

Growing Interest in New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

In response to our recent report, *New Directions for Student and Learning Supports: From Fragmented Initiatives to System Transformation*, we are hearing from superintendents, school board members, leaders in SEA's, deans of schools of education, and others. (Report URL -- <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Newdirs.pdf>)

They agree that the matter is fundamental to school improvement and are sharing the report with colleagues and encouraging discussion and action.

For those who have not yet had time to browse the report, below is the abstract. (A brief Executive Summary also appears at the beginning of the report.)

The growing response suggests that leaders across education are recognizing that addressing barriers to learning and teaching must become a central component of school improvement policy and practice.

Report: *New Directions for Student and Learning Supports: From Fragmented Initiatives to System Transformation*

Abstract

"Across the United States, growing attention is being given to addressing the barriers that interfere with students' learning, development, well-being, and school success. In response, a variety of initiatives have emerged, including whole-child approaches, integrated student supports, community schools, comprehensive school mental health systems, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS), and expansions of student support personnel. While these efforts have increased awareness, expanded services, and strengthened school-community collaboration, they have not resolved a persistent problem: student and learning supports continue to be fragmented, marginalized, and insufficiently integrated into school improvement policy and practice.

This report first reviews seven major arenas of activity currently shaping student and learning supports and analyzes the lessons emerging from these efforts. The analysis concludes that fragmentation is not the fundamental problem but rather a symptom of a deeper policy issue: addressing barriers to learning and teaching has not been established as a primary and essential component of school improvement. As a result, programs, services, personnel, and funding streams tend to operate in parallel rather than as parts of a coherent system.

The report argues that the next major frontier in school improvement is system transformation. It proposes moving beyond the prevailing two-component framework focused on instruction and management/governance to a three-component framework that includes a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports. Such a framework organizes and weaves together existing school and community resources, prioritizes

prevention and early intervention, strengthens leadership and infrastructure, and enhances equity of opportunity for all students.

The report concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, operational infrastructure, accountability, and resource integration designed to transform fragmented initiatives into a sustainable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students and families.”

Please share the report with colleagues, and let us know your perspective on all this.

Best wishes and be well,

Howard & Linda

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