the teaching and learning component of our organization need to be part of this effort or it will be the student support leaders talking to themselves while the teaching and learning leaders continue to ignore them." Moreover, as the many newcomers join in, we must bring them up to speed quickly. And, in order to keep current, it is important to let us know when natural attrition calls for deleting names from mailing lists and documents.

Finally, we encourage everyone to remember that the current problems confronting public education and our nation's young people continue to make it imperative that we all work together for new directions in addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Respectfully Submitted,

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