

Berkeley, CA

Berkeley has a strong school-community collaboration. The following are excerpts from two January 2007 documents prepared by the Berkeley Integrated Resources Initiative:

(1) *Schools-Mental Health Partnership Strategic Plan*

(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/BIRI%20Schools%20Mental%20Health.pdf>)

(2) *Universal Learning Support System Assessment Report*

(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/Universal%20Learning%20Support%20System%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>)

“In June 2005 the Berkeley Alliance – a longstanding partnership between the Berkeley Unified School District, the City of Berkeley, the University of California-Berkeley, and the Berkeley community – formally committed to supporting the Berkeley Integrated Resources Initiative. This is a community-wide endeavor to integrate school and community resources, in policy and practice, with a common goal of promoting healthy child and youth development and breaking down barriers to learning.

“The Vision calls for the Berkeley Unified School District, the City of Berkeley, the University of California-Berkeley, and local community organizations [to] work collectively and purposely to identify and weave their relevant resources to effectively address barriers to learning and promote healthy development for all Berkeley children and youth.”

The Mission calls upon the partners to “address barriers to learning and promoting healthy development for Berkeley children and youth. [This] entails the strengthening of students, schools, families, and neighborhoods to foster a developmentally appropriate learning environment in which children and youth can thrive. The systemic change process emphasizes a coordinated school improvement and agency reform effort that leverages and weaves school-owned and community-owned resources in a comprehensive manner. In their work together, schools and agencies will create and provide a continuum of support for children and youth that emphasizes promoting healthy development for all, intervening early when problems arise, and providing specialized services to address critical needs.”

The first step taken was to undertake a comprehensive mapping of resources and gaps in Berkeley. To accomplish this goal it was necessary to establish a conceptual framework for the assessment. The partnership sought a model that was comprehensive enough to address the wide range of issues facing children and families as they grow and develop. After some reflection, the partnership adopted the Comprehensive Systemic Intervention Framework developed by Drs. Adelman and Taylor of the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools...

In August 2005 Berkeley Unified School District received an Integrating Mental Health in Schools grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This grant, organized around the Adelman and Taylor framework, called for a systemic reform process that would affect all of the public schools and students in Berkeley.”

“The Berkeley Schools Mental Health Partnership is part of the Berkeley Integrated Resources

Initiative, a community wide endeavor launched in 2005 to integrate school and community resources in policy and practice, with a common goal of promoting healthy child and youth development and breaking down barriers to learning. The initiative builds on a longstanding partnership between the Berkeley Unified School District, the City of Berkeley, the University of California at Berkeley and the broader community and weaves together existing institutional change efforts into a single coordinated and unified process. The initiative calls for a systemic change process in which the organizations collaborate along a common vision, language and process, and implement necessary policy changes to sustain the effort over time.

In order to provide structure, direction and a shared theoretical approach to their work, the initiative adopted the Comprehensive Systemic Intervention Framework developed by Drs. Adelman and Taylor of the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools.”

“This framework is based on the premise that the ‘range of barriers to student learning is multifaceted and complex and the number of students affected is quite large...[and therefore] it is reasonable to stress that a comprehensive and systemic approach to intervention is necessary.’ This framework, therefore, ‘conceives the scope of activity as a school-community continuum of interconnected intervention systems consisting of: systems for promotion of healthy development and prevention of problems; systems for intervening early to address problems as soon after onset as is feasible; and systems for assisting those with chronic and severe problems.’

Drs. Adelman and Taylor categorize six Universal Learning Supports in an attempt to capture ‘the multifaceted work schools need to pursue in comprehensively addressing barriers to learning.’ The BIRI Steering Committee has added a seventh arena, cultural literacy, to emphasize the importance of supporting children and youth in culturally competent ways, given the diversity of the Berkeley community. The categories are:

1. Classroom-focused enabling - enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction for students with mild-moderate learning and behavioral problems and re-engaging those who have become disengaged from learning at school)
2. Support for transitions (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes, daily transitions)
3. Home involvement with school - strengthening families and home and school connections
4. Crisis response and prevention - responding to, and where feasible, preventing school and personal crises
5. Community involvement and support (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
6. Student and family assistance - facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed"
7. Cultural literacy - the ability to tailor outreach, engagement, and intervention to the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of students and families.”

“A Universal Learning Support System (ULSS) is constructed to provide **appropriate** services to **all** children and youth who need them to be successful academically, behaviorally and socially.

To accomplish this goal, a ULSS must have an appropriate continuum of highly accessible services, ranging from the least to the most intensive, and the ability to deploy them equitably to children, youth and families based on need. The system would be based on the framework of Drs. Adelman and Taylor and be a single, unified, interagency coordinated, and integrated system of services and supports. The system would be funded, staffed and governed by all relevant public and private agencies and community organizations that share the goal of promoting healthy children, youth, families and communities....”

Comments from the Manager of Integrated Resources, Berkeley Unified School District:
“We have seen mental health as one part of a broader system of "Universal Learning Supports" (ULSS) for our students.... I did a training for a subsection of our ULSS Council (elementary schools) focused on the organization and coordination of learning support resources more holistically than we had done in the past, emphasizing a continuum of services (I kept pushing to try and get people to think about prevention/promotion) in areas such as mental and physical health, afterschool programing, special education, and on more abstract sometimes unrecognized supports such as the unique strengths of teachers/staff and their relationships with students.

So while we are pushing an elephant one step at a time, I really feel that our system is moving. But it is clearly a long term process that takes time, and also needs to be resourced. We are looking at ways of generating new financial resources to support it. Some of these appears may well come directly from BUSD, which is a real sign of increased buy-in.”

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