

Open Letter to Chief School Officers, District Superintendents, School Board Members, Principals, and All Other Education Leaders

Re: *Improving How Schools Address Learning, Behavior, and Emotional Problems and Reengage Disconnected Students*

WE ALL KNOW THAT

- many schools are unable to address the number of students who are not doing well
- and that
- temporarily adding a few more professionals using one-time relief funds will not meet the long-term needs.

YOU KNOW THAT

- existing student/learning supports are organized in too fragmented a way
(see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/figure1of4.pdf>)

and that

- efforts to improve coordination and integration are insufficient fixes.

RESEARCH HAS IDENTIFIED THAT

- the fragmentation is an indication of the *marginalization* of student and learning supports in school improvement policy
- ending the fragmentation and significantly improving how schools provide student/learning supports involves ending the marginalization, coalescing the interventions and expanding MTSS into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports.

IT'S TIME TO BEGIN RETHINKING STUDENT/LEARNING SUPPORTS IN WAYS THAT

- (1) coalesce all school efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students into a unified component and integrating the component as a primary and essential facet of school improvement policy
(see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/figure2of4.pdf>)
- (2) move beyond a limited MTSS framework to build the continuum of interventions into a consolidated set of subsystems weaving together school and community resources (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/figure3of4.pdf>)
- (3) organize the supports needed each day at schools into a delimited set of domains crossing the continuum to establish a framework for developing *a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports* over several years (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/figure4of4.pdf>)

The new framework is designed to prevent many of the problems experienced by students and schools, thereby reducing the numbers of and costs incurred by unnecessary referrals for specialized assistance and special education.

For in-depth discussions about moving forward to transform student and learning supports, see the resources the Center has developed to guide planning, including the following three free books:

- > *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
- > *Improving School Improvement*
- > *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

All three of these resources can be accessed at no cost at

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Also, see the following brief prepared for PACE:

- > *Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID 19 Context and Beyond*

https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/pb_adelman_nov2020.pdf

The content, of course, is applicable to other places

A set of resource aids have been compiled into a *System Change Toolkit* at

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

Among the aids in the toolkit is

First Steps in Transforming Student and Learning Supports into a Unified and Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/1ststeps.pdf>

We don't have email addresses for all who we hope will read this, so please share this with your colleagues.

And as always, we ask that you share with us whatever you think others might find relevant. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Best wishes, be well,

Howard & Linda

Howard Adelman, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology & Center Co-director

Linda Taylor, Ph.D.

Center Co-director

Dept. of Psychology, UCLA

Emails: adelman@psych.ucla.edu Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>