

Draft Proposal for Policy Legislation

Restructuring Student Support Resources and Enhancing Their Connection with Community Resources

Background:

School-linked service initiatives around the country have shown considerable promise in demonstrating another element that is worth building upon in efforts to enhance student achievement and well-being.

At the same time, such initiatives have had difficulty demonstrating ways to

- fully integrate community resources with school-owned programs and services
- sustain existing projects
- clarify how other schools can adopt the model without project funding.

And, the models used to develop the initiatives have by-passed the more fundamental problem of clarifying how existing school-owned student/learner support programs and services should be restructured to enhance their impact.*

Policy Proposal:

One key to dealing with all these concerns rests with new policy designed to encourage the restructuring of school-owned student/learner support resources in ways that enhance their ability to (a) address barriers to student learning and promote healthy development and (b) connect with community resources (e.g., community-based organizations and businesses, regional non-profits, county/city public agencies, parent organizations and family members, volunteers).

Such restructuring should encompass (but not be limited to) all school-owned student/learner support programs and services including those provided by psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers, various specialist personnel, and by others involved with programs designed to

- minimize grade retention by providing supports for students who do not achieve promotion standards
- prevent dropouts and pregnancy
- reduce violence and enhance school safety
- ensure that schools are drug free
- provide supports for various student transitions
- provide supports and special assistance for those with special needs related to enhancing readiness skills, second language acquisition, disabilities, and so forth
- respond to and prevent crises
- identify and address physical and mental health problems

- promote physical, social, and emotional development and well-being
- enhance family and community involvement in school and schooling.
- support and strengthen families
- contribute to neighborhood safety, security, and stability

To these ends, policy must

- encourage school districts and each school to include an emphasis on restructuring student/learner supports in school improvement plans and certification reviews and to include family/community active involvement in these processes
- encourage state education agencies to develop and provide district staff and their school boards with frameworks, training, and technical assistance relevant to such restructuring
- encourage institutes of higher education to include such frameworks in their preparation programs for district and school administrators and pupil service personnel.

*Note: The term “school-owned” refers to the programs, services, resources, and related personnel financed directly by the school system.. “School-linked” refers to programs, services, resources, and related personnel financed by an agent other than the school system (e.g., a community health or human services agency). Some school-linked resources are co-located at a school site or at a district-owned regional facility. The term “school-affiliated” has been proposed by some to refer to situations where resources are underwritten with pooled funding.