

Student Support Staff Must Play Leading Roles in Moving in New Directions

Given the ongoing upheavals in public education and the archaic approach to student/learning supports at most schools, changes in the ways schools address barriers to learning and teaching is inevitable. As a result, so are the roles and functions of school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other student and learning support staff.

What will it all look like in the coming years?

In part, that probably depends on whether such personnel approach the future reactively or take the lead in transforming student and learning supports. From our perspective, most efforts to improve student/learning supports have been reactive and have long-been marginalized in school improvement policy and practice. The consequences have been dire.

Thus, while our Center continues to provide resources that can help *improve current practices*, we also provide materials such as those listed below to facilitate moving student/learning supports in fundamentally new directions. These stress that moving in new directions is essential for dealing with the increasing volume of learning, behavior, and emotional problems, and reducing absentees.

So, along with responding to all the others challenges schools are facing, support staff need to play a proactive leadership role in making transformative systemic changes in the way schools address barriers to learning and teaching. Fortunately, as some of the resources listed here indicate pioneering and trailblazing work has laid a foundation for moving forward.

Below are examples of resources developed as part of our work with student support staff.

- >*New Directions for School Counselors, Psychologists, & Social Workers*
- >*Another Initiative? Where Does it Fit? A Unifying Framework and an Integrated Infrastructure for Schools to Address Barriers to Learning*
- >*Learning Supports Initiative: A Compendium of Practice and Findings*
- >*Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff*
- >*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*
- >*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process*
- >*Building on MTSS to Enhance How Schools Address Barriers to Learning*
- >*Leadership Infrastructure: Is What We Have What We Need?*
- >*Key Leadership Infrastructure Mechanisms for Enhancing Student/ Learning Supports*
- >*Job Descriptions Related to Student & Learning Supports*
- >*Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change*
- >*Funding Stream Integration to Promote Development and Sustainability of a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*
- >*Connecting Schools in Ways that Strengthen Learning Supports*

More on all this can be accessed from our Center's online clearinghouse Quick Finds. For example, see

- >*Cost-Benefit Analyses Relevant to Addressing Barriers to Learning and MH in Schools*
- >*Mapping Existing School & Community Resources for Addressing Barriers to Learning*
- >*School Improvement Planning*
- >*Staffing Student Supports: New Directions*
- >*Enabling/Learning Supports Component: Rethinking & Restructuring Student Supports*

Pioneering Examples of State and District Work on Transforming Student/Learning Supports are Documented in

- >*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Lessons Learned from Trailblazing and Pioneer Initiatives*

These examples underscore how essential student and learning support leadership is for such work. Unfortunately, we have found that places that moved forward to transform student/learning supports ended their transformative efforts as superintendents changed. When new superintendents arrive, sustaining promising system changes requires leaders who recognize the importance and support their ongoing development and implementation. (See *Leadership Changes: Minimizing the Downside* .)

Recently, we reported major lessons we have learned about sustaining system changes. See

- >*Transforming Student/Learning Supports & Enhancing Equity of Opportunity: A Journey of Lessons Learned*

And, of course, a fundamental lesson learned is that those involved in making systemic change, must pay closer attention to implementation science. See

- >*Implementation Science and School Improvement*

For system change examples and tools related to transforming existing student supports into a unified, comprehensive, equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, see the Center's *System Change Toolkit*.

And there is much more available

The above are just a few examples of the many free resources developed by our Center. For more from us and from a variety of other sources, our online Clearinghouse menu offers over 130 Quick Find topics. <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

We also have put online for free and easy access the following three books:

- >*Improving School Improvement*
- >*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
- >*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*