What are Community Schools Doing to Help Transform Student/Learning Supports?

It's great that there is so much interest now in Community Schools.

Our Center has long supported the concept of Community Schools.

> *At the same time, we have cautioned that the prevailing trend is to establish "Community Schools" as an initiative at a school. And unfortunately, such initiatives rarely evolve into the type of transformed school needed to significantly reduce the achievement and opportunity gaps.**

As initiatives, Community Schools usually are designed in ways that pursue some of a school's priorities but do not end the marginalization of student/learning supports in school improvement policy and practice. And in some instances, they contribute to increasing the fragmentation of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. And the emphasis on collaboration often goes astray producing counterproductive competition between Community School "directors/coordinators" and principals and between community professionals and a school's student/learning support staff.

We worry that the funding for the current push will mainly reify the trend to define the initiative as primarily a "community based effort to coordinate and integrate ... services" which will limit their evolution.

To facilitate the evolution of the Community School movement, we stress focusing on system building that is pursued by (a) expanding school improvement policy from a two to a three component framework, (b) framing efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching as a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports that coalesces school and community resources, (c) reworking the operational infrastructure at schools, and (d) facilitating systemic change with a process that emphasizes sustainability.**

In addition, we emphasize that key challenges related to any effort to develop productive school-home-community collaboration include (1) outreaching 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 schools to address common concerns and achieve economies of scale.***

Notes:

  *See, for example,
> *>Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports*
> http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evolvecomm.pdf

> *>Understanding Community Schools as Collaboratives for System Building to Address Barriers & Promote Well Being*
> http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/communitycollab.pdf

  **Overviews and in-depth details of major ideas related school improvement are provided in:
> *>Improving School Improvement*
> *>Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
> *>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

> all three books can be freely accessed at
> http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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

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