Preventing and Responding to Problems at School: MTSS is not enough!

The school shooting in Wisconsin calls for more than grieving, increased hardening of school security, and threat assessment.

Concerned stakeholders, of course, will want to review *Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence* https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf

The document "provides an unprecedented base of facts about school violence, as well as an updated methodology and practical guidelines for prevention...."

At the same time, it is important to embed the focus on violence into a framework that covers the broad range of concerns schools encounter every day related to preventing learning, behavior, and emotional problems and reengaging disconnected students (and families).

While MTSS (a multi-tiered support system) has gained popularity in this respect, the limitations of the framework are being widely ignored.

See *Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning*
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall19.pdf

MTSS primarily emphasizes the importance of a *continuum of interventions* (i.e., the multi-tiers). With respect to addressing student and school problems, *such a continuum is only one facet* of unifying and developing a comprehensive and equitable system of interventions.

If the rest of the school year is to be more effective in preventing and addressing student and school problems, schools must unify student/learning supports into a cohesive component and then develop the component into a comprehensive and equitable system of supports. In this respect, our research has clarified the need to (1) reframe each tier of the intervention continuum into subsystems designed to weave together existing school and community resources and (2) organize the various programs, services, initiatives and strategies into six domains of classroom and schoolwide student and learning supports.

Here are two guides that clarify the expanded intervention framework and how to begin moving forward with essential system changes using existing resources:

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions.*
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf

>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process*
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemchangesteps.pdf

Student/learning supports currently are marginalized and fragmented in school improvement policy and practice. Significantly reducing the achievement gap requires a laser-like focus on closing the opportunity gap by transforming the role schools play in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students. Our hope in raising the above concerns and offering guides for transformative system change is to encourage greater attention to ending this undesirable state of affairs.

**As the calendar year ends, we take this opportunity to once again thank you
for all you do for children and youth.**