Aid for Alabama Districts in Strategically Guiding Schools through the Initial Systemic Changes for Developing a *Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*

Every district and school involved in developing a *Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* needs to strategically plan how to make the transformation. The following document has just been drafted as an aid for districts in Alabama as you strategically plan the work. ***The draft reflects processes that other districts have found useful. It also highlights some major lessons learned that can help you avoid problems previously encountered.***

As you formulate your strategic plan, feel free to use anything in this aid that seems like a good fit for your district. Moreover, please feel free to contact us for further assistance at any time.

And please share with us what you develop so we can improve this tool.

Contents

Introduction to Planning Related to Developing a
Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

SEAs, LEAs, and schools need to develop a *Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* in order to enhance equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school and beyond. Such a system directly addresses barriers to learning and teaching and re-engages disconnected students. Developing the system requires transforming existing student and learning supports (see Appendix A and other overviews at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkita1.htm).

Strategic and action planning are systematic processes that translate a desired future into a design, specify a broad set of goals or objectives, and detail a sequence of steps to achieve the vision (see Appendix B). With specific respect to developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports, strategic planning is meant to ensure that the vision and design are effectively and efficiently implemented. The plan spells out an answer to ***How do we get there from here?***

As delineated in this draft, the systemic change process begins with an overview introduction of the work to the district (e.g., by a state department or by an external expert) and facilitates decision making. Subsequently, a similar process is pursued when the district introduces the work at schools.

When a district is ready to proceed, strategic and related action planning delineate
   (1) necessary district level changes to unify and systematize learning supports,
   (2) what the district must do to move the system into the schools, and
   (3) what the district and schools must do to develop (over several years) a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports at participating schools.

At district and school levels, leadership preparation and other capacity building are carried out using material resources, personalized mentoring and coaching, technical assistance, and networking with others. When outside expertise is sought, much of it can be accessed through email, phone, and other non face-to-face interchanges.
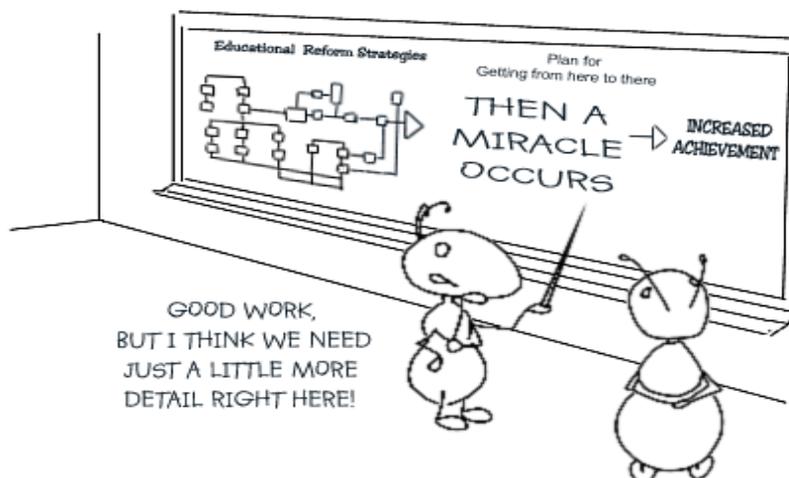
I. Introductory Presentations and Decision Making Discussion with District and School Leadership

In your district by this point in time, specific district and school level leaders have had an *initial* introduction to the Alabama Design for *A Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* and decisions to move forward have been made. (See Alabama Design Document at http://www.alsde.edu/general/ALDOEDesignDocument.pdf .)

Objectives were:

(1) To provide an *introductory overview* about

    A. The bases and frameworks for understanding the nature, scope, and implications of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

    B. What is involved in the systemic transformation (Getting from here to there)

(2) To facilitate *decision making* about whether to proceed with the transformation

(3) To enhance *readiness and commitment* for moving forward

(4) To delineate and reach agreement on *next steps**

*Examples of Next Steps:

- Designation of a dedicated district administrative leader position for the transformation and ongoing work

- Establishment of a temporary set of task-dedicated district mechanisms for the transformation (e.g., steering group, Learning Supports Leadership Team to plan, develop, and guide implementation, work groups -- see Appendix C)

- Setting a date for a full day leadership institute for all who will be staffing the mechanisms (This has already been provided to specific district leaders. As system change mechanisms are established, plans will be needed for achieving the above objectives with those staffing the system change mechanisms.)

- Identifying who will develop a *action plan* for
  >ensuring widespread distribution of the *Design Document*
  >carrying out the *above next steps*
  >establishing a *critical mass of stakeholder support*
  >developing a *Strategic Plan*

Hopefully, by this point, an MOU has been prepared with the state department detailing agreements about what will be done and what supports will be provided.

The nonplanner's creed:

I don't just believe in miracles, I rely on them!

II. Action Planning and Follow Through related to
>>**A. establishing and mobilizing system change** *mechanisms*
>>**B. widespread distribution of the** *Design Document*
>>**C. preparation of an** *Initial Strategic Plan*

Objective:
>Establish and build the capacity of a planning team to formulate how each of the delineated next steps will be accomplished. In doing so, clarify the functions and sources for mentors, coaches, and technical assistance.

This objective relates to planning for changes at the district level that will enhance the district's capacity for guiding the work at schools.

A. Establishing and Mobilizing System Change Mechanisms

Appendix C provides a prototype of relevant system change mechanisms. The planning team needs to pay particular attention to establishing and mobilizing:

>(1) **Leadership Mechanisms**

>Planning here involves not only establishing but also *building the capacity* of the leadership mechanisms for planning, developing, and guiding implementation of the new system. Such mechanisms include the district administrative leader for the work, a steering group, a *Learning Supports Leadership Team*, and work groups.

>The plan should
>>first designate and provide relevant training for the administrative leader and steering group
>>designate that the steering group, along with the administrative leader
>>>establish and train a *Learning Supports Leadership Team* to develop and guide the system transformation
>>>provide essential capacity building (including special training) for the *Learning Supports Leadership Team*

(2) Work Groups
Planning here involves not only establishing but also *building the capacity* of groups at the district and school levels to carry out specific tasks. Examples of such tasks are

- ensuring widespread distribution and visibility of the *Design Document* and the systemic changes

- developing and implementing procedures *for building a critical mass of stakeholder support* (e.g., providing all key stakeholders with an introduction to the design and the systemic changes that are planned and doing so in a way that enhances engaged involvement)

- helping develop facets of the *Strategic Plan* for systemic changes at the district and school levels

- enhancing communication, sharing, and problem solving related to the work

Addressing Lessons Learned

It will help if planners, address the following concerns:

The administrative position of transformation and ongoing leader for the learning supports component needs to be well delineated by an official job description and specific accountabilities (see Center' System Change Toolkit for a job description). The nature and scope of the systemic changes involved requires that the work not just be tacked on to someone who is already overly committed. It also requires immediate planning for capacity building related to the functions of this role and special professional preparation for the designated leader.

While establishment of a transformation leader and Steering Group is readily comprehended, the importance of creating a broad-based systemic change infrastructure mechanisms is less understood. Therefore, it is essential to plan for clarifying the need for and eliciting commitment to establishing and building the capacity of a full set of *transformation mechanisms* as quickly as feasible.

While the Steering Group is meant to champion the work, it is invaluable to plan for cultivating a cadre of other *high level* decision makers as influential champions who can remove barriers to moving forward.

To the degree feasible, continuous efforts should be made to reach out and include in work groups those who are resistant to unifying fragmented ("siloed") student and learning supports and reluctant to give up protecting their turf.

As understanding of what is involved deepens, plans should call for reviewing and revising initial agreements and procedures if necessary.

There's never time to plan things right.

True, but there's always time to do things wrong!

B. Widespread Distribution of the Design Document

Objective:

> To inform stakeholders in ways that enhances engaged involvement and builds a critical mass of stakeholder support.

Usually, the administrative leader establishes a work group to plan and implement a strategic way to inform all key stakeholders about the design and planned systemic changes.

Addressing Lessons Learned

With respect to the design, plan to address the following concerns:

In adopting/adapting the design to account for situational opportunities, strengths, and limitations, plan for reviews that can ensure essential facets of the prototype are not lost (see Appendix A). Feedback from mentors guiding the process is essential in this respect.

Don't assume because someone is using the language of the design that it is well understood or accepted. Many times new terms are adopted, but the substance of the transformation is not. When this happens, only cosmetic changes are made. Plan for assessing whether the substance and not just the form is in place.

Again, as understanding deepens, remember to review and revise initial agreements and procedures as necessary. Plan for this.

What are the basic steps in strategic planning?

One is to prepare the plan. Two is to shelve it!

C. Preparation of an Initial Strategic Plan

Objectives: To draft a plan that

   (1) provides an *overview* of intended systemic changes

   (2) conveys a *detailed initial plan for the initial implementation* of system changes
        and related formative evaluation (designed to lead to summative evaluation)
        done in ways that anticipates sustainability and renewal

   (3) delineates a strategic approach to capacity building.*

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*Capacity building involves:

•   ensuring sufficient resources for the transformation
      (e.g., staffing; budget; guidance materials; external mentoring, coaching,
        professional development, and technical assistance processes that are designed
        to develop comparable internal mechanisms/processes for deepening
        understanding, commitment, and skills)

•   development of effective mechanisms/processes** for the transformation
      (e.g., mechanisms/processes for
        >steering and enabling systemic change
        >everyday leadership to guide and support the work (e.g., administrative lead,
          learning supports leadership team, internal mentors/coaches)
        >collaboration with external mentors and coaches
        >internal mentoring, coaching, professional development, & technical
          assistance
        >providing information to all stakeholders
        >preparing a design document
        >planning a strategic approach to the work, conducting analyses needed for
           planning, (e.g., resource mapping and gap analyses, ways resources can be
           redeployed), and clarifying priorities
        >implementation (initial and long-term, replication to scale)
        >monitoring, problem solving, and enhancing progress

   **Re. mechanisms for accomplishing system change see Appendix C.

Process for Developing the Plan

The administrative leader for transforming student and learning supports into a unified and comprehensive system establishes a work group to draft the strategic plan. Exhibit I outlines some guidelines for establishing and conducting a strategic plan work group. The immediate focus is on planning strategic ways to implement system changes and conduct formative evaluations.

At the same time, to facilitate the planning, the leader establishes one or more additional work groups to map, analyze, and recommend changes with respect to

- current policies (bulletins, guidelines, etc.)
- current operational infrastructure
- current programs and initiatives
- possible ways to redeploy resources.

(Tools to aid such mapping and analyses are in Section B (4) of the Center's System Change Toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm .)

Coaching, technical assistance, and networking with others doing similar planning are used to prepare work groups. This includes careful reading and discussion of the design document and of this aid and other presentations on the processes of system change. As the work groups prepare to undertake their tasks, further coaching, related resources, and feedback are provided.

Beyond ensuring adequate introductory presentations, related interchanges, and agreements about proceeding, the implementation plan should include strategic approaches for

- continuing to enhance and deepen understanding the bases, frameworks, and implications of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports
- clarifying what is involved in getting from here to there
- ensuring establishment and maintenance of effective leadership and operational infrastructure for daily implementation and formative evaluation (*see p.17 of the Alabama Design Document*)
- enhancing stakeholder engagement
- building capacity related to unifying student and learning supports and developing and implementing the intervention framework
- enhancing component visibility, communication, sharing, & problem-solving

Note: As the work is implemented at enough schools, plan for establishinga Learning Supports Leadership *Council* that brings together representatives from the Learning Supports Leadership *Teams* in a feeder pattern or family of schools. This formal collaborative mechanism is essential for helping to fill program or service gaps and achieving economies of scale. (And it provides a mechanism for linking clusters of schools and connecting school and community resources.)

Exhibit I

About the Strategic Planning Work Group

About Group Size and Composition

Group size varies. Five members is a reasonable guideline. One should be designated as the team facilitator.

Too large a planning group usually is not a good idea. The majority should have had some formal strategic planning training and/or experience.

All members need to have a good understanding of the current organizational environment (vision, mission, values; political, social, economic, and technical considerations) in which the district and schools operate.

The group can call upon others to form ad hoc workgroups when special expertise is needed.

About Team Process

Much of the work can be done through individual assignments and email exchanges – with meetings as needed.

- Most of the initial work constitutes drafting sections, sharing them for feedback with team members via email and at meetings, and integrating the feedback.

- This process is continued until each section is seen by members as a good draft.

- Then 1-2 members compile and refine the sections into a draft document which is emailed to all members for feedback.

- Feedback is integrated and the draft is sent back and forth until it is in good shape.

- Workgroup members sign off on the revised draft and it is submitted to decision makers who may ask for revisions before final approval is given.

Schedules should be tight enough to avoid losing momentum.

Throughout the process the group should access e-coaching and feedback from an external mentor/coach as needed.

Representative stakeholder input should be sought (if feasible as the plan is developed and especially from those who can derail the work); relevant feedback is integrated. (Note: Circulating the draft to as many other stakeholders as feasible provides an opportunity to deepen their understanding and appreciation for the importance of the work.).

The finished draft is reviewed by designated decision makers, specific concerns are addressed by the team, and relevant changes are made until a final plan is approved.

The document is then placed on the website, an announcement is crafted to indicate the work is proceeding on schedule and what's next. (Note: This too provides an opportunity to enhance stakeholder understanding, readiness, commitment, and engagement.)

III. Strategic Implementation

Objectives: To establish system change mechanisms and rework the existing operational infrastructure to ensure capability for

>developing an action plan based on the strategic plan

>enhancing capacity for strategic implementation and eventual sustainability

>guiding, monitoring, problem-solving, and continuously improving implementation

Expert mentoring and coaching are used to establish and build the capacity of system change mechanisms and for reworking the existing daily operational infrastructure. See Appendix C for a prototype of the set of system change mechanisms that can accomplish these objectives; see page 17 of the Alabama Design Document for a prototype of a reworked daily operational infrastructure.

Note: A parallel approach is involved in rolling out the work from the SEA to LEAs and from LEAs to schools. See Exhibit II for a sense of the phase-in and start-up activity that the implementation plan needs to address at the LEA and school levels.

Addressing Lessons Learned

Systemic change requires continuous policy and resource support. For significant systemic change to occur, policy commitments must be backed up with effective allocation and redeployment of resources that facilitate organizational and operational changes.

Finances, personnel, time, space, equipment, and other essential resources must be made available, organized, and used in ways that adequately implement policy and promising practices. This includes ensuring sufficient resources to develop an effective structural foundation for planning, development, systemic changes, sustainability, and ongoing capacity building.

Transforming organizations is challenging, frustrating, tiring, and sometimes makes individuals professionally vulnerable. Plan continuous strategies for keeping stakeholders engaged and for re-engaging those ready to give up. This includes revising initial agreements and planned procedures as appropriate. Moreover, remember that it is easy to get so caught up in the work that the value of continuously *celebrating accomplishments* and publicizing accomplishments is ignored. Plan to make the work and its impact visible on websites, social media, and in the press. The public relations aspect of this is important social marketing.

Finally, because they are called upon to do many things that may be unpopular with some stakeholders, plan appropriate protections for those on the front line of change.

Exhibit II

Start-up and Phase-in with Schools

To implement the work with SCHOOLS, the LEA Needs to

(1) Establish and build the capacity of the District Implementation Team.

The Implementation Team needs to provide a school with

> guidance

>facilitation of organizational change and personnel capacity building (including PD designed for spiral learning to deepen understanding)

>facilitation of systemic change and inclusion of the work into the school improvement and related strategic plans

>continuous problem-solving

>constant support for getting from here to there.

See Appendices D and E for examples of tasks.

(2) The District's Implementation Team will need to have a plan of action for carrying out the following introductory tasks:

>initial presentations to key school leadership

>a follow-up personal session with each principal and key school leaders to enhance readiness, commitment, and engagement

>review of plan delineating how the district will work with the school leaders to *facilitate (help them)* start-up and phase-in a unified and comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

(3) The Implementation Team will need to have a guide for establishing a school Steering Team and for providing capacity building and ongoing technical assistance for this team.

(4) The Implementation Team will need to provide school leadership with information resources and supports that enable the school to clarify the following for school stakeholders:

>the imperative for change

>the state's design prototype and the rationale for adopting (and adapting) it

>the current and future plans for roll-out to districts and schools

>the systemic changes that will be involved at district and school levels and the process to be used in bringing the changes about

IV. Formative Evaluation (designed to lead to Summative Evaluation)

Objectives:

   (1) To establish standards and related benchmark indicators for the work

   (2) To implement strategically planned monitoring and problem solving to enhance progress

Establish work groups to adopt/adapt

- benchmarks and mechanisms for monitoring progress (see *Benchmark Checklist for Monitoring and Reviewing Progress in Developing a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/benchmarktool.pdf)

- standards (e.g., see p. 21 of the Alabama Design Document and *Common Core Standards for a Learning Supports Component* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf)

- a system for continuous quality improvement and evaluation of impact and integrate it into regular planning

- indicators that can eventually be used for summative evaluation and accountability (see pp. 18-19 of Alabama Design Document and indicators described in *Common Core Standards for a Learning Supports Component* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf)

Assign the *Learning Supports Leadership Team* to implement the system for continuous quality improvement.

Ensure that the administrative leader and the *Learning Supports Leadership Team* use the formative evaluation information to enhance capacity including providing personalized professional development.

Addressing Lessons Learned

Problems arise when benchmarks are used as progress indicators. Benchmarks are good indicators of whether specific tasks have or have not been accomplished. They are not a basis for evaluating big picture progress.

With specific respect to progress monitoring and formative evaluation in general, care must be taken so that

>progress monitoring is not experienced as supervisory evaluation

>formative evaluations are not used prematurely as a summative evaluation

>formative evaluations are not used prematurely for policy accountability

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Anticipating Sustainability and Renewal

Initial strategic planning focuses on the first two phases of system change: Phase 1 *Introduction and Creating Readiness, Commitment, & Engagement* and Phase 2 *Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure, Capacity, and Pursuing Initial Implementation*. As noted in Appendix B, Phases 3 and 4 of systemic change involve, respectively, *Sustaining and Evolving to Enhance Outcomes* and *Generating Creative Renewal and Replication to Scale*. Specific planning for phases 3 and 4 can be deferred until initial implementation is proceeding satisfactorily. However, awareness of and commitment to these matters is essential throughout in order to avoid working in ways that will be counterproductive to accomplishing these phases. See *Sustaining and Scale-up: It's About Systemic Change* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/Fall04.pdf

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Addressing Lessons Learned

- While it is always important to customize a plan to account for situational opportunities, strengths, and limitations, it is essential not to do so in ways that undermine accomplishing basic aims, goals, and objectives. At the same time, as the work proceeds and understanding deepens, periodic review and revision of initial agreements and procedures often are necessary.

- Mentors/coaches are always concerned about relationship building. However, this is not about building a few good personal relationships; fundamental and sustained system changes require developing effective *working* relationships among all who are involved. Such relationships emerge from a initial and ongoing strategic planning for enhancing readiness, commitment, and engagement.

- Those who are reluctant or resistant to making the transformation often raise points meant to block change. Most fundamentally they suggest that there is no money for the work. For many LEAs and schools, it appears that about 25% of the budget is being expended to address barriers to learning and teaching. Strategic planning focuses on redeploying such resources and using them in ways that benefit from economies of scale. And good planning should ensure that "special initiatives" (even those supported by extra-mural funding) are not allowed to redirect resources away from the transformation.

- Frequent leadership changes (e.g., superintendents, principals, other key stakeholders) can undermine agreements. This requires early attention to reworking policy and procedures in ways that can be sustained in spite of such changes. It also requires planning strategies for effectively bringing new leaders and other key stakeholders up to speed.

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Appendices

A. Five Essential Elements of a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

B. About Strategic Planning

C. Unifying and Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: *Prototype for System Change Mechanisms*

D. Illustrative Examples of Major Steps During the First Phases of Establishing a Learning Supports Component

E. Some Major Tasks for Coaches/Mentors to Help Address as a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is Established

Appendix A

**Five Essential Elements of a Unified and Comprehensive
System of Learning Supports**

It is clear that developing a *Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* is a complex, multi-year process. We have delineated the specifics nature and scope of the system and of the processes for getting from a fragmented and marginalized set of student and learning supports to a unified and comprehensive system (see the Center's *System Change Toolkit* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm).

In doing so, we have stressed that such a system needs to be *adapted* to localities.

While reasonable adaptation is wise, care must be taken not to eliminate elements that are essential to a fundamental transformation of how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. A constant problem we encounter in efforts to implement the type of approach our Center has delineated is the tendency for some places to adopt the terminology and not the substance of system transformation.

To counter this tendency, here are five essential elements that should be the focus of any place that indicates it is developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.

(1) A three component policy for schools (see p. 11 of Alabama Design Document)

To enable all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, schools need to be able to directly address barriers to learning and teaching. This requires elevating such efforts so that they are a third primary and essential component for school improvement. As indicated in Exhibit A, the third component might be called a learning supports component or a component to address barriers to learning and teaching or something comparable.

The policy must be translated into a *design document* and *strategic plan* that ensures learning supports are unified and then developed into a comprehensive system that provides supportive interventions in classrooms and school-wide. The design and strategic plans for the third component must be fully integrated with the strategic plans for improving instruction and management at schools.*

Obviously, it is desirable that the three component policy be adopted at all levels (SEA, LEA, and schools), however, most schools can move forward once the district has enacted such a policy.

   *Re. examples of policy statements and design and strategic planning, see Sections
   A and B of the Center's toolkit –
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm .

(2) A transformative intervention framework for addressing barriers to learning and teaching (see pp. 12-15 of the Alabama Design Document)

A unified and comprehensive intervention framework combines both an integrated and systemic continuum of school and community intervention (delineated as levels)* and is organized into a multifaceted and cohesive set of five to seven content arenas. (See prototype presented in Exhibit B.)

> *The continuum is designed to (a) promote positive development and prevent problems, (b) intervene as early after the onset of problems as is feasible, and (c) provide special assistance for severe and chronic problems. This continuum must not be presented as identical to the tiers or pyramid currently emphasized in relation to Response to Intervention (RTI) and behavioral initiatives.

(3) An operational infrastructure dedicated to the third component (see p. 17 of the Alabama Design Document)

To ensure effective daily functioning and continuous development and improvement in keeping with the design and strategic plan, there must be

- an administrative leader (e.g., assoc. superintendent, assistant principal)
- a learning supports leadership team (e.g., a resource-oriented, system development team)
- work groups to carry out specific tasks.

(See prototype presented in Appendix D.)

The leader's job description must be revised to reflect the new responsibilities and accountabilities and to ensure this leader is at administrative planning and decision making tables so that component development is a regular part of the agenda.*

Along with the administrative leader, a learning supports leadership team clarifies, analyzes, identifies priorities, recommends resource redeployment, and establishes and guides workgroups for developing each facet of the component over a period of several years.

> *For job and team descriptions, see Section B of the Center's toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm .)

(4) Continuous capacity building (especially professional development)

Capacity building plans and their implementation must include a specific focus on development of the unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.* Professional development must provide on-the-job opportunities and special times focused specifically on enhancing the capability of those directly involved in the learning supports component. Professional development of teachers, administrators, other staff and volunteers, and community stakeholders must also include and emphasis on learning about how best to address barriers to learning and teaching.

>*For resources related to capacity building, see Sections B and C of the Center's toolkit – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm

(5) Monitoring for improvement and accountability (see p. 18-19 and p. 21 of the Alabama Design Document)*

Essential facets of the ongoing development of a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports involve (a) continuous monitoring all factors that facilitate and hinder progress and then (b) ensuring actions are taken to deal with interfering factors and to enhance facilitation. These are done in the context of a set of standards for learning supports.

As significant progress is made in developing the system, the monitoring expands to evaluate the impact on student outcomes that are direct indicators of the effectiveness of learning supports (e.g., increased attendance, reduced misbehavior, improved learning).

>*For more about accountablity indicators for monitoring, evaluation, and accountability and standards for learning supports, see *Common Core Standards for a Learning Supports Component* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf

The trouble with doing something right the first time is that nobody appreciates how difficult it was.
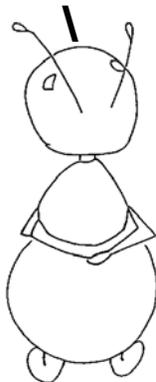
Appendix B

About Strategic Planning

The art of progress is to preserve order amid
change and to preserve change amid order.
Alfred Lord Whitehead

Strategic planning is key to effective implementation, sustainability, and replication to scale of major education innovations. In pursuing such planning, it is essential to approach the task from the perspective of systemic change/transformation.

And, it is also essential not to lose sight of a simple truth:

> *If innovations do not end up playing effective roles at a school and in the classroom, they aren't worth the time and effort. Schools and classrooms must be the center and guiding force for all strategic education planning.*

Strategic planning is a systematic process that translates a desired future into a design, a broad set of goals or objectives, and a sequence of steps to achieve the vision. With specific respect to developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports, strategic planning is meant to ensure that the vision and design are effectively and efficiently implemented. The plan spells out an answer to: ***How do we get there from here?***

Strategic and Action Planning Operationalizes the Design: To this end, the specific goals for strategic planning are to accomplish the major phases and tasks of systemic change.

First Phase – Introduction and Creating Readiness, Commitment, & Engagement

Second Phase – Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure, Capacity, and Pursuing Initial Implementation

Third Phase – Replicating to Scale, Sustaining, and Evolving to Enhance Outcomes

Fourth Phase – Generating Creative Renewal and Replication to Scale

The multi-year plan stresses objectives, steps, tasks, to be accomplished during each phase and general strategies for accomplishing them. Our focus here is on the first year which covers the first two phases and does so in ways that lay a foundation for the third. See examples in Appendix D of major steps during the first and second phases. For purposes of this strategic plan we have divided the process steps into seven sections and have included cautions based on lessons learned from work in states, districts, and schools. The strategies in each section provide the basis for action planning and developing MOUs and work plans.

Strategic Planning Needs to Reflect Organizational Context: Strategic planning for developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports is done within the organizational context and is intended to be fully integrated into the overall approach to school improvement.


What is strategy?

"Strategy is . . . well, strategy is everything. Strategy is timing . . . as the comedians tell us, timing is everything. When the time is right, we use the word "opportune" and thus imply the existence of opportunity. This is how intention reconciles itself with reality and how tactics shape strategy. As Tom Peters once said, 'Execution is strategy.'

   Algebraically speaking, that means strategy is execution. In much simpler terms, we adapt to changing circumstances. So does strategy."

Fred Nickols

Appendix C

Unifying and Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: *Prototype for System Change Mechanisms**
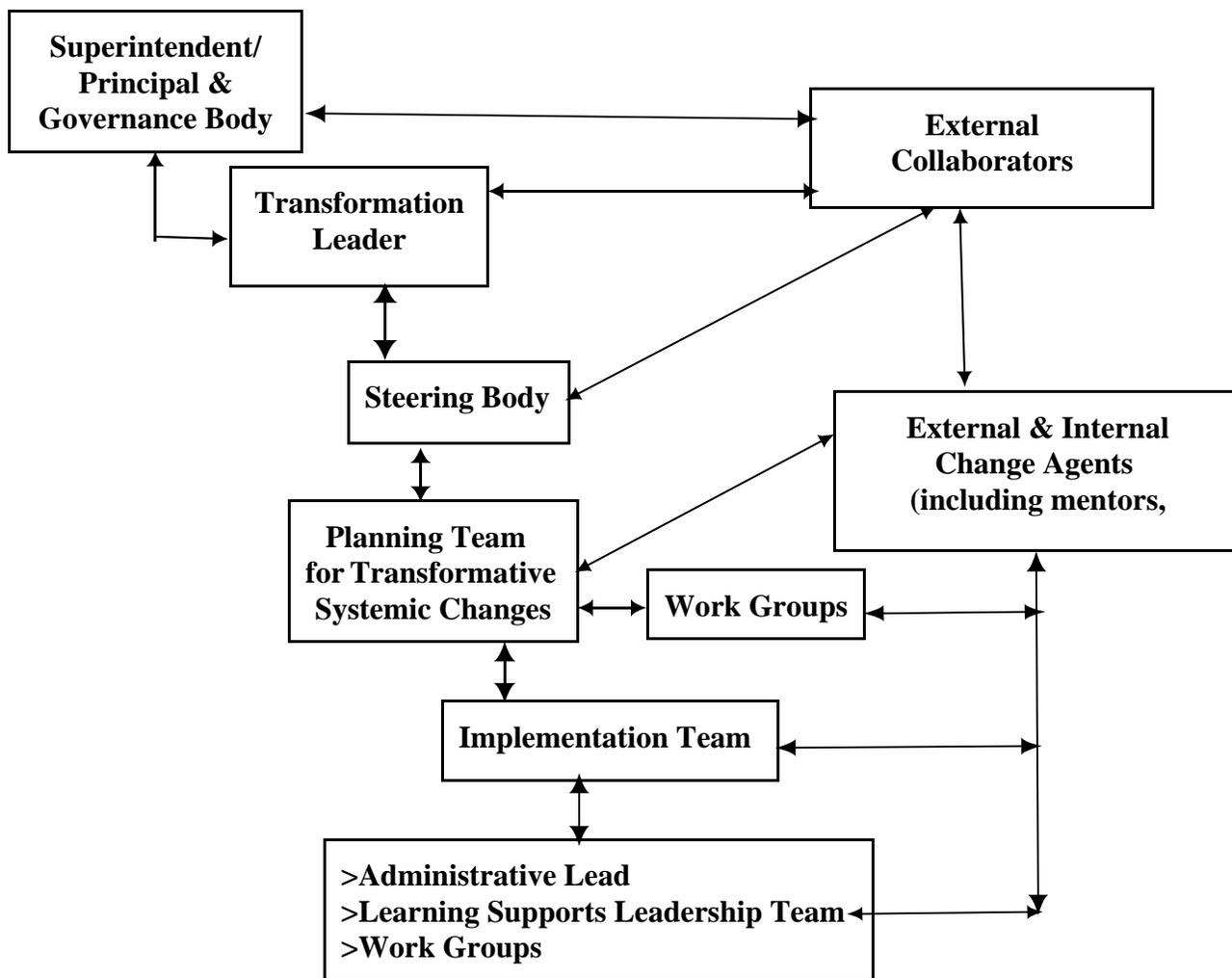
*These mechanisms are needed at the SEA and at LEAs. At the SEA, the focus is on changes in the department and planning and facilitating roll-out and roll-on at LEAs.

At each level, any given staff member may be part of several of the above mechanisms.

For the functions related to each of the above mechanisms, see *Guide for Planning Coaching for SEAs/LEAs to Establish a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coaching.pdf

Appendices D and E provide examples of specific tasks.

Appendix D

Illustrative Examples of Major Steps During the First Phases of Establishing a Learning Supports Component

First Phase: Introduction and Creating Readiness, Commitment, and Engagement

- Frameworks for a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports are introduced to relevant groups of decision makers

- Readiness, committment, and engagement of key stakeholders are enhanced

- A MOU detailing agreements and procedures is established

- An administrative leader (equivalent to the leader for the instructional component) is appointed to lead the transformation and guide the work of the new component.

Second Phase: Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure, Capacity, and Pursuing Initial Implementation

- External Mentors provide professional preparation for the administrative leader

- Temporary mechanisms are established to facilitate initial implementation and systemic change (e.g., groups to steer, plan, implement); capacity building is provided for each of these mechanisms with respect to delineated functions.

- Strategic and action plans are formulated and implemented for the initial phases

- Operational infrastructure is reworked so that the component is unified, continuously developed, and fully integrated with the instructional and management components:

  - Ongoing responsibilities and accountabilities are formalized for administrative leader related to unifying and then developing, over time, a comprehensive system of learning supports
  - Administrative leader becomes part of key decision making bodies (e.g., administrative cabinet, school improvement team)
  - Resource-oriented mechanisms (e.g., a Learning Supports Leadership Team and work groups) are established to work with administrative leaders; capacity building is provided for each of these mechanisms with respect to delineated functions.

- A system for quality improvement and evaluation of impact is established and integrated into school improvement planning, evaluation, and accountability.

- Program or service gaps are filled and economies of scale are achieved through outreach designed to establish formal collaborative linkages among groups of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern) and among districtwide and community resources (e.g., through establishing a Learning Supports Resource Council).

Appendix E

**Some Major Tasks for Coaches/Mentors to Help Address as
a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is Established**

Coaches and Mentors can prepare leaders to

- Deepen the understanding of and enhance committed readiness for what is involved in
  >unifying & developing a comprehensive learning supports system
  >making systemic changes

- Establish and build the capacity of the administrative leader for the learning supports component and of a Learning Supports Leadership Team

- Engage a critical mass of key stakeholder groups (building interest and consensus for the work and garnering feedback and support)

- Guide development of a design document and strategic system change plan

- Establish and build the capacity of a set of system change mechanisms

- Build the capacity of work group(s) to
  >map prevailing status of student and learning supports within the district (e.g., current activity, gaps, redundancies, priority needs, etc.) using the intervention framework in the design document
  >analyze the resource map and priority needs and recommend
      >>how to unify the work into a system
      >>yearly priorities for developing the system into a comprehensive approach
  >analyze and recommend changes that fit with the design for a unified and
      comprehensive system of learning supports with respect to
      >>current policies (bulletins, guidelines, etc.)
      >>current operational infrastructure
      >>current programs and initiatives
      >>possible ways to redeploy resources
      >>adapt benchmarks & mechanisms to monitor progress at district/school levels

- Provide a set of recommendations for change that will be submitted to the agency head (e.g., changes in policy and operational infrastructure)

- Fully integrate the system as a primary and essential component of school improvement

- Enhance component visibility, communication, sharing, and problem solving (e.g., within the district and beyond)

- Establish a system for continuous quality improvement and evaluation of impact and integrate it into regular planning, evaluation, and accountability

- Connect resources to enhance effectiveness and achieve economies of scale (e.g., weaving resources at SEA and LEA levels; connect a "Family" of schools/a feeder pattern)

- Enhance outreach to establish formal collaborative linkages with community resources

- Update and deepen resource mapping and analyses

- Plan and implement continuous capacity building and technical assistance

- Celebrate progress