

From: Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor, Center co-directors

REBUILDING FOR LEARNING

ANNOUNCING!!!!

**Focus on Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and
Re-engaging Students**

We have had inquiries about the public-private collaboration our Center has formed with Scholastic, Inc.'s Community Affairs Unit. Below is an introductory overview. We invite state and district superintendents, school boards, education associations, and chairs of university departments of education to express their interest in exploring ways to connect with the initiative. (See the response form at the end of this announcement for email reply or the PDF attachment which can be returned by FAX.) This announcement should be shared with all top leaders.

OVERVIEW

Scholastic has created an initiative called: *Rebuilding for Learning*.TM It is designed to help state and school district leaders "rebuild" school and district infrastructure. Our Center is collaborating with this initiative to improve learning supports for all children.

There are schools in districts across the country where a majority of students are performing well; academically and socially youngsters are succeeding. The bad news is that there are too many schools, particularly those serving lower income families, where large numbers of students and their teachers are in trouble. Most schools tend to be ill-prepared to address the challenges faced by their students, faculty and families – challenges that often seriously interfere with students' abilities to fully benefit from instruction. Schools that have suffered through major crises and natural disasters have special challenges that are not covered in emergency preparedness plans. Here are some poignant statistics that underscore these points.

- The dropout rate for our nation remains unacceptably high. Education Trust reports that nearly 25 percent of the ninth grade population will not end up graduating from high school. (Hall, 2006)
- Students are not the only ones dropping out of school. We are losing teachers at a rate of almost 1,000 day. Many are not retiring; they are leaving the profession to find "better working conditions." (Alliance for Excellence in Education, 2005)
- Student achievement in core academic subjects for far too many students ranges from mediocre to abysmal. Take reading levels as an example. Despite recent gains highlighted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), most American students, across grade levels, are reading at the most basic levels and "only about 30 percent of high school students read proficiently and more than a quarter read below grade level." (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007)
- The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports, "students who speak a language other than English at home and speak English with difficulty may be in need of special services." There are almost 11 million children whose primarily home language is not English. (NCES, 2007)
- School leaders acknowledge that the amount of student suspensions and retention underscores the degree to which behavior problems are placing students at greater risk for dropping out. The latest data shows that almost "10 percent of public school students in kindergarten through grade 12 had been retained (i.e., repeated a grade since starting school), while 11 percent had been suspended and 2 percent had been expelled (i.e., permanently removed from school with no services)." (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007)

- Schools deal daily with the affects that poverty has on learning. NCES states "research has suggested that growing up in poverty can negatively impact children's mental and behavioral development as well as their overall health, making it more difficult for them to learn." (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov 1994; Pollitt 1994, NCES) While it is a widely held belief that education should be a great equalizer, the sad fact is that in large portion, children living in poverty attend schools that at best, have marginal performance records. (U.S. Department of Education, Ed Week)

None of this comes as news to educational leaders. The data, however, highlight the imperative for the initiative's work. In aggregate – on a significant national scale – education leaders know that without intervention and a clear plan in place schools cannot

- reduce student dropout rates
- reduce teacher dropout rates
- re-engage students in classroom learning
- narrow the achievement gap
- eliminate the plateau effect related to student achievement,
- reduce the growing list of schools designated as low performing, or
- support districts in crisis

Resources currently exist within districts and schools to support all children's education and address barriers to learning. Currently though, a great deal of student support is oriented to discrete problems and focuses on specialized services for individuals and small groups.

Furthermore, current student supports are so highly fragmented and marginalized in policy and practice that many districts have chronic difficulty stemming the tides of low achievement, delinquency, student and teacher dropouts, and a host of other serious issues.

Schools and districts need to redeploy existing funds allocated for addressing barriers to learning and weave these together with the invaluable resources found among students, family members, and community stakeholders. It is time for schools to move forward in establishing comprehensive systems for addressing barriers to learning and teaching that can enable them to be more effective in ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed at school and in life.

The following tenets guide and are infused throughout the work of the UCLA Center and the *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative:

- Every school has a wide range of learners and must ensure equity of opportunity for all students and not just a few.
- External and internal barriers to learning and factors that disrupt teaching widely interfere with schools achieving their mission.
- To meet the challenge for the many students in need, school districts need to design and implement learning support systems that are comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive, and institutionalize them at every school.
- Learning support systems must address barriers to learning and teaching and ensure that students are engaged and reengaged in classroom learning. Such systems must reflect the best available science, with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation theory and practices.
- Schools need strong leadership for systemic change and an infrastructure that facilitates schools and communities working together in pursuit of a shared vision and common set of goals around learning supports and student achievement.

APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY

The *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative provides education leaders with meaningful and ongoing learning opportunities around planning and implementing improved systems for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

District or state teams interested in participating apply to receive a *Rebuilding for Learning* planning grant. The grant serves as a catalyst for engagement with this work. It covers participation by district or state teams in the *Rebuilding for Learning Institute*. Specifically, the grant covers travel and accommodations costs for Institute attendees. It also covers staff time, and stipends for participants.

Participating teams that demonstrate a serious commitment to *Rebuilding for Learning* by moving toward developing plans for their schools or states and need assistance with aspects of plan consultation or implementation would be eligible to apply for an implementation mini-grant that supports additional technical assistance from *UCLA* and/or members from the *Rebuilding for Learning Team*.

The intent is to aid district and state level capacity building by offering information, guidance and support through the auspices of Scholastic and the *UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools*.

This includes

- In person professional input and interchange (e.g. *Rebuilding for Learning Institute* and on-site technical assistance)
- Online professional development and guidance (e.g. continuing education and online technical assistance)
- Print and online supplemental resources

Rebuilding for Learning Institute – orients school leaders to the need for student learning supports, the full continuum of essential school-community interventions, and the core principles and tenets of comprehensive learning support systems. District or state leadership teams leave the Institute with an emerging "blueprint" that enables them to more deeply investigate student learning supports and the feasibility for instituting change in their districts or states.

Rebuilding for Learning Online Institute – available to Institute participants, this resource allows users to probe deeper with theory and practice content. The online resources are especially designed as aids for moving forward.

Technical Assistance – Institute participants pursuing implementation of comprehensive learning support systems have access to the initiative's team of specialists who are available to provide strategic guidance as districts move from planning to implementation.

Rebuilding for Learning Core Materials – provide administrators with information on student learning supports policies and practices. Core materials include the *Rebuilding for Learning Institute Handbook*. The handbook is provided to all in person institute participants.

For info on Scholastic's Community Affairs unit, see
<http://www.scholastic.com/aboutscholastic/community/index.htm>
or contact: Karen Proctor, Vice President (kproctor@scholastic.com – phone: (212) 343-6157)

For more info on our Center at UCLA, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>
or contact: Howard Adelman or Linda Taylor, Co-directors
(adelman@psych.ucla.edu –(310) 825-1225; Ltaylor@ucla.edu – (310) 825-3634)

Response Form

Interested in Exploring Participation in the *Rebuilding For Learning Initiative*?

We invite state and district superintendents, school boards, education associations, and chairs of university departments of education to express their interest in exploring ways to connect with the initiative.

Check all that apply:

I would like to discuss convening a Leadership Institute focused on Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Students?

I want more details.

I would like to receive regular information about the initiative as it moves forward.

Other comments:

If there are others to whom you would like us to send the announcement, indicate their names and contact information below:

Finally, if you are in the process of taking any strategic local action related to these matters, please share it with us to share what is happening with others as a catalyst for change.

Your Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____ E-Mail _____

Thanks for completing this form. Return by FAX to (310) 206-8716.

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<http://www.scholastic.com/aboutscholastic/community/index.htm>
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