2015 National Initiative
for Transforming Student
and Learning Supports

*Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights;
transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to
enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.*

Opportunity to Focus ESEA Reauthorization on Transforming Student and Learning Supports

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), chair of the Senate education committee is moving forward aggressively with respect to reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). He has released a draft rewrite bill (http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/AEG15033.pdf) to engage discussion. It is reported that he hopes to finalize bill language and schedule committee consideration by late February. Public comment is to be directed to Senator Alexander's staff by Monday, February 2 at fixingNCLB@help.senate.gov .

This is an immediate opportunity for action by those interested in advancing policy discussion for transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

One critical focus of the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* is on enhancing school improvement policy in ways that end the marginalization of student and learning supports. Ending the marginalization is fundamental to ending the fragmentation and disorganization that has long been a systemic concern. As you will see, while the Senator's draft makes some relevant changes related to student and learning supports, the draft bill's focus is not transformative and will maintain the marginalized status of supports that are essential for enhancing equity of opportunity for success at school and beyond.

Time for Action

ESEA (and other policy-focused efforts) need to continue to improve the instructional and management components of schooling ***and also*** embrace, as primary and essential, a third component to comprehensively, systematically, and equitably address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. States and districts already moving in this direction describe this as a paradigm shift from a two- to a three-component framework for school improvement policy (see Chapter 2 "Reframing Policy" in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System –* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf).

We have sent an initial letter to the members of the Congressional education committees (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/congletter.pdf) and will shortly offer more specific comments to Senator Alexander's staff (at fixingNCLB@help.senate.gov). Anyone concerned with enhancing policy may find the letter a useful one to adapt. We have also added a set of

"Talking Points" for use in clarifying new directions; these are on the website section for the initiative at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html. If you need additional information, let us know.

There has been and will continue to be ample discussion about the testing and accountability options in the bill; now it is time to increase discussion of policy changes to transform student and learning supports. In addition to letters to Congress, it is time to stimulate more media stories, editorials, blogs, coalitions for transforming student and learning supports, etc. At the same time, let's not wait to start informing state and local policy leaders about the need and directions for transformation of how schools can unify and then start to develop a comprehensive approach to *enabling* learning, promoting whole child development, and enhancing school climate.

As you take some action, let us know so we can share it with others. (Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu or to adelman@psych.ucla.edu)

Reminder: The initiative's URL is http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

The new, free online book entitled: *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* can be easily accessed at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf . (The chapters provide protocol frameworks and many specifics for a systemic learning supports component to replace the existing marginalized and fragmented set of student and learning supports in districts and schools. The work also stresses that transformation can be done by redeploying existing resources and garnering economies of scale.)