
From the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Not Another Team!

Every new school initiative seems to come with the same directive: *Form a team to make it happen*. While well-intentioned, this often triggers a familiar—and understandable—reaction from staff:

“Not another team! We don’t have the time, there aren’t enough of us, and many of us are already serving on multiple teams.”

This sentiment is especially prevalent among student and learning support personnel. These staff members are frequently expected to participate in a wide array of teams—crisis response, student assistance, IEP development, MTSS planning, parent involvement, community engagement, and more. The result? A proliferation of teams that can overwhelm staff and dilute focus.

There is no question that teams, workgroups, committees, and collaboratives can play a vital role in enhancing organizational functioning. A substantial body of literature supports their value in fostering collaboration, stakeholder engagement, shared leadership, and improved outcomes (see <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/team.pdf>). When thoughtfully designed and strategically implemented, such mechanisms can be powerful tools for change.

However, when these operational infrastructure mechanisms are established in an ad hoc and piecemeal fashion, problems arise. Such an approach further fragments and marginalizes school improvement efforts. It is especially counterproductive to the development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable systemic approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students.

Meaningful and sustainable school improvement demands a rethinking of existing operational infrastructures at both school and district levels. And the guiding rule in doing so involves applying the foundational organizational principle that *structure follows function*.

With specific respect to transforming student/learning supports, this means creating an infrastructure that can drive development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for learning and student support. For details, see Chapter 13 “Reworking the School Leadership Infrastructure into a Three Component Framework” in *Improving School Improvement* <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf>

Best wishes and be well,

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