BRINGING STUDENT SUPPORT INTO THE 21st CENTURY

Despite decades of discussion about ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, reformers have paid little attention to rethinking the way schools provide student supports.

Until now.

Last October, a national Summit on *New Directions for Student Support* was convened and spawned the “Summits Initiative: New Directions for Student Support.”

Facilitated by the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, the Summits Initiative is generating a series of regional summits and is planning a summit for every state.

*The goal is to revolutionize what schools do to address barriers to learning and teaching.*

Already, the initiative has produced the first-ever *Guidelines for a Student Support Component* to provide schools with a template for rethinking learning support. Also begun is the process of showcasing efforts across the country where new directions are being explored.

Why New Directions are an Imperative

There is a particular urgency arising from the demands made by the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

- Many schools are being designated as low performing
- Increasing accountability demands require demonstrating progress for students who are “economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency.”
- All schools will be evaluated on criteria designed to identify sites that are “persistently dangerous.”

In general, with increasing accountability for student outcomes and dwindling budgets, it is essential to rethink use of existing learning supports.

Meeting the Challenges Requires Rethinking
Support Programs, Resources, and Personnel

Most people hear the term *student support* and think mainly about pupil service personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses) and the special services such staff provide. But, schools need and have many more resources they can use to meet the challenge of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Besides traditional support staff, learning support is provided by compensatory education personnel (e.g., Title I staff), resource teachers who focus on prereferral interventions, and personnel who provide a variety of school-wide programs (e.g., after school, safe and drug free school programs).
Rethinking how all these resources are used can lead to

C more effective deployment of existing resources (by minimizing fragmentation, counterproductive competition, and policy marginalization)

C reframing student supports as learning supports that address barriers to student learning and realigning support staff roles and functions to develop comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approaches

C fully integrating learning support programs and staff into the school improvement agenda at every school

C revamping infrastructures to weave resources together and provide mechanisms for enhancing and evolving how schools address barriers to student learning

For more information:

Go to the homepage of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu) and click on the green button labeled “Summits for New Directions.”

Or contact:

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Below is the current list of the sponsoring and co-sponsoring agencies.

The Summits Initiative is sponsored by the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.*

So far, the growing number of co-sponsors includes:

C American School Counselors Association
C American School Health Association
C Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
C California Center for Community School Partnerships
C Coalition for Cohesive Policy in Addressing Barriers to Development and Learning
C Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
C Center for Cooperative Research and Extension Services for Schools
C Center for Prevention of Youth Violence, Johns Hopkins University
C Center for School Mental Health Assistance at the University of Maryland at Baltimore
C Coalition for Community Schools
C Education Development Center
C Johns Hopkins University Graduate Division of Education
C National Alliance of Pupil Service Organizations
C National Association of School Nurses
C National Association of Pupil Services Administrators
C National Association of School Psychologists
C National Association of State Boards of Education
C Policy Leadership Cadre for Mental Health in Schools
C School Social Work Association of America
C Region VII Comprehensive Center

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