

From the Center for MH & Student/Learning Supports

Planning to Apply for a Full Service Community Schools' grant?

Given that folks will be applying soon for Full Service Community Schools' grants and may want to use the opportunity to evolve community schools, this seems like an appropriate time to highlight the Center report on:

>Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports

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

Note in the discussion that the multi-tier system of support framework is expanded to clearly include

- (a) weaving together school and community resources into subsystems at each level of the continuum of interventions,
- (b) connecting the continuum with a set of major domains of student/learning supports, and
- (c) establishing a system that is fully integrated with school improvement policy and practice.

Abstract from the above reference: This report underscores that the prevailing view of community schools is just a beginning for their ongoing development and contribution to improving schools. We stress that defining the initiative as a "community-based effort to coordinate and integrate ... services" raises some concerns and limits their evolution. We illustrate this by highlighting that the movement to link community services to schools inadvertently has worked against efforts to catalyze a much needed transformation in how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

With respect to community school's moving forward, we focus on system building that includes an emphasis on transforming student/learning supports and that is pursued by school-home-community collaboratives. The process is described as requiring an expanded framework for school improvement policy that coalesces school and community resources into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of interventions by weaving together overlapping institutional missions and resources.

Key challenges for those committed to developing comprehensive and equitable community schools are discussed as including (1) outreach to a wide range of community resources, (2) adopting shared governance and functions, (3) establishing an effective and sustainable collaborative infrastructure, and (4) connecting "families" of community schools to address common concerns and achieve economies of scale.

These matters are covered in a more detailed way in:

- >Improving School Improvement
 - >Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide
 - >Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change
- all three can be accessed at

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