



School Practitioner Listserv



A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange

*27 years
& counting*

January 27, 2014

Request

>Helping districts to facilitate moving to a unified and comprehensive system of student support?

Follow-up

>Students and schools make the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday an opportunity for community service

Featured Center Resource

>Using mid year conferences as a transition that re-engages to engage students and families

New Directions Brief Survey

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Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested.
The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of
the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Request: From a Joint union high school district – "Our district has made some exciting progress in the last two years. One of our three new bi-yearly district goals (below) includes creating a district wide system of learning supports. [see #2 below]

1. Implement Common Core...
2. Implement systemic intervention to support all struggling learners
 - Provide access to every under-performing student (every means EVERY)
 - Identify differentiated instruction strategies
 - Communicate a directed, timely, systemic intervention model
 - Clarify guidelines/rubrics for student accountability (grading)
 - Celebrate benchmark successes that motivate further student achievement and success
3. Implement high-functioning Project Learning Trees district-wide...

As we move forward with goal 2, we would like to provide some professional development opportunities to the counselors and administrators who are creating our new systemic intervention framework. I am familiar with many of the amazing resources on your website and I was wondering if your organization offers any on-ground opportunities for professional development that might help guide us in this process? We want to create a guaranteed and viable district-wide systemic intervention and support model for all struggling students. We were thinking one or two days of workshop time for approximately 30 counselors and administrators to share your vision and guide us through some first steps in creating our model."

Center Response: We always appreciate hearing about places that are moving toward developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports. And we always are looking for *STRATEGIC* ways to help.

Here what we mean by strategic:

(1) We have found that just providing professional development is insufficient for achieving the type of major systemic changes necessary for transforming a district's approach to student and learning supports.

(2) We see all professional development related to moving forward in developing a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports as embedded into the broad concern for facilitating implementation of the prototype frameworks. Our work on facilitating implementation begins with some brief reading and a phone discussion to clarify the level of district interest. Given strong interest in our approach, we pursue an on-the-ground presentation and decision making session with the district's leadership. This session is designed to clarify (a) our prototype frameworks, (b) the multi-year implementation process, and (c) what is involved in facilitating substantive implementation and sustainability (e.g., mentoring, coaching, policy commitment, capacity building including professional development). After the session, the focus is on generating an agreement about who will be the administrative leader, steering group, and planning and implementation team, and an agenda for them to prepare a design document and a strategic plan to guide the work.

Specific professional development needs are identified in the strategic plan, and we can meet these needs in several ways.

(3) From the above perspective, we see the type of two day workshop requested as one that should happen after the top leadership is fully committed to moving forward.

(However, if some place finds it can only start with such a workshop, then we focus on hooking them up with someone in a district doing this work to see if they would be willing to come to share how their district has been working on this.)

Listserv Participants: What strategies have you used to get the leadership at your school, your district, and your state department of education aware of the value of a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports and how it can enhance success for all students? Let us know. ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Follow up:

>Students and schools make the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday an opportunity for community service

From the Stillwater (MN) Area Schools' website
<http://www.stillwater.k12.mn.us/district-news/students-honor-martin-luther-king-jr-day-service>

District students are no strangers to getting involved in and giving back to the community. This year nearly 50 junior high students will participate in Be the Change Day of Service. This event has been offered annually on a non-school day near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday since 2008. While many of their peers are enjoying their day off, these students will be spending January 17 volunteering for organizations such as Feed My Starving Children, Second Harvest Heartland, Community Thread, Hope House of Stillwater and the Circle of Friends program. Students will also be participating in discussions about change and about how growth and change happen when we allow ourselves to step out of our comfort zones. "This day is set up as both a service project and a learning opportunity. While the students give back and volunteer, they also learn about community issues and the different type of organizations in our community," said Amy Skare, Coordinator of Youth Enrichment for Community Education.

In 1994, Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act. Since then, the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, has taken the lead in helping to transform the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day into a day of service to meet community needs. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

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Featured Center Resource:

>Using mid year conferences as a transition that re-engages students and families

A major Center focus is on all facets of schooling that provide an opportunity to support a successful transition. (See the Center's Online Clearinhouse Quick Find on Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcome – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm.) Here we feature the resource entitled:

>Mid-Point of a School Year - Report Cards & Conferences: Another Barrier or a Challenging Opportunity – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/atyourschool/feb03.htm>

Look at most school calendars for the month of February. They say... End of a Semester; Start of a New One; Report Cards; Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences

About first semester report cards and conferences – What happens at this point is critical in either cementing or altering teacher, parent, and student relationships. This is an especially crucial time for students who have learning, behavior, or emotional problems. Most data on school depression and suicide attempts show an increase in the spring semester. Is this seasonal pattern linked to the experience of school failure and hopelessness? Changing negative patterns and cycles is what support for learning is all about.

And, school support staff can play a key role in all this by introducing new approaches and partnering with teachers. In planning what to do, remember the following:

- >For some students and their parents, report cards and conferences affirm how well things are going. Students are succeeding; parents are proud; teachers feel successful. (When we talk with teachers in urban districts and poor rural areas, they estimate about 10% fit this category.)
- >For another group of students and parents, the news is a surprise. Last year's teacher said things were going all right, and we thought that was so this year until we saw these grades.... No one told us.... We were hoping there was time to make up missing work
- >For still others, the report card repeats negative interactions with the school. My child doesn't do well in school ... the report card only confirms this, and school conferences only make it sound like our fault....

Guess which parents don't like to come to school?

School staff lament: “When we have an event for parents at school, only about 10% attend regularly.” The parents with whom schools need to connect are the very ones who don't attend conferences and parent events.

Differentiating subgroups helps in appreciating that the 10% who attend school events on a regular basis are probably the same 10% whose kids are doing well. It shouldn't surprise anyone that those who associate school with negative experiences would avoid such experiences whenever possible. We often quote a noted behavioral intervention specialist who likes to emphasize that “For every negative encounter you have with a student, you

need to have eight positive encounters to restore the balance.” The same may be true for parents.

The dilemma: If a student isn't doing well, parents need to be informed. The problem is how to do it in ways that first and foremost don't alienate the family and hopefully mobilize them to work with the school to make things better. How can schools balance a focus on the strengths and assets of students and their families when the report card conveys a negative picture?

Rethinking parent conferences – It's time to rethink end of semester conferences for those students who need support. In redesigning what is done, the objectives are to

- >counter tendencies for students and parents to see the reported grades as a reason to give up
- >enhance student, parent, and staff motivation to do better.

This requires a process that

- >avoids blaming, defensiveness, anger, frustration
- >emphasizes mutual respect, sharing, and interchange (talking with, not at; discussing, not telling)
- >involves students and parents in enhancing the understanding of everyone concerned about what can be done to make things better and in planning how to get from here to there .

One Evolving Strategy: Student Led Conferences – Many schools are recognizing the counterproductive impact of their interactions with parents of students who are not doing well. Student led conferences are an emerging strategy some schools are using in hopes of addressing the problem. Such student-led meetings can be an effective strategy for engaging parents related to counseling, intervention programs, planning for supplementary services, etc. There is a good deal of information on student led conferences.

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New Directions Brief Survey

New Directions Initiative

Unifying Student and Learning Supports

Please take five minutes to answer 4 brief items so we can share where districts/schools stand with respect to unifying student and learning supports and developing them into a comprehensive system.*

Send you responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

(1) A policy component that makes student and learning supports a high priority?

Does the policy for school improvement address barriers to learning/teaching and the problem of re-engaging disconnected students as an equal component with instruction and management?

_____Yes _____No

(2) A transformative intervention framework for student and learning supports?

Has an intervention framework been adopted that combines both an integrated and systemic continuum of school and community interventions and an organized set of multifaceted content arenas?

Yes No

(3) An operational infrastructure dedicated to making the transformative intervention framework a sustainable reality? Is there

(a) an administrative leader whose job and accountabilities are dedicated to unifying and developing a comprehensive system of student and learning supports?

Yes No

(b) a leadership team to help unify and develop the system?

Yes No

(c) work groups to carry out specific developmental tasks?

Yes No

(4) Capacity building (especially professional development) for ensuring student and learning supports are unified and developed into a sustainable, comprehensive system? Is there continuous capacity building for implementing, enhancing quality, sustaining, and replicating the work?

Yes No

*If you feel you need more information about the above items, see the Winter, 2014 issue of the Center's e-journal - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/winter14.pdf>

For items answered YES, it would be helpful in sharing with others across the country if you could send us links to any documents, websites, etc. related to that facet of the work or jot down any specifics.

Please share! Send in relevant resources ideas, requests, comments and experiences to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Note: Responses come only to the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA for possible inclusion in the next week's message.

We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and to the *Facebook* site (which can be accessed from the Center's website homepage <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>