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

We were asked:

If someone were to do just one thing this summer to support improvements in public education, what would you recommend?

Our response: Ask your local education leaders (e.g., school board members, superintendents, principals, union reps.) this straightforward question:

What are the biggest barriers to learning and teaching at schools and how are schools building a stronger system of student and learning supports to address them?

Starting in-depth conversations about this can be a big step toward meaningful improvements.

Here are some points to emphasize:

Most communities already have dedicated teachers, administrators, and support staff working hard. What is often missing is a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system that addresses major barriers, re-engages disconnected students, and connects school and community resources.

Why is such a system needed?

- Improving instruction is essential, but students cannot learn effectively when they face unaddressed barriers such as attendance problems, mental health concerns, family stresses, or lack of engagement.
- Schools frequently have many support resources, but they are fragmented and marginalized.
- Strengthening student and learning supports can benefit all students while particularly helping those most at risk of falling behind or dropping out.
- Beginning to transform student/learning supports is a relatively low-cost move forward because it stresses using existing resources more strategically.

Every stakeholder in public education can help by advocating for transforming student/learning supports.

Building a system that enables every student to have an equitable opportunity to succeed at school and beyond is essential if public education is to fulfill its promise.

Helping schools to more effectively play their role in addressing barriers to learning may be one of the most important contributions a citizen can make to countering the widespread attacks on public education.

For follow-up, encourage folks to read more about all this. Here are some free online 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>

>Building on MTSS to Enhance How Schools Address Barriers to Learning
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/BuildMTSS.pdf>