

TO: Learning Support Collaborative Network Participants (12/6/11)

From: Howard & Linda

RE: What Superintendents Say about Creating Infrastructure for Learning Supports

To begin another line of exchange, we sent the following to the Superintendents in the network:

“We received some interesting responses to our recent Center report entitled: Not Another Team: School Improvement Infrastructure Viewed through the Lens of Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/team.pdf>

The responses underscored our previous work looking at district and school operational infrastructure as a fundamental concern related to developing a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports.

We are updating our analyses and operational infrastructure prototypes and need feedback from the collaborative network. The first feedback needs to come from superintendents and principals since these are primary administrative concerns.

Please take a few minutes to look at the Center's four page tool for mapping and analyzing current infrastructure. "Infrastructure: Is What We Have What We Need?" <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20infrastructure.pdf>

If you are uncertain about what we mean by a Learning Support Leadership Team, see the one page description at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

Below are some of the matters we hope to address, but any form of feedback will be helpful. (We won't use attributions when we synthesize responses unless you want us to)

1. How well does your present district and school infrastructure enable development of a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports? (Strengths? weaknesses?)

2. What position has been established as an administrative lead for developing the system at the district? at schools?

3. Do you have a mechanism such as a Learning Support Leadership Team at the district? at schools? (e.g., if yes, current status - just starting to organize, have something like this but it needs to be strengthened, etc.)

As you know, participant responses are the essential building blocks for the collaborative network's success. We are looking forward to hearing from you. Just reply to this email. Responses come only to the Center. And as always, let us know if we can help as you work to strengthen learning supports so all students can succeed.”

What follows here are some first responses.

First Respondent.

1. How well does your present district and school infrastructure enable development of a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports? (Strengths? weaknesses?)

The strengths to our system in are that a comprehensive instructional infrastructure is in place (solid assessment system, intervention systems, school operational systems (ie - school schedules to ensure bell-to-bell instruction) and a dedication to instructional best practices.

Weaknesses include not having school staff, from administrators to teachers, own the process of identifying these best practices. It has been viewed as a top-down process and has impacted, in my view, the success of the systems we have tried to implement

2. What position has been established as an administrative lead for developing the system at the district? at schools?

At the district-level, we have the educational services team that is comprised of all of the directors that oversee the educational side of the house. This is lead by our associate superintendent of educational services. At the school, the lead would be our school principal with his or her leadership team.

3. Do you have a mechanism such as a Learning Support Leadership Team at the district? at schools? (e.g., if yes, current status - just starting to organize, have something like this but it needs to be strengthened, etc.)

We do have something like the LSDT team in our district, although it does need to be strengthened.”

Second Respondent.

1. Our district and school infrastructure is organized and operates as a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports.

Strengths: the alignment of all work to the CSLS Weaknesses:
Communicating to all stakeholders and participants

2. We have restructured our leadership to place a Social Worker as the Director of Learning Supports.

3. Some schools have established a Learning Supports team, or work group, within their school, that works beside the school leadership team.

As the Superintendent, I see the best work done in schools where the school leadership team functions as the Learning Supports team- addressing the three components- on a regular basis- rather than a separate team.

In response to the article, and "lessons learned" from us, do not create more teams- move the main leadership teams to the framework of Learning Supports.

After all, the ultimate goal is for all work to be focused on the three components simultaneous.”

Third Respondent.

“Here are our thoughts related to your questions.

1. How well does your present district and school infrastructure enable development of a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports? (Strengths? weaknesses?)

Our main strengths are coming from the understanding that we need to "develop" a comprehensive system. We have a rather messy closet, but the good news is that our staff understand that and are committed to helping organize things around an appropriate framework. In our current structure one of the strengths is that as the Assistant Superintendent I supervise our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, our Director of Student Support Services (which includes special education, school psychs, nurses, etc.), and our Director of Community Education and Community Relations (which includes programming birth to adult). As a Division we are able to align our work and focus on creating the structures that are necessary for us to confidently say that we are meeting the needs of EVERY child.

Our limitations are all related to needing better alignment and creating the structure - especially out at the building level. Across the district we have far too many things going on and have focused out time on mapping what we have so that we can identify what we will keep and what we will not. As we develop our structure I anticipate the commitment actually increasing as we see that what we are putting in place is making a difference for our students.

2. What position has been established as an administrative lead for developing the system at the district? at schools?

At the District level we have identified our Director of Student Support Services, as the lead administrator for this work. At the building level we have assigned our student advocates as the lead person. She meets with the student advocates on a weekly basis to make sure we are supporting their work at the school level.

3. Do you have a mechanism such as a Learning Support Leadership Team at the district? at schools? (e.g., if yes, current status - just starting to organize, have something like this but it needs to be strengthened, etc.)

We are in process of developing this team at the District level. It would be important to share that the District Cabinet (Leadership Team) has written and agreed to a goal for the implementation of a comprehensive system of learning supports that is tied to our performance goals. In addition, we are planning to establish Learning supports team at each of our schools as well. This is a work in progress for us.”

#####

To All Network Participants:

Any thoughts about all this you want to share will be helpful. In particular, what would you say in answering these questions for your district or school? Please share your information so we can share it with others in the collaborative. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu