



Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

Improving Student Outcomes, Enhancing School Climate: Teachers Can't Do it Alone!

New teachers, however naive and idealistic, often know before they enter the profession that the salaries are paltry, the class sizes large, and the supplies scant. What they don't know is how little support . . . they can expect once the door is closed and the textbooks are opened.

Former teacher Claudia Graziano (in an *Edutopia* article)

Teaching in public schools is extremely important to society and is an exceedingly difficult job. Indicators of how difficult teaching can be include the achievement gap, the many students manifesting learning and behavior problems, and the number of students and teachers who dropout.

Teachers and everyone else want better student outcomes. To this end, considerable attention is focused on a limited set of strategies intended to improve teaching. Prominent among these are approaches such as increasing curriculum standards, making teachers more accountable, and improving teacher and principal preparation and licensing. Such improvements all have merit; but the strategies are insufficient for addressing many everyday barriers to learning and teaching. Thus, efforts to improve teaching must go beyond the prevailing agenda.

Even the best teacher can't do the job alone. Teachers need a system of supports in the classroom and school-wide to help when students are not responding effectively to instruction. Our analyses indicate that school improvement policy and practice must add a focus on developing a unified and comprehensive system of supports that enable teachers to teach and students to learn.¹

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**It Takes More
than Good and
Accountable
Teachers and
Principals**

Most of us are aware of the debate over how best to evaluate teachers and the concerns related to adoption of common core state standards for curriculum. Now, policy attention is turning once again to improving educator preparation.

The current impetus stems from the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Recognizing the need to align *teaching standards* with the new curriculum standards, the Council sponsored development of a set of *model core teaching standards*.² The set is meant to outline “what teachers should know and be able to do to ensure every K-12 student reaches the goal of being ready to enter college or the workforce in today’s world”. CCSSO states that these standards are based on “common principles and foundations of teaching practice that cut across all subject areas and grade levels and that are necessary to improve student achievement.”

In December, the Council followed up the core teaching standards with a report focused on “transforming educator preparation” and entry into the profession.³ Please note that while the title says *educators*, the report's focus is only on teachers and principals.

The necessity of good instruction and good school management is a given. At the same time, most policy makers and administrators know that good instruction delivered by highly qualified teachers cannot ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. As CCSSO’s 2002 mission statement stressed, “the work involves achieving the vision of an American education system that *enables* all children to succeed in school, work, and life.” (*italics added*)

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We doubt that anyone seriously argues against the importance of enhancing teacher and principal capabilities. However, such a focus cannot be allowed to proceed in ways that ignore all the other professional educators who are *essential* to a school's success. Ignoring these resources is particularly unfortunate for teachers since it perpetuates the myth held by the general public that teachers working alone can close the achievement gap, end learning and behavior problems, increase graduate rates, and ensure students are career and college ready.

If those who are concerned with improving student outcomes and enhancing school climate are to succeed, they certainly will have to avoid buying into this myth. And if public education in this country is to survive, every policy that focuses on enhancing the instructional component at schools must also ensure teachers are effectively backed up by a potent system of student and learning supports.

Who's Missing from School Improvement Policy and Practice?

School reform continues to focus primarily on two arenas: improving curriculum and instruction and rethinking the way our schools are governed and managed. There are new curriculum, new tests, new evaluation schemes, new technology, and new governance for some schools. But little is substantively new about the ways in which schools address factors that interfere with students benefitting from improved instruction.

It is evident that prevailing approaches to improving instruction do not address many barriers to learning and teaching. And, analyses indicate that the student “support” programs and services that schools implement to address such barriers are too limited, fragmented, and marginalized.

As a result, virtually missing in the most prominent discussions of school improvement are all personnel whose direct or indirect role is to provide supports to students, their families, and teachers. Examples of such educators are: administrators responsible for student and learning supports (e.g., assistant principals, deans of discipline); school psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers; behavioral specialists; staff focused on attendance and dropout, safe and drug free schools, special education, after school programs; bilingual and Title I program coordinators; health educators; personnel who staff the front office and food services; custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers. These personnel represent major resources and a considerable portion of a school’s budget. Also often involved with schools are staff from community entities concerned with physical and mental health, welfare and protective services, and juvenile justice, as well as volunteers and mentors.

Part of the reason that student support personnel seem almost invisible in school improvement planning is that as currently designed supports meet the needs of a relatively few students who are not doing well at school. This is especially so in schools where a large proportion of students encounter major barriers to learning. The reality is that school improvement and capacity building efforts (including pre- and in-service staff development and the formulation of core standards) generally give short shrift to the many factors interfering with learning and teaching.

The bottom line is that, for all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school, every teacher must be enabled to help them around barriers and then to (re)engage them in classroom instruction. Enabling teachers to do all this involves both in-classroom and school-wide supports. (See the following article.)

With respect to increasing in-classroom supports, the focus is not just on individual students, but on collaborating to improve general practices such as personalizing instruction for all students and applying “Response to Intervention” strategies. Turning student support staff (as well as other teachers) into in-classroom collaborators represents a critical change in school improvement policy and practice. School policy makers and administrators should begin their redesign of student and learning supports with this as a foundational idea.

Student support personnel seem almost invisible in school improvement policy and practice.

New Directions for Student and Learning Supports is an Imperative

Most school improvement efforts *primarily* focus on enhancing instruction and school management/governance. Because of concerns for school safety and greater family and community involvement, schools also embed a few scattered programs and services to address these matters. School improvement plans, however, do not stress the need to enable student outcomes by *comprehensively* addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Yet, the reality is that teachers encounter a variety of barriers that interfere with effective teaching. A primary concern must be to provide them with a range of supports so they can enable the learning of students who are not doing well. The greater the number of students manifesting learning and behavior problems, the more a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports is essential for (re)engaging them in classroom instruction and enabling classroom learning.

Needed in particular are initiatives to reform and restructure how schools work to prevent and ameliorate the many learning, behavior, and emotional problems experienced by students. The end product must be schools where everyone – staff, students, families, and community stakeholders – feels supported. This requires reshaping the functions of all school personnel who have a role to play in addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. And, it requires fully integrating the efforts into school improvement planning.

The time is long overdue for escaping old ways of thinking about student supports. Leaders at all levels need to move school improvement efforts in substantively new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. (See the next article: *Supporting Teachers in Classrooms and School-wide to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching.*)

The Good News

Efforts by districts to help their schools develop a unified and comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching can draw on pioneering work from across the country. Trailblazing states, districts, and schools are taking steps to develop and put into practice designs for a system that moves learning supports to a prominent place in improving schools and student outcomes. Work is currently underway, for instance, at the state department level in Alabama, Illinois, Ohio, Hawai`i, and Iowa.⁴ At the district level, a good example is the work of the Gainesville City Schools in Georgia.⁵

These trailblazers all recognize that many teachers are confronted with a large proportion of students who are not motivated and ready to learn what is on the teaching agenda for the day. Moreover, they understand the wide range of factors that interfere with such students connecting with good instruction and are designing unified and comprehensive systems to address such factors.⁶

Other good news comes from the work of the *New Directions for Student and Learning Supports Initiative*.⁷ The initiative is bringing together networks of district and state leaders concerned with the development of unified and comprehensive systems of learning supports and has facilitated development of common core standards for a learning supports component.⁸

One objective of the New Directions initiative is to influence a shift in school improvement policy from the prevailing two component emphasis to a three component framework. If such a framework can be integrated into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it would mark a fundamental turning point in how schools and communities address the problems of children and youth.

We Can Help

To support pioneering work across the country, our Center at UCLA has established a collaboration with Scholastic and with the American Association of School Administrators.⁹ We also are facilitating the *District and State Collaborative Network for Developing Comprehensive Systems for Learning Support*.¹⁰

If you want more information about any of this or if you want to share the work being done at state and district levels to develop a unified, comprehensive, and systemic approach to addressing barriers and re-engaging disconnected students, please contact us at Ltaylor@ucla.edu.

Notes:

¹ *Blueprints for Education Reform: Have You Analyzed the Architects' Vision?*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/blueprint.pdf>

² CCSSO (2011). *Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, InTASC model core teaching standards: A resource for state dialogue*. Washington, DC: Author.
[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Interstate_Teacher_Assessment_Consortium_\(InTASC\).html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Interstate_Teacher_Assessment_Consortium_(InTASC).html)

³ CCSSO (2012). *Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession*. Washington, DC: Author.
http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2012/Our%20Responsibility%20Our%20Promise_2012.pdf

⁴ Where's it Happening? Trailblazing and Pioneering Initiatives (and lessons learned)
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm>

⁵ <http://www1.gcassk12.net/images/shared/other/rebuildingforlearning.pdf>

⁶ See *Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf> ;

⁷ See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ninhome.htm>

⁸ *Common Core Standards for a Learning Supports Component* (related quality indicators appended)
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf>

⁹ See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/rebuild/rebuilding.htm> & <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/aasa/aasa.htm>

¹⁰ <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/network/network.html>

Supporting Teachers in Classrooms and School-wide to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching

When teachers encounter barriers that interfere with effective teaching, the first concern must be to provide them with a range of supports so they can enable the learning of students who are not doing well. School improvement must include plans to develop more effective and comprehensive systems for directly dealing with factors that keep too many students from succeeding at school and beyond.

Our work over many years stresses that the supports needed cluster into six content arenas. (Think of them as the curriculum of learning supports.) The six arenas are designed to continuously enhance:

- **Regular classroom strategies to enable learning** – working collaboratively with other teachers and student support staff to ensure learning is personalized for all students and especially those manifesting mild-moderate learning and behavior problems; re-engaging those who have become disengaged from learning at school; providing learning accommodations and supports as necessary; addressing external barriers
- **Supports for transitions** – programs and systems for assisting students and families as they negotiate hurdles to enrollment, school and grade changes, daily transitions, program transitions, accessing supports, and so forth
- **Home involvement and engagement** – programs and systems to increase and strengthen home and school connections
- **Community involvement and engagement** – programs and systems to increase and strengthen outreach to develop greater community involvement and support from a wide range of entities, including enhanced use of volunteers and agency collaborations
- **Crisis response and prevention** – programs and systems for responding to, and where feasible, preventing school and personal crises and trauma, including creating a caring and safe learning environment and countering the impact of out-of-school traumatic events
- **Student and family assistance** – programs and systems to facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed

A brief discussion of and examples related to each of these arenas follows.

For more extensive examples, see:

- >the set of self-study surveys designed to map what a school has and what it needs to address barriers to learning and teaching –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/surveys/set1.pdf>

- >the Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds on topics related to each area –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

Enhancing Regular Classroom Strategies to Enable Learning

A key to personalizing learning and stemming the tide of out-of-class referrals is to “open classroom doors” to bring learning supports into the classroom. This requires in-class collaboration with student support staff and other teachers, as well as training volunteers to assist with students-in-need.

Learning supports in the classroom are designed to enable student learning by assisting, supporting, and enhancing the capability of teachers to (a) prevent problems, (b) intervene as soon after problems arise, (c) enhance intrinsic motivation for learning, and (d) re-engage students who have become disengaged from classroom learning. Learning supports are designed to increasingly enable teachers to personalize instruction for all students, add special assistance in the context of implementing “Response to Intervention,” and provide a greater range of accommodations and learning options.

Examples of Classroom-Based Learning Supports Essential to Personalizing Learning

- Redesigning classroom approaches to enhance teacher capability to prevent and handle problems and reduce the need for out-of-class referrals
 - > Personalized instruction; special assistance as necessary
 - > Developing small group and independent learning options
 - > Reducing negative interactions and over-reliance on social control
 - > Expanding the range of curricular and instructional options and choices
 - > Systematic use of “prereferral” interventions
- Enhancing and personalizing professional development
 - > Creating a learning community for teachers
 - > Ensuring opportunities to learn through co-teaching, team teaching, mentoring
 - > Teaching intrinsic motivation concepts and their application to schooling
- Curricular enrichment and adjunct programs
 - > Varied enrichment activities that are not tied to reinforcement schedules
 - > Visiting scholars from the community
- Classroom and school-wide approaches used to create and maintain a caring and supportive climate with a specific focus on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to others at school and reducing threats to such feelings

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see the continuing education modules on

> *Personalizing Learning* at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf>

> *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf>

Supports for Transitions

Supporting transitions involves a range of interventions that address changes can be disruptive to students, families, and teachers. In the classroom and school-wide (and sometimes at the district level), such supports are designed to (a) enhance successful transitions, (b) prevent transition problems, (c) use transitions to enhance acceptance and reduce alienation, and (d) use transitions to increase positive attitudes/motivation toward school and learning

Examples of Supports for Transitions

- Welcoming and social support programs for newcomers
 - > Welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions
 - > Peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers
- Daily transition programs for
 - > Before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool
- Articulation programs
 - > Grade to grade (new classrooms, new teachers)
 - > Elementary to Middle School; Middle to High School
 - > In and out of special education programs
- Summer or intersession programs
 - > Catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs
- School-to-career/higher education
 - > Counseling, pathway, and mentor programs
- Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions
 - > Students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher educ.
- Staff/stakeholder development for planning transition programs/activities

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

> *Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*

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

Home Involvement and Engagement

While policy calls for *parent* involvement, the reality is that many students are cared for by grandparents, aunts, siblings, and foster families. Also, because of past experiences, many care-providers are not motivated to connect with the school, and some are so angry with schools that they are belligerent when contacted.

Learning supports aim to develop a full range of interventions designed to assist and then engage and re-engage key home stakeholders. In the classroom and school-wide (and sometimes at the district level), such supports are designed to (a) strengthen the home situation, (b) enhance home involvement in and capability for problem solving, (c) increase home support for student development and learning, and (d) enlist the home in strengthening school and community.

Examples of Home Involvement and Engagement

- Addressing specific support and learning needs of family
 - > Facilitating open-access to support programs for those in the home to assist them in addressing basic survival needs and obligations to the children
 - > Adult education classes to enhance literacy, job skills, English-as-a-second language, citizenship preparation
- Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home
 - > Opportunities at school for family networking and mutual support, learning, recreation, enrichment, and for family members to receive special assistance and to volunteer to help
 - > Phone calls from teacher and other staff with good news
 - > Frequent and balanced conferences (student-led when feasible)
 - > Outreach to attract hard-to-reach families (including student dropouts)
- Involving homes in student decision making
 - > Families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving
- Enhancing home support for learning and development
 - > Family literacy, family homework projects, family field trips
- Recruiting families to strengthen school and community
 - > Volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities
 - > Families prepared for involvement in school governance
- Staff/stakeholder development to broaden awareness of and plan programs to enhance opportunities for home involvement

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

> *Parent and Home Involvement in Schools*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/parenthome/parent1.pdf>

> *Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning: A Collaborative Process*

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

Community Involvement and Engagement

Most schools are reaching out to a few community partners. Learning supports aims to fill critical systemic gaps by weaving in a wider range of community resources to work collaboratively on mutual concerns related to strengthening students, schools, families, and neighborhoods. For schools and the district, this requires programs and systems to increase and strengthen outreach to build linkages and collaborations to a wide range of entities, including enhanced use of volunteers and agencies.

Examples of Community Involvement and Engagement

- Planning and implementing outreach to recruit a wide range of community resources
 - > Community resources such as public and private agencies; colleges/universities; local residents; artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations; service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations
 - > Community policy and decision makers
- Systems to recruit, screen, prepare, and maintain community resource involvement
 - > Mechanisms to orient and welcome
 - > Mechanisms to enhance the volunteer and mentor pools,
 - > Mechanisms to maintain current involvements; enhance sense of comm.
- Reaching out to students and families who don't come to school regularly – including truants and dropouts
- Connecting school and community efforts to promote child and youth development and a sense of community
- Capacity building to enhance community involvement and support
 - > Policies/mechanisms to enhance & sustain school-community involvement
 - > Staff/stakeholder development on the value of community involvement
 - > Social marketing

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

> *Community Outreach: School-Community Resources to Address Barriers to Learning*

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/Commout_tt/communityfull.pdf

> *Fostering School, Family and Community Involvement*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/44%20guide%207%20fostering%20school%20family%20and%20community%20involvement.pdf>

Crisis Response and Prevention

The broad category of crisis assistance and prevention stresses not only effective emergency response and aftermath help, but a major emphasis on prevention that fits nicely with concerns for creating a positive and supportive school climate. A general focus on crisis prevention encompasses bullying and violence prevention and other efforts to curtail problems and minimize the need for discipline and suspensions. The supports in this arena require integrated classroom, school-wide, and district programs and systems that (a) respond to crises, (b) minimize the impact of crises, (c) where feasible, prevent school and personal crises and trauma, (d) counter the impact of out-of-school traumatic events. and (e) create a caring and safe learning environment

Examples of Crisis Response and Prevention

- Ensuring there is a well-trained school-focused Crisis Team that
 - > Maintains an integrated response plan
 - > Takes leadership for developing prevention programs
- Providing immediate assistance in emergencies so students can resume learning
- Providing follow-up care as necessary
 - > Brief and longer-term monitoring
- Mobilizing staff, students, and families to anticipate response plans and recovery efforts
- Maintaining a focus on creating a caring and safe learning environment
 - > Developing systems to promote healthy development and prevent problems
 - > Developing general crisis prevention strategies that encompass bullying, harassment, violence prevention, and other efforts to curtail problems and minimize the need for discipline and suspensions
- Working with neighborhood schools and the local community to integrate planning for response and prevention
- Staff/stakeholder development focusing on the role and responsibility of all in promoting a caring and safe environment

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see

> *Responding to Crisis at a School* at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/crisis/crisis.pdf>

> *Resources for Responding to a Crisis* at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisisresp.htm>

> *Moving Prevention From the Fringes into the Fabric of School Improvement*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/24 moving prevention from the fringes into the fabric.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/24%20moving%20prevention%20from%20the%20fringes%20into%20the%20fabric.pdf)

Student and Family Assistance

Finally, the focus is on what has been the traditional emphasis of student support services – helping students and families who are identified as needing personal and specialized assistance. Such supports usually require programs and systems to facilitate access of specific students and families to effective health and social services and special assistance on campus and in the community as needed, as well as for career and college planning.

Examples of Student and Family Assistance

- Providing support as soon as a need is recognized; doing so in the least disruptive way
 - > “Prereferral” interventions in classrooms in the context of “Response to Intervention”
 - > Problem solving conferences with parents
 - > Open access to school, district, and community support programs
- Referral interventions for students and families with problems
 - > Screening, referrals, and follow-up – school-based, school-linked
- Enhancing access to direct interventions for health, mental health, and economic assistance; counseling for career and college
 - > School-based, school-linked, and community-based programs
- Follow-up assessment to check whether referrals and services are adequate and effective
- Mechanisms for resource coordination to avoid duplication of and fill gaps in services and enhance effectiveness
 - > School-based and linked, feeder family of schools, community-based programs
- Enhancing stakeholder awareness of programs and services
- Involving community providers to fill gaps and augment school resources
- Staff/stakeholder development to enhance effectiveness of student and family assistance systems, programs, and services

In addition to the self-study survey and Quick Finds related to this arena, see
 > *Student & Family Assistance Programs and Services to Address Barriers to Learning*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/student_tt/studentfamfull.pdf

It should be noted that each of the six arenas intersect with a full continuum of interventions. The continuum encompasses three subsystems: (1) promoting healthy development and preventing problems, (2) responding early after problem onset, and (3) treating chronic and severe problems. While such a continuum is often portrayed as three levels or tiers, this is too limiting a perspective of learning supports. Development of a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports requires a framework that emphasizes weaving school and community resources together to integrate each of the continuum’s subsystems with each other and with the six content arenas.

For a discussion not only of the prototype *intervention* framework, but also of the *policy*, *operational infrastructure*, and *systemic change* frameworks, see:

> *Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemictransformation.pdf>

Whole Child and All Children: Expanding the Common Core Standards Movement

[Note: We prepared the following for the December 20, 2012 ASCD Whole Child Blog -- online at <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/blog/whole-child-and-all-children-expanding-the-common-core-standards-movement>]

Although we share many of the concerns critics have raised about the Common Core State Standards (and we know that the debates and the boycotts will continue), we do appreciate the concept of Common Core standards.

But from a whole child and all-children perspective, let's be clear about a couple of crucial matters.

For one, let's not ignore that the Common Core State Standards being widely adopted focus only on school curricula, and so far only on a few facets. Hardly a whole child approach. And let's acknowledge that the movement continues to marginalize efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching. Hardly an approach designed to enable teachers to effectively teach all students.

States concerned with whole child development have been busy trying to expand school curriculum by developing standards for social and emotional learning. That's a good thing as long as schools adopt such standards with a full appreciation of the role the arts play and the many natural everyday opportunities at a school for promoting social and emotional development. But broadening the focus on healthy development is not enough.

Another crucial concern is the lack of a unified and comprehensive focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching. It is true that the Common Core State Standards include a brief "application to students with disabilities." The standards are silent, however, about those students who, at some time or another, bring problems with them that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach. In some geographic areas, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems, stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities. Such problems are exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school. In some locales, the reality often is that more than 50 percent of students are not succeeding. And, in most schools in these locales, teachers are ill-prepared and poorly supported to address the problems in a potent manner.

Standards for learning supports can provide the type of balance to the Common Core State Standards movement that enables schools to provide an equal opportunity for all students to succeed in school and beyond. Without such a balance, the curriculum standards probably will widen the gap between education haves and have-nots and undermine any commitment to develop the whole child. This would hardly be a recipe for enabling better teacher and school performance.

For the Common Core State Standards to succeed, schools must have good teaching focused on the whole child. And they also must have a unified and comprehensive system for

addressing barriers to learning and teaching. This calls for a shift in school improvement policy and practice to a three-component approach. Such an approach expands the current primary emphasis on (1) instruction (including curriculum and teaching) and (2) governance and management; it adds a third primary component to focus directly on (3) addressing barriers to learning and teaching. All three components are essential facets of what must take place at schools every day, and efforts to revamp schools cannot afford to marginalize any of them.

Recognizing the need to end the marginalization of student and learning supports, a group of dedicated leaders have developed core standards for a learning supports component.* Such core standards allow for coalescing what is common in all student and learning supports and provide a base on which each professional specialty can establish its unique contribution. The standards stress that addressing barriers to learning and teaching is a primary and essential third component, and they delineate the nature and scope of the component.

Continuing to ignore standards for learning supports perpetuates the myth that teachers alone are responsible for closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, and ensuring students are college- and career-ready. This convenient mythology takes a lot of folks off the hook with respect to developing the whole child and enhancing equity of opportunity for all students. It also contributes to the undermining of public education. A simple reality is that teachers can't do it alone.

We invite all who are concerned about the *whole child* and *all children* to join in the effort to ensure that schools are supported in developing a unified and comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

*See *Common Core Standards for a Learning Supports Component*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf>

Why do you say you're wasting
your time by going to school?

Well, I can't read or write –
and they won't let me talk!





New Directions Initiative

Besides developing the *Common Core Standards for a Learning Supports Component* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/commcore.pdf>, our work with superintendents who are building unified and comprehensive systems of learning supports in their districts has led to development of the following:

- > *Policy Prototype* – a model of policy for learning supports to strengthen implementation and sustainability. Added to our Learning Supports Toolkit, Section A.
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policyproto2012.pdf>
- > *Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started.*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superstart.pdf>
- > *About Demonstration Sites* – What would observers find at the best school in the district with respect to a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports? See
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/demosite.pdf>

In our work with Scholastic focused on enhancing professional development, we recently updated *Leadership Infrastructure: Is What We Have What We Need?* This is a mapping and analysis tool that outlines a four step process for use by planners and decision makers.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20infrastructure.pdf>

Want resources? Need technical assistance?

Use our website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or contact us – E-mail: smhp@ucla.edu Ph: (310) 825-3634
Or write: Center for Mental Health in Schools, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

If you're not directly receiving this Quarterly e-journal/newletter, our monthly electronic newsletter (ENEWS), or our weekly *Practitioners' Interchange*, send your E-mail address to smhp@ucla.edu

For the latest on Center resources and activities, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> – click on *What's New*

Some Thoughts About New Directions

I don't care whether you're driving a hybrid or an SUV.

If you're headed for a cliff, you have to change direction.

Barack Obama

You've got to think about big things while you're doing small things,
so that all the small things go in the right direction.

Alvin Toffler

If you board the wrong train, it is no use running along
the corridor in the other direction.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Center for Mental Health in Schools operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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Linda Taylor, Co-Director

Perry Nelson, Coordinator

... and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

Starting a Discussion About Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

- (1) Circulate a brief introductory document to the district leadership team – see for example,
Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf>
 (Note: if this document doesn't seem to fit the local situation, there are others to choose from
 Section A of the Center's Rebuilding Toolkit –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>)
- (2) Follow-up with by providing information about a few of the other places that have pursued development of a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.
 Specifically, refer to the following:
 - >***Brochures from Districts and State Departments***
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkit1a.htm>
 - >***Examples of State and District Design Documents***
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkitb1a.htm>
- (3) To answer typical questions raised in the process, see and share as needed material from
 >***Q & A Talking Points*** (in Section A of the Center's Rebuilding Toolkit)
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/toolkit2a.htm>
- (4) Review the documents:
 - >***Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started***
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superstart.pdf>
 - >***Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff***
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf>

Are you ready to unify the learning supports system?



*Well, it makes sense to do so,
BUT my job is
bullying prevention!*



and mine is dropout prevention!



and I'm responsible for Title I ...



and ...



and...

