

Student/Learning Supports Falling Off the Fiscal Cliff

Now that the pandemic relief funds have gone away, once again districts have had to reduce their cadre of student support professionals.

The impact of this is staggering especially at schools that continue to have significant numbers of students who are not doing well.

The tendency is to think there is little that can be done to improve student and learning supports until the district can afford to hire enough student support professionals.

The reality is that sparse district budgets have never been able to and are unlikely ever to be able to afford hiring anywhere near the number of professionals who advocates for support staff say are needed to address the nature and scope of learning, behavior, and emotional problems at many schools. (See the Hot Topic: “About the Student Mental Health Crisis: *What do you recommend beyond hiring more personnel?*” <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm#Hot> .)

So it is time to face up to rethinking and transforming how districts address barriers to learning and teaching. See

>*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports*
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summer2022.pdf>

Prevailing strategies emphasize enhancing instruction, bolstering service availability, and framing supports in terms of MTSS and in the context of the Community School movement. Such approaches are relevant but insufficient, and need to be evolved. See

>*Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning*
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall19.pdf>

>*Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports*
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evolvecomm.pdf>

By themselves, these efforts ignore and even impede making essential changes in school improvement policy and guiding transformative systemic improvements in how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students and families.

(We continue to note that, at too many schools, both MTSS and Community Schools rapidly are being adopted as buzzwords rather than substantive improvements.)

Essential system rebuilding can be initiated by redeploying existing school resources and making formal connections with a wide range of community resources.

Unfortunately, too many recent reports have not gone beyond tinkering with what already is in place. Contrast such reports with the following discussion of moving forward in rethinking and rebuilding a sustainable system of student/learning supports that is unified, comprehensive, and equitable.

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions**

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>

Please share with interested colleagues.