

Minnesota Statewide Summit for New Directions for Student Support

March 3rd, 2003.

What is the Summits Initiative?

In response to widespread interest for mounting a strategic initiative for new directions for student support, the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA convened a national Summit in October 2002. The national meeting underscored the imperative for moving in new directions and formulated a set of recommendations for moving forward.

As next steps, Summit participants proposed that the Center host a series of regional and statewide summits designed to broaden understanding of new approaches, encourage advocacy, and build a leadership network. Three regional Summits were scheduled for spring 2003.

Minnesota's Summit

In the midst of the Center's planning for regional Summits, several groups from Minnesota asked for a statewide Summit. While it seemed a bit premature to do so, the energy and enthusiasm of the groups were contagious, and so the process of planning a statewide meeting for March 3rd, 2003 was initiated.

The individuals leading the way were from the *State Department of Education* and the *Minnesota Student Services Coalition for Effective Education*. The Coalition is composed of the Minnesota School Counselors Association, Minnesota School Psychologists Association, Minnesota School Social Workers Association, School Nurse Organization of Minnesota, and the School Section of the Minnesota Association of Resources for Recovery and Chemical Health. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, with whom the Center has worked over the years, joined in as a local co-sponsor.

Representatives of the groups formed a local planning team. The team identified and invited key education leaders throughout the state. Each was asked to bring a small team from their district. The planning group formulated a four point Agenda:

- C Presentation on New Directions (to advance thinking about the nature and scope of student support and encourage enhancement of policy and practice related to this component of school improvement)
- C Exchange of Information about Current Policy and Practices
- C Discussion of Strategies for Moving Forward
- C Action Planning (follow up steps to build on the momentum generated during the Summit).

The process called for teams to work together throughout the day with the objectives of applying key insights to their locales and exploring next steps. In addition, over the day several administrators showcased work in which they were involved:

- >Superintendent Mark Wolak of the Mahtomedi Public Schools presented his district's work in expanding school accountability to better integrate student support
- >Kevin Hogan, Administrator of Guidance and Related Services for the St. Paul Public Schools and Mary Heiserman, Director of Mental Health and Education Programs at the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, shared outcome data from their federally funded Safe Schools/Healthy Student Project.
- >James Boyle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Families and Children of Hennepin County, shared work on community resource mapping and linking community, school, and county resources to serve children and families more effectively.

In exploring next steps, the focus was on:

- C how to create a statewide steering group for New Directions for Student Support
- C how to encourage discussion of recommendations about new directions across the state (e.g., at staff meetings, association conferences, Blue Ribbon Commissions, etc.)
- C how to engage planning mechanisms for new directions at local and state levels (e.g., existing ones and establishing new mechanisms if necessary)

Lessons Learned

As the first statewide summit, Minnesota proved to be an excellent learning ground for planning future statewide summits. Center staff learned valuable lessons for organizing, implementing, and following-up. On the positive side, the value of forming local planning groups was underscored, and it was demonstrated that they could work effectively through the medium of email. It also was clear that there are many stakeholders across a state who want to share their experiences, learn more about new directions for student support, and explore how to move forward. However, it was equally clear that statewide Summits need to attract about 40-60 high level education opinion leaders. And, with respect to showcasing local efforts, it is important to include only those that represent a major systemic effort to move in new directions. Finally, if there is to be significant follow-up, Center staff learned that they would need to help identify a group of leaders and champions willing to form a steering group for new directions and facilitate its establishment.

Many of these lesson learned were incorporated into the steps and guidelines outlined for those who want to establish a state summit. (See the document on the Center website in the section on Summits on New Directions.)

Minnesota Summit
Taking Action: Ensuring Supports for Student Success
Monday, March 3, 2003

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