

Saint Paul Public Schools, St. Paul, MN

In recent years, the schools in Saint Paul have explored new directions for providing learning supports through special projects. With support from the Wilder Foundation, they focused on three schools designated as Achievement Plus schools. Then, with a federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, they expanded from a narrow focus on mental health to an emphasis on addressing barriers to learning by adopting a comprehensive learning supports approach. As part of this work, a plan was developed to scale up to 13 schools using specially trained consultants to assist in coordinating, integrating and expanding comprehensive approaches to addressing barriers to learning. Plans call for further scale-up.

Achievement Plus Schools

Achievement Plus is designed to guide the education reform efforts of the Saint Paul Public School District, as well as school districts throughout Minnesota and across the country. The focus on learning supports at these schools was implemented to provide a demonstration for eventual district-wide scale-up. The approach to Learning Supports focuses on six areas of prevention and intervention:

- C Classroom-focused supports
- C Crisis assistance and prevention
- C Support for student transitions
- C Home involvement in schooling
- C Community outreach and volunteering in schools
- C Direct student and family assistance such as mental health counseling, dental clinic, nurse practitioners, and health education classes

Sites Established by the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

At these sites, interventions were conceived in terms of the following six areas:

- >coordinating and providing services to students and families
- >responding to and preventing crises
- >classroom teacher support and consultation
- >supporting transitions
- >increasing home involvement in schooling
- >developing greater community involvement and support for the school.

The work of the specially trained consultants involved a combination of building infrastructure, facilitating systemic changes, and helping establish procedures to coordinate and develop interventions. Initial efforts focused on integrating school support interventions and developing a broad-based preventive emphasis to address the needs of urban learners. To these ends, resource-oriented mechanisms were used to map resources and ensure interventions match the assessed needs of the school staff, parents, and students.

District Changes

Based on this work and related initiatives (including the MN State Summit for New Directions for Student Support), reports from the District's Office of Student Services indicate that discussions are underway about setting new directions that recognizes student support and learning supports are as important as instruction at the school level.