



# Addressing Barriers

# to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link



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## Strengthening Learning Supports at Schools *This Year*: Best Practices and *Innovation*

*Each day public education must strive to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school. When students don't succeed, civil rights, public health, and societal well-being are undermined. Enabling student success requires high priority attention to innovation in addressing barriers to learning and teaching.*

**N**o more waiting for failure. No more piecemeal and fragmented approaches to addressing barriers to teaching and learning and re-engaging disconnected students. No more *inappropriate* referrals for special education diagnosis and treatment.

This year is the time for schools to proactively begin the process of moving well beyond the old case-by-case (clinical) model that kicks in after a problem arises. Sure, some students need one-to-one assistance and even special education programs, but stemming the tide of students who end up with learning and behavior problems requires a *comprehensive system of learning supports*. By developing over time a cohesive and well conceived continuum of interventions, such a system can prevent and also be quickly responsive to individual problems when they arise.

This is the year to *begin* radically transforming how schools provide student and learning supports. All the special attention being paid to school improvement and to low performing and turnaround schools provides both an imperative and opportunities to do so.

With the new school year upon us, this issue of *Addressing Barriers to Learning* focuses first on several practices for immediately enhancing student and learning supports. Then, in the second article, we stress two strategic steps to pursue this year that can move student and learning supports from the margins to the heart of school improvement planning.

The practices and innovations discussed can help schools move more quickly and proactively in developing a *comprehensive and cohesive system* to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. The aim is to transform schools at all levels. And, of course, embedded in the transformation are breakthrough ways for schools to approach mental health and psychosocial concerns.

(cont. on p. 2)

### What are Learning Supports?

*Learning supports are the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to directly address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. A comprehensive system of learning supports provides supportive interventions in classrooms and schoolwide and is fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction and management at a school.*

### Some Specific Practices for Enhancing Learning Supports Immediately

Every school has some student and learning supports; few have enough. Opportunities to enhance such supports at a school arise daily and over the year. For example, most schools can use staff, aides, peers, family and community members and other volunteers to enhance welcoming and social support networks and address school adjustment problems before the problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions. Schools also can adopt monthly themes that anticipate and address the changing demands that arise over the school year. The following discussion highlights such practices and cites online resources to facilitate the work.

#### Prevention is the First Concern; Focusing on Transitions is a Good Place to Start

Developing a range of supports for transitions provides a schoolwide focus on prevention. Every school and classroom needs well developed interventions for the many transitions that occur each day and over the school year. Transitions provide opportunities to enhance acceptance and adjustment, prevent transition problems, and increase positive attitudes/motivation toward school and learning – all of which add to a positive school climate.

Among the many transitions that warrant special attention are

- newcomer welcoming and social support (e.g., Are there welcome signs, materials, and initial receptions? peer buddy programs and other social networks for students, families, staff, volunteers?)
- daily transitions (e.g., Are there programs for before school, breaks, lunch, and afterschool?)
- articulation programs (e.g., Are there programs to support grade-to-grade, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and in and out of special education transitions?)
- summer or intersession programs (e.g., Are there catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs?)
- school-to-career/higher education (e.g., Are there counseling, pathway, and mentor programs?)

The contrast between schools that do and do not provide a range of supports for transition can be breathtaking. For example, observe the differences between schools that focus on *welcoming and providing social support* at the beginning of the year (as well as for all newcomers who subsequently enroll). Most schools have some form of orientation and welcoming. Those intent on preventing problems also pay special attention to providing supports for newcomers who appear to have difficulty negotiating enrollment and/or joining in the routines and culture of the school. To these ends, such schools provide front office staff with training and resources so they can provide a special welcome and supportive outreach to those who seem overly reticent or confused. Teachers in these schools are prepared and given assistance so that they can personally welcome and connect newcomers with social supports and provide special attention to those students and/or family members who initially need extra supports.

Specific examples of supports for transitions are available from the Center's Online Clearinghouse – see the Quick Find search topic *Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcome* at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm)

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## ***Investing in Parents During the First Six Weeks of School***

Excerpts from an article by Carol Davis and Alice Yang  
downloaded from the Responsive Classroom website: <http://www.responsiveclassroom.org>

“Teachers work hard during the first six weeks of school to get to know their students and to establish a safe and welcoming classroom environment. This early investment makes the whole school year go better. The same idea applies to working with the most influential adults in the children’s lives: their parents.

Although in many schools the first parent conference doesn’t take place until November, teachers can begin early—right as, or even before, the school year starts—to build a positive relationship with parents.

Investing in parents as well as children during those critical first six weeks yields better school–home interactions all year, enriches classroom life, and enhances children’s learning.

### **Goals for the first six weeks**

Teachers are experts on curriculum and pedagogy, but parents are experts on their own children—how the children absorb information, what delights them, how they show that they’re upset, what comforts them. During the first six weeks, we can create a climate of respect, trust, and collaboration with these valuable educational partners. Here are the three main goals in this early work with parents:

*Help parents feel welcomed and valued.* Show that you’re excited to work with their child. Reassure them that their opinions, interests, and family culture matter to you. As one parent of a second grader said, “It’s so important to me that the teacher has a welcoming demeanor and shows that she wants you to be part of your child’s education.”

*Welcome parents to play an active role.* Begin sending the message that you want parents to visit the classroom, send notes, call you, and voice opinions.

*Build community among families.* Help parents get to know each other. When parents share positive relationships, they’re more likely to get their children together outside of school, take part in school life, and seek help if their children need it.

### **Strategies for meeting these goals**

*Start early with a special parent conference.* To demonstrate powerfully that parents matter, hold your first parent conference before school starts or during the early weeks. You’ll gather crucial information about the child and family, which can mean more effective teaching from the very start. One way to structure this first conference is to invite parents to share their goals, hopes, and dreams for their child. ... meaningfully engage parents and set a collaborative tone....

*Send out a family interest inventory.* Another way to gather information early is to send out a form that asks parents to list special talents, skills, interests, or family traditions that they would like to share with the class. This establishes a connection with the family and welcomes parents into an active role in classroom life....

*Hold a Morning Meeting for parents.* To encourage connections among families during the first six weeks, many teachers hold a Morning Meeting for parents, perhaps at back-to-school night. Although the content is geared toward parents and the meeting takes place in the evening, you can follow the usual Morning Meeting format—a Greeting, a Sharing, a Group Activity, and News and Announcements. Just as this format sets a positive tone for learning in the classroom, it does so for this evening of adult communication. It helps build a sense of community among adults and lets parents experience something their children do every day at school....”

For more about opportunities to use the beginning of a school year to welcome families, see the Center Online Clearinghouse Quick Find topic *Parent/Home Involvement in Schools*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm>

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### Respond Rapidly to School Adjustment Problems

It is only a matter of weeks (sometimes days) after students enter a new school or begin a new year that it is clear to most teachers which students are experiencing difficulties adjusting (e.g., to new content and standards, new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc.). It is particularly poignant to see students who are trying hard, but for various reasons aren't keeping up.

School adjustment problems manifest as a range of behavior, emotional, and learning problems (e.g., including students who are easily distracted, need extra direction and guidance, and/or are having difficulty finishing tasks; those who are very anxious, extremely shy, or frequently misbehave). It is essential to be *proactive* by addressing problems in the earliest stages at all levels of schooling.

When school adjustment problems are not well-addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior and learning problems increase. And, a flood of requests for special services and special education assessment is certain to follow. This leads to many students with common learning and behavior problems being misdiagnosed as having learning disabilities and ADHD because this has been seen as the only way to assure they receive learning supports. In turn, this contributes to the dropout/pushout and achievement gap problems that raise major civil rights and public health concerns.

The growing emphasis on *Response to Intervention* (RTI) is expected to be a positive step in stemming the tide of referrals. However, RTI is still a "waiting for problems" approach that may pursue too limited a set of intervention strategies and then reify the case-by-case model by referring students for special education assessment. Prevention should be the first focus for intervention.

The push for *Response to Intervention* represents the long-standing practice of trying new strategies in the classroom – based on growing understanding of what is causing the problem and information about best practices for ameliorating the problem. Special attention is paid to enhancing student engagement through (a) an emphasis on learning and enrichment options that the student indicates interest in pursuing and (b) a temporary deemphasis on areas that are not of high interest. These are critical, and too often ignored, first steps.

For a brief set of guidance notes on addressing school adjustment problems, go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjustmentproblems.pdf>

### Open the Door to Volunteers and Develop a Volunteer Pool

Volunteers can be a multifaceted resource in a classroom and throughout a school (see Exhibit on the next page). For this to be the case, however, the school staff must value volunteers and learn how to recruit, train, nurture, and use them effectively. When implemented properly, school volunteer programs can enable teachers to individualize instruction, free teachers and other school personnel to meet students' needs more effectively, broaden students' experiences through interaction with volunteers, strengthen school-community understanding and relations, enhance home involvement, and enrich the lives of volunteers. In the classroom, volunteers can provide just the type of extra support needed to enable staff to conference and work with students who require special assistance.

Volunteers can be recruited from a variety of sources: parents and other family members; others in the community such as senior citizens and workers in local businesses; college students; and peers and older students at the school. There also are organized programs that can provide volunteers, such as AmeriCorps, VISTA and local service clubs. And, increasingly, institutions of higher education are requiring students to participate in learning through service. Schools committed to enhancing home and community involvement in schooling can pursue volunteer programs as a productive element in their efforts to engage these invaluable resources.

Few teachers have the time to recruit and train a cadre of volunteers. Teachers can, however, work with student support staff and the school administration to set up a volunteer program for the school. To get things rolling, a small group of volunteers can be recruited and taught how to implement and maintain the volunteer program. Resources are available on the internet for how to recruit a large pool of volunteers, train them, nurture them, work with them to recruit replacements when they leave. In the long run, the cost of volunteer programs is relatively small compared to the impact volunteers can have on school climate and the quality of life for students and school staff.

The following Exhibit indicates the many ways volunteers can help enhance supports at a school. In the classroom, for example, they can help with

- (1) *tutoring* – One of the most direct and effective ways volunteers provide extra instructional assistance is through individual and small group

*Exhibit***Roles for Volunteers, Interns, Aides in the Classroom and Throughout the School****I. Welcoming and Social Support**

- A. In the Front Office
  1. Greeting and welcoming every day
  2. Ensuring no waiting and providing information to those who come to the front desk
  3. Escorting guests, new students/families to destinations on the campus
  4. Orienting newcomers at the beginning and throughout the year
- B. Staffing a Welcoming Club
  1. Connecting newly arrived families with peers
  2. Helping develop orientation and other information resources for newcomers
  3. Helping establish newcomer support groups that transition into established interest groups and networks

**II. Working with Designated Students in Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Classrooms**

- A. Helping to orient new students at the beginning and throughout the year
- B. Engaging disinterested, distracted, and distracting students
- C. Providing personalized learning opportunities, guidance, and support for specific students in class to help them stay focused and engaged

**III. Providing Additional Opportunities and Support in Class and on the Campus as a Whole by Helping to Recruit, Develop, and Staff Additional Volunteers for**

- A. Recreational activity
- B. Enrichment activity
- C. Tutoring
- D. Mentoring

**IV. Helping Enhance the Positive Climate Throughout the School**

- A. Assisting with Supervision in Class and Throughout the Campus
- B. Working with Students on Campus "Beautification"
- C. Helping to Get Materials Ready

For more on the topic of *Volunteers in Schools*, see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/volunteers.html>

tutoring. Volunteer tutors (including peer tutors and cross-age tutors) provide a way to make such assistance feasible on a large scale. Volunteers who are bi-lingual provide a special resource for students with limited English skills. They not only can help students with lessons but also can

assist with development of English language skills, and can help the teacher communicate with family members. In the case of students tutoring other students, various benefits may accrue for the tutor in terms of enhanced knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior.

(2) *planning and implementing instruction* – As the teacher develops lesson plans and prepares instructional activities, volunteers can help gather resources and contribute any special knowledge and skills they have acquired. During class, they can help support and guide the work of small groups.

(3) *social support* – Throughout any school day and at critical times throughout the school year, students require social as well as academic support. Who needs social support? New students and their families; students who are shy; those who are uncertain about how to make friends; those who feel alienated; those experiencing temporary emotional upsets; those who misbehave; students making the transition to a new grade and classroom; those transitioning to middle and high school, students transitioning back from special education; and many others. Here, too, peer volunteers can be used. For example, trained "peer buddies" may commit to

being a buddy for several weeks – eating lunch together, participating in various activities, and facilitating connections with other students.

(4) *mentoring* – It is well known that a good relationship with a caring adult is a fundamental ingredient in helping children succeed. In one form or another, all children need role models and advocates. Ideally, family members fulfill this role; teachers and others who work with young people can do so as well. To expand the range of role models and to ensure all youngsters do have an advocate, volunteers can be recruited as mentors. Mentoring is another tool in efforts to provide social support and a sense of future options and hope, develop positive behavior and skills, increase engagement in school and life, and reduce school dropout. Recruiting college students as mentors provides role models and networks that can enhance students' interest in pursuing higher education.

### **Introduce Monthly Themes to Focus on Upcoming Needs and Opportunities**

Schools have a yearly rhythm, changing with the cycle and demands of the school calendar. The following are examples of monthly themes schools can draw upon and go beyond. The idea is to establish focal points for minimizing potential problems and maximizing natural opportunities to promote social-emotional learning. Resources to pursue such monthly themes are available on the Center's website. (See *Ideas for Enhancing Support at Your School This Month* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>)

- Sept. – Getting Off to a Good Start
- Oct. – Enabling School Adjustment
- Nov. – Responding to Referrals in Ways That Can *Stem the Tide*
- Dec. – Reengaging Students: Using a Student's Time Off in Ways That Pay Off!
- Jan. – New Year's Resolutions—A Time for Renewal; A New Start for Everyone
- Feb. – The Midpoint of a School-year—Report Cards and Conferences: Another Barrier or a Challenging Opportunity
- Mar. – Reducing Stress; Preventing Burnout
- Apr. – Spring Can Be a High Risk Time for Students
- May – Time to Help Students/Families Plan Successful Transitions to a New Grade or School
- June – Summer and the *Living Ain't Easy*
- July – Using *Downtime* to Plan Better Ways to Work Together in Providing Learning Supports
- Aug. – Now Is the Time to Develop Ways to Avoid Burnout

*While the long-range aims of schooling are to ensure the school's academic, social, emotional, and physical outcomes for all students are achieved, the immediate focus for any school year is to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.*

*In schools with significant numbers of learning, behavior, and emotional problems, ensuring equity of opportunity requires effectively addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.*

### Who Can Guide this Work at the School?

Enhancing learning supports over the school year requires leadership and workgroups that are resource-oriented (rather than a case-oriented). A good starting point at a school is to establish a *Learning Supports Resource Team* – see

> *What Is a Learning Supports Resource Team?*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

> *Resource-Oriented Teams: Key Infrastructure Mechanisms For Enhancing Learning Supports*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Report/resource\\_oriented\\_teams.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Report/resource_oriented_teams.pdf)

> *Developing Resource-Oriented Mechanisms to Enhance Learning Supports*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/developing\\_resource\\_oriented-mechanisms.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/developing_resource_oriented-mechanisms.pdf)

And the following free resources will be helpful for structured staff discussions related to enhancing student supports:

> *Enabling Learning in the Classroom* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/enabling.htm>

> *Re-engaging Students in Learning* –

<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/quicktraining/reengagingstudents.pdf>

> *Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning* (Training Tutorial)

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition\\_tt/transindex.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition_tt/transindex.htm)

> *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning* –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf>

For more resources, see the Center’s Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/websrch.htm>

### Learning Support Innovation is Key to School Improvement

Enhancing learning supports is part of the broader goal of creating schools where staff, students and families interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals. An atmosphere can be created that fosters smooth transitions, positive informal encounters, and social interactions; facilitates social support; provides opportunities for ready access to information and for learning how to function effectively in the school culture; and encourages involvement in decision-making. Learning supports are critical in creating a positive sense of community at a school and in facilitating student readiness to learn and perform every day.

**NO unauthorized visitors    NO weapons    NO drugs**



I knew we had a problem when I noticed that all the signs  
at the school entrance began with **NO** instead of **WELCOME!**

## Using the Year to Take Two Major Strategic Steps Toward Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

**E**nhancing specific types of supports each year is essential. The goal over time, however, is to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

So, besides strengthening specific interventions, another objective for this year is to take major strides forward in system development.

In moving forward, it is essential to keep in mind that the intent is system building. Therefore, before emphasizing *beginning* steps, we want to provide a brief overview related to establishing a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of learning supports at a school site (see the Exhibit on the next page).

System building involves systemic change. Therefore, the Exhibit organizes the steps in terms of four major systemic change phases:

- *Creating Readiness and Commitment*: enhancing the climate/culture/conditions for innovative systemic change;
- *Start-up and phase in – initial implementation*: adapting and phasing-in a prototype with well-designed infrastructure and capacity building;
- *Sustaining, evolving, and enhancing outcomes*: ensuring institutionalization, maintenance, momentum, and progress;
- *Ongoing evolution*: replication to scale and creative renewal.

Making major systemic changes to strengthen learning supports, of course, is not easy; the alternative, however, is maintaining a very unsatisfactory status quo for many students.

**Get out of the box** and **Aim High**



As John Maynard Keynes has stressed:

***The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.***

## Exhibit

### Overview: Establishing a Comprehensive, Multifaceted, and Cohesive System of Learning Supports at a School Site

At any site, key stakeholders and their leadership must understand and commit to systemic changes for the proposed innovation. Commitment must be reflected in policy statements and creation of an infrastructure that ensures essential leadership, resources, motivation, and capability for developing an effective system of learning supports. Developing such a system requires blending resources. Thus, the emphasis throughout is on *collaboration* – cooperation, coordination, and, where viable, integration – among school and community stakeholders. Planning and accountability related to the following four phases of systemic change use data from evaluation of major antecedents, transactions, and outcomes.

#### First Phase – *Creating Readiness and Commitment*

- Introduce basic ideas to relevant groups of stakeholders to build interest and consensus for the work and to garner feedback and support
- Establish a policy framework and obtain leadership commitment – the leadership should make a commitment to adopt a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching as a primary and essential component of school improvement
- Identify a leader (equivalent to the leader for the instructional component) to ensure policy commitments are carried out for establishing the new component

#### Second Phase – *Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure and Capacity*

- Establish temporary mechanisms to facilitate initial implementation/systemic change (e.g., a steering group, an organization change facilitator) and develop the capacity of these mechanisms to guide and manage change and provide essential leadership during phase-in
- Formulate specific start-up and phase-in actions
- Refine infrastructure so that the component is fully integrated with the instructional and management components
  - > Establish and train an administrative leader
  - > Ensure there is a resource-oriented mechanism (e.g., a Learning Supports Resource Team) and train those who staff it in how to perform major resource-oriented tasks (e.g., mapping, analysis, coordinating, planning, setting priorities for program development, enhancing intervention systems)
  - > Help organize work groups for each major arena of component activity and facilitate their initial mapping and analysis of resources and formulation of recommendations
  - > Develop ad hoc work groups to enhance component visibility, communication, sharing, and problem solving
- Establish a system for quality improvement and evaluation of impact and integrate it into school improvement planning, evaluation, and accountability
- Attempt to fill program/service gaps and pursue economies of scale through outreach designed to establish formal collaborative linkages among families of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern) and among district-wide and community resources (e.g., through establishing a Learning Supports Resource *Council*)

#### Third Phase – *Sustaining, Evolving, and Enhancing Outcomes*

- Plan for maintenance and institutionalization
- Develop strategies for maintaining momentum and progress

#### Fourth Phase – *Replication to Scale and Generating Creative Renewal*

## Getting Started

There are two major strategic steps to pursue this year in moving forward with systemic change:

- (1) organize leadership and a resource-oriented workgroup and
- (2) become a major partner in school improvement planning.

### Leadership and a Resource-Oriented Workgroup

Organize leadership and a resource-oriented workgroup with an agenda focused on addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

As noted in the preceding article, a good starting point is to establish a *Learning Supports Resource Team*. For example, again see *Developing Resource-Oriented Mechanisms to Enhance Learning Supports*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/developing\\_resource\\_oriented-mechanisms.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/developing_resource_oriented-mechanisms.pdf)

Then:

§ Map the resources – The team’s first work is to *map the resources* currently allocated for all learning support activity and personnel at the school. This is done using a learning supports framework that reflects a comprehensive approach to intervention.

*What resources does the school have?*

As a guide for this work, see *Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports*  
><http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>

Also see: *Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change*  
><http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resourcemapping/resourcemappingandmanagement.pdf>

*What does the school need?*

§ Clarify problems interfering with learning and teaching – After mapping resources, the team can review school data to *determine which problems are interfering the most with learning and teaching* (e.g., attendance, transitions, misbehavior, inappropriate referrals for specialized services and special education).

*How are resources meeting the most pressing need?*

§ Analyze gaps – The resource mapping and clarification of needs provide the information needed for a gap analysis.

*What should be the priorities for strengthening learning supports?*

§ Delineate priorities for strengthening learning supports – Based on a gap analysis, the *Learning Supports Resource Team* can identify what would be the best use of existing resources and personnel to address the most widespread problems at the school and delineate the highest priorities for strengthening efforts to develop a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching – schoolwide and in the classroom. In turn, formulation of priorities provides a basis for joining in the school improvement planning process with specific recommendations for enhancing how the school provides learning supports over time.

Another aspect of getting started is to develop a process for unifying and aligning (not just coordinating) the fragmented approach to learning supports found at most schools. This is particularly important for ensuring additional initiatives don’t increase fragmentation and compete with development of a comprehensive system. An aid for this work is the Center document entitled: *Another Initiative? Where Does it Fit? A Unifying Framework and an Integrated Infrastructure for Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Promote Healthy Development*.

><http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf>

## Making Learning Supports a Major Facet of School Improvement Planning

Enhancing learning supports at a school involves full integration into school improvement planning. Gaining access may be as simple as volunteering to participate.

Getting to planning tables, however, is only the beginning. It is necessary to come prepared to

- (1) make the case, using data and best practices, for what needs to be done
- (2) offer specific recommendations for priorities and for how to redeploy existing resources in order to implement immediate priorities in ways that ensure there is movement toward developing a fully integrated comprehensive system of learning supports.

Making the case at the planning table includes stressing that leaving no child behind means addressing the problems of the *many* who aren't benefitting from instructional reforms because of a host of *external* and *internal* barriers interfering with their development and learning. Meeting the challenge stemming from factors that interfere with learning and teaching is an absolute *imperative* given how many schools are designated as low performing, how difficult it is to close the achievement gap, the continuing concerns about school safety, and the rate of dropouts. Therefore, school improvement planning must fully reflect this imperative.

Recommendations stress that meeting the needs of *all* students requires

- rethinking how schools can more effectively use *all* support programs, resources, and personnel
- setting appropriate priorities and goals each year for developing a comprehensive system (addressing about three major gaps a year)
- establishing an *operational infrastructure* for developing a comprehensive system (e.g., the leader/administrator responsible for doing so, a team to work with the leader in developing a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports).

No one needs to start from scratch in developing a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. The Center has many aids online for proposing and planning development of such a system. See the following brief discussions:

> *Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf>

> *School Improvement? . . . fully addressing barriers to learning and teaching is the next step!*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolimprovement.pdf>

> *Toolkit* - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

> *The School Leader's Guide to Student Learning Supports: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/corwin/bookannouncement.htm>

## What's New?



The list of *Center Resources and Publications* is at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/selection.html>. Below are a few new resources.

### New from the Center

#### >Tools for School System Design

In working with system design teams at state and district levels, it is helpful to begin with some general guidance for the design process. The following are recently developed working drafts of aids related to our work with the Louisiana Department of Education.

- *Generic Outline for a Design Document* for a comprehensive system of learning supports
- *Templates* for preparing the following sections of a design document:
  - >> *Introduction and Imperative*
  - >> *Intervention Framework*
  - >> *Operational Infrastructure*
  - >> *Policy Considerations*
- *Guidance Notes for Outside Facilitators* working with a state or district to guide a design team working on creating a comprehensive system of learning supports
- A working draft for *Guide for Team Designing a Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Reengage Disconnected Students*

Each of these aids can be accessed from the Toolkit on our Website – go to *A Set of Aids for Design Teams* at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkita.htm>

The Center for Mental Health in Schools operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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 . . . and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Admin., U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services.

### Want resources?

### Need technical assistance?

Use our website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

Or contact us at E-mail: [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu)

Ph: (310) 825-3634 Toll Free Ph: (866) 846-4843

Write: Center for Mental Health in Schools, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

If you're not receiving our monthly electronic newsletter (ENEWS) or our weekly *Practitioners' Exchange*, send your E-mail address to [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu)

For the latest on Center resources and activities, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> – click on *What's New*

### Responding to Input From Young Adult Advisors

We have invited the university students who staff our Center to become the initial core for the Center's informal *Young Adult Advisory group*. The first questions we posed to them asked about what they found helpful at key transitions in their education (middle to high school, high school to college). As might be expected, they confirm the important role that peers play in providing transition support, information, networking and stress that students who have difficulty with these transitions are those least likely to seek help from adults. As the Center strives to enhance information about policies and practices related to peer support (informal and formal) and how schools can reach out more effectively to students at risk, we hope that you will share any information and resources related to these concerns. Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

How would you *diagnose* someone who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, then sits down weeping uncontrollably the next?

A football coach?

