

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)

August 16, 2017

Topic: *Making student/learning supports more effective*

Comments from Colleagues in the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Center Resources for Use in

>Advocating for new directions for student/learning supports

From the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

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Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*, this is being sent to and forwarded by over 100,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

Making student/learning supports more effective

In this era of science-based practice, decision makers increasingly are asking about data on the effectiveness of student/learning supports and demanding greater accountability for results. For example, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) stresses a growing responsibility for states, districts, and schools to incorporate research evidence in decision-making and for continuous improvement.

Given all this, the beginning of a new school year brings with it the challenge of and opportunity for improving the effectiveness of how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and engage disconnected students. Major improvements involve working a bit harder and a lot smarter.

Fundamentally, there are two alternative ways to proceed. One way focuses improvement efforts primarily on enhancing prevailing student/learning supports; the other alternative is to move in new directions with the aim of system transformation.

The First Alternative: For places mainly looking to enhance prevailing approaches, the following comments from colleagues in the field, along with excerpts from a few articles, may be helpful.

- (1) “My suggestion is to collect and aggregate data that could show the effectiveness of existing services and, if possible, show changes over time. Depending upon the services, that might include student achievement, behavior, absenteeism, teacher reports, etc. Then, if possible, use numbers of students that could benefit if these supports were increased by ‘X’%. That could make for a nice once page summary that explains the need, the best way to address it (citing research), the current status for their school, and what could be if more students could benefit from these services.”
- (2) “The National Association of School Psychologists has a number of good resources related to how to evaluate and improve student supports. For example, see Evaluating service delivery programs.* Here’s an excerpt:
The Depth and Breadth of Services. Comprehensive screening for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional risks, and factors that contribute to those risks, helps identify the prevention and intervention programs necessary. Important questions to be answered within this process include:
Does the district provide a comprehensive range of student-level services?
Are interventions for instructional support adequate?
Are mental and behavioral health supports adequate?
Are school psychologists working at a systems level, particularly the school building level, to address prevention of academic and social problems?
Are school psychologists routinely collaborating with parents and other school and community professionals in the provision of services?
Are school psychological services reflective of the practices that should permeate these services-data-based decision making, accountability, and use of consultation and collaboration?
Do services properly reflect cultural competency, and are they delivered with respect for legal and ethical considerations?
Are student-level and systems-level services based upon known research or evidence-based practices?
Are student outcome indicators regularly collected and student progress towards school psychological service goals regularly monitored and reported to relevant stakeholders?...
Effective Practices. ... A multidisciplinary district level data team reviews school and feeder system discipline data on a regular basis. The team then works with school mental health team supervisors to determine a district-wide plan for reducing disciplinary problems, improving student-teacher interactions, and delivering targeted interventions to students at greatest risk for suspension and expulsion. Monitoring and review of the implementation of the plan occurs regularly....”
*<http://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/nasp-practice-model/nasp-practice-model-implementation-guide/section-iv-evaluating-school-psychological-services-utilizing-the-nasp-practice-model/part-2-systems-level-evaluating-school-psychological-services-delivery-programs>
- (3) Also see *School Social Work Evaluation Tools* – <http://www.sswaa.org/?page=408P>

(4) "... I understand 'Support Services' to mean a multi-disciplinary team that plans possible solutions for problems students may have in the areas of academic achievement (in the broadest possible terms), attention and behavior, and mental health. Generally, a parent or a school staff member has already tried a few interventions that they know how to do, and the success is not yet adequate. The Support Services Team is then called upon to generate some new possible interventions, coordinate their implementation, evaluate progress, and make mid-course corrections as needed.

... The challenge is getting group agreement and actually providing high quality student support services instead of just 'looking good on paper.' It's not enough for some administrator to say, 'all you folks are my new student services team' without the financial, procedural, training, supervision, and team 'nurturing' that goes along with it....

If the regular education staff doesn't believe it's their job to make adjustments for individual differences, the effectiveness of even very simple interventions will be limited. If current procedures call for one person to communicate intervention plans to everybody and evaluate progress towards goals (and that employee is too busy to do this) again, effectiveness will suffer. If there is no well understood, trusted process for evaluating effectiveness of an intervention, and staff fears that their job evaluations could be negatively impacted, the data will not be reliable."

In looking to the literature, a good place to start is with (a) our online clearinghouse Quick Finds (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>), (b) a Google Scholar search, and (c) the websites of professional organizations (e.g., read about the empirical studies supporting the value of school counseling – <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Careers-Roles/Effectiveness.pdf>).

A useful subset of the literature are articles discussing the barriers that must be overcome so that student/learning supports will be more effective. For example, see:

>*The Contribution of School Counselors' Self-efficacy to Their Programmatic Service Delivery* – <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pits.21899/full> . Here is an excerpt:

"Factors that impede school counselors' facilitation of student services are identified, including (a) fear of failing or inadequacy... (b) limited counselor acceptance of roles within comprehensive school counseling... (c) role conflict and ambiguity ... (d) high student-to-counselor ratios... (e) time spent on noncounseling activities... and (f) limited administrative awareness..."

>*Mental Health Collaboration: A Survey of Practicing School Psychologists* – <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15377903.2017.1328626> . Here is an excerpt:

"...Regarding collaboration, some of the most frequently endorsed barriers represent difficulties that should be addressed at the individual and school levels and do not represent difficulties experienced between collaborators. In this area, school psychologists cited a lack of time as a significant barrier to collaboration. This finding further supports results of previous studies that suggest that school psychologists are overburdened and may be unable to take on the added responsibility and time associated with collaborating regularly with other mental health professionals. It is impractical to suggest that individual school psychologists take on the additional work required to engage in more frequent collaboration; rather, improvement in this area requires administrative support and systems-level changes that can include hiring more school psychologists to allow for a more manageable caseload and more time in preferred activities such as intervention. School administrators have also suggested that it is important to develop partnerships with key stakeholders, such as school administrators, superintendents, vice superintendents, and school leaders, to gain support for collaboration efforts. This necessitates deliberate data collection and sharing of information to highlight the benefits of collaboration. Interestingly, research suggests that a significant benefit of collaboration is access to increased professional support and programmatic initiatives that may, in the long term, provide additional resources for overburdened school systems and school professionals..."

Collaborative processes involving diverse professionals and practice systems also clearly lead to additional barriers. In this study, the use of different diagnostic systems was endorsed as a barrier by nearly half of the participants... Together, these findings are in line with

potential challenges to collaboration, including a diverse knowledge base, conflicting mandates, differing goals for clients, differing intervention priorities, differences in policies and procedures, and differences in the working practices of the collaborators....”

>*Impediments to Enhancing Availability of Mental Health Services in Schools: Fragmentation, Overspecialization, Counterproductive Competition, and Marginalization.*

*<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/31> impediments to enhancing availability of mental health in schools.pdf

Abstract:

“Concerns about enhancing availability and access to mental health in schools range from sparse resources to the proliferation of piecemeal and overspecialized interventions arising from categorical funding. This paper discusses such concerns and stresses that they must be addressed from a perspective that fully appreciates the degree to which school policies and practices marginalize student support programs and services. Changing all this is discussed in terms of reframing school reform to fully address barriers to student learning. Finally, a proactive agenda involving new directions for pupil personnel professionals is suggested.”

Alternative Two: For those ready to move in ways that transform student/learning supports, it is important to start by clarifying (a) any concerns that have been raised about the impact of such supports, (b) data showing the need for such systemic changes related to school improvement efforts, and (c) data on the value of moving in new directions. (If you need some resources related to these matters, see the Center’s Quick Find on *Evaluation of Programs Addressing Barriers to Learning* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/evaluation.htm> .)

In discussing the data, it is important to stress the necessity of being rational and analytical in bringing evidence-based practices into schools (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/berational.pdf>). The reality is that the status of evidence-based practices is insufficient to address many student problems and for making major systemic changes.

With respect to developing new directions with the aim of transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students, see the following resources:

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

Free access from the Center's homepage – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

>*Education Leaders’ Guide to Transforming Student and Learning Supports* –

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

>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports:*

Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System

<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

The reality is that few schools come close to having enough resources to respond when confronted with a large number of students who are experiencing a wide range of psychosocial barriers that interfere with their learning and performance. Most schools offer only bare essentials. Too many schools can't even meet basic needs. Analyses indicate that programs and services are planned, implemented, and evaluated in a fragmented and piecemeal manner. student/learning supports personnel tend to function in relative isolation of each other and other stakeholders, with a great deal of the work oriented to discrete problems and with an overreliance on specialized services for individuals and small groups. Primary prevention often is only a dream.

The simple fact is that education support activity is marginalized at most schools, and thus the positive impact such activity could have for the entire school is sharply curtailed.

From our perspective, if all students are ultimately to have an equal opportunity to succeed in school and beyond, school and community resources designed to counter youngsters’ learning, behavioral, emotional, and health problems must be restructured. This includes rethinking the roles and functions of all personnel involved with student/learning supports. It is time to expand their roles as advocates, catalysts, brokers, and facilitators of systemic reform. As this happens, they will engage in an increasingly wide array of activity to promote academic achievement and healthy development and address barriers to learning and teaching.

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Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

What changes do you recommend to enhance the effectiveness of student/learning supports?

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Center Resources for use in

>Advocating for new directions for student/learning supports

Here are direct links to a few resources that can be used for advocating system transformation:

- >So You Want High Achievement Scores: It's Time to Rethink Learning Supports – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/schoolboard.pdf>
- >What Is a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports? – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whatis.pdf>
- >Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning & Teaching – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf>
- >Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System (30 minute introductory webinar) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/powerpoint/briefintrosliidesrec.pptx>
- >Intro to New Directions for Learning Supports (from an online leadership institute webinar) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/institute/session1.htm>
- >Teachers Can't Do it Alone! – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/alone.pdf>

For additional advocacy resources (e.g., materials from trailblazers across the country), see the Section A of the System Change Toolkit – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm> .

For a wide range of resources aids related to a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, also see the Quick Find on *Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qq/qq_enabling.htm .



And information is online about the **National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports** <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

If you missed the quarterly ejournal for summer 2017 or the monthly ENEWS, you can access them and more from the Center's homepage <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)