

Transformation Requires *Unifying* – *Not just Integrating* Student/Learning Supports

Reports indicate that districts in Alabama, California, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin are moving toward a unified, comprehensive and equitable system of student and learning supports. Others across the country are considering transforming student and learning supports.

A Word of Caution

A natural tendency is to think in terms of just “integrating” programs and services (we have heard some references to developing an “Integrated Learning Supports System”). While discussion of such integration is useful and seems like a common sense goal, ***just focusing on integration is a trap.*** Limiting the focus to Integrating student/learning supports has little chance of enhancing equity of opportunity for students across the country. Moreover, as practiced, such a minimal emphasis on systemic change can have serious unintended negative consequences.

Of particular concern is that focusing primarily on integration maintains the fragmentation of interventions and does little to reduce the counterproductive competition among those personnel responsible for the various discrete programs and services. And it risks maintaining the marginalization of school/home/community efforts to address learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

The point of moving from a two- to a three-component framework for school improvement is to bring fundamental coherence and end the marginalization of endeavors to address barriers to learning and teaching. That is, adding a learning supports component to the instructional and management components enables (a) unifying all interventions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students and (b) unifying the three components of school improvement.

Because transformation of schools is so difficult, it is easy to get side-tracked and to aim for a few changes and a few immediate outcomes. Indeed, the history of school improvement is strewn with quick fixes and even these usually have not been effectively sustained. Without fundamental and sustainable changes, we continue to see a leveling off after a few years of initial gains in achievement scores and reductions in absences and behavior problems.

The goal of the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports is to guide every school toward unifying and then developing a comprehensive and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. This requires fully implanting a unified learning supports component into school improvement policy and planning.

The point is to enhance equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school and beyond and foster the type of climate that makes schools the heart of their community.

*Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to
enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.*

Making it Happen in Transformative and Sustainable Ways

If you are moving toward transforming student and learning supports, we encourage you to

- (1) take some time to go over the resource -- *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*. (To download it, go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf> .)

- (2) then email us with your questions and let us know whenever you need some TA and coaching.
(We have learned a lot of lessons about what to do and not to do in developing a sustainable transformation.)

We want to be helpful and what our Center offers can make a big difference.

Feel free to contact either of us at: adelman@psych.ucla.edu or Ltaylor@ucla.edu .

Best wishes,

Howard & Linda

Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor
Center Co-directors
Dept. of Psychology, UCLA
Phones: 310/825-1225 -- 310/825-3634
Website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

#####

Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested.

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the ongoing exchanges,
send an email to ltaylor@ucla.edu .**

Looking forward to hearing from you.

#####