

**District and State Collaborative Network for
Developing Comprehensive Systems
for Learning Supports**

Update May, 2014

(1) New Report and Guide

Our recent policy notes have helped to increase discussion of New Directions for Student and Learning Support. (*Integrated Student Supports and Equity: What's Not Being Discussed?* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/integpolicy.pdf>). In that document, we stressed that:

“Considerable work needs to go on in a school and district so that community resources can be brought in effectively to fill gaps in schools efforts to unify and then over several years develop a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports at every school. Policy, intervention, infrastructure, and system change efforts by some SEAs, LEAs, and schools are helping to clarify how to do this. See *Where's it Happening - Trailblazing/Pioneering Initiatives* - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm>

Truly integrating student supports is best done so that the full range of school- community-home resources are woven together. The aim is to unify and then over several years develop a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports at every school. To this end, schools need to weave together all their student/learning supports (redeploying rather than cutting them). And they need to integrate all that the community can bring to the table with respect to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re engaging disconnected students. All this involves a fundamental policy shift that results in much more than just linking a few community-based services to a few schools.”

We noted that a fully-informed discussion about all this continues to be missing at district, state, and federal levels. To push the discussion forward we generated and sent out a new guide:

>*Education Leaders' Guide to Transforming Student and Learning Supports.*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/transguide.pdf>

We encourage you to pass this guide on to colleagues who are concerned with improving student and learning supports.

(2) Lessons Learned During First Year of Scale-up in Alabama

An ed policy advisor to a state legislator heard us at a recent White House event and sent us the following query:

"The Alabama model looks very interesting. We are looking at statewide models that might be applicable in California. There is no question that the fragmented systems that predominate at every level waste resources and opportunities to meet the needs of children and families. As Alabama is now well into the first year of implementing this plan ... What issues have arisen in moving the system toward increased alignment? I assume the usual resistance to change is a factor, but are there lessons learned at this point? ... "

Those implementing the work in Alabama responded:

"...Using the Center's benchmark tools, adapted as needed, was very helpful for keeping implementation on track.

More on-going communication between formal coaching sessions is needed ... including use of electronic tools such as webinars and simple phone calls to stay in touch between sessions....

It's important that the district supports schools and avoids a compliance mode.

We found that part of the success came from using every opportunity available to get the word out throughout the districts and state. To that end, the partnerships formed ... with the state teachers' union, the superintendents' association, the school principals association, and the state school board association served us well. Through these partnerships, learning supports leaders were invited to speak throughout the year at a variety of venues. Word spread quickly and interest built state-wide.

We would like to spend more time up front on driving home the value of a three-component model for organizing a district, and helping them design ways to promote that model within the district staff and to schools.

Plans for Year 2. The first cohort will continue for a second year of coaching, while serving as hubs for the second year cohort which may include up to thirty new districts [almost 1/3 of Alabama's districts]. The hope is to plan strategically in terms of geographic distribution, not only to allow for every state board member's district to be represented but to allow for periodic regional meetings and in-person coaching.

At an introductory session (held in March), 21 districts attended and more wanted to but could not make it, so a second session will be held ... all seemed very interested. Superintendent Bice is very pleased and ... would like to see the approach implemented across the entire state within five years. ..."

(3) Update from Gainesville City Schools, GA

From a news report focused on Gainesville's approach to implementing new juvenile code changes to reduce student suspensions.

"Gainesville City GA schools have eliminated about 700 days of out-of-school suspension for students this academic year after implementing changes from the state juvenile code. The revised code was adopted by the Georgia General Assembly last year, with a Jan. 1 implementation date, and aims to reduce recidivism among truant, drug-using and other students with behavioral problems. The goal is prevention rather than suspension or prosecution. The code refers to a "truant, unruly, incorrigible" student as a "child in need of services." Schools are now charged with demonstrating they have taken added steps to prevent, intervene, engage and assess students with disciplinary issues. This can include convening a committee of parents, school officials and counselors to put a disciplinary plan in place. Gainesville school officials said the goal is to get troubled students back to school and their regular classroom schedules within three days rather than have them face a tribunal, which results in 10 days of out-of-school suspension. To meet these goals, in-school suspension rooms at Gainesville High School and Gainesville Middle School have been converted to classrooms with teachers certified in working with these students. The change also allows the students to continue their studies and receive tutoring. Additionally, a juvenile justice officer has been placed in the school system, and two classified positions have been converted to "learning support coordinators." Finally, the school system has contracted with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hall County to target programs for these students. There have been zero tribunals for students at Gainesville Middle School this year after 25 were initiated last year. Meanwhile, tribunals at Gainesville High School have fallen to four this year after topping out at 39 last year, an 89 percent decrease."

4/18/14 <http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/section/6/article/98422/>

(4) Update from Phoenix Unified High school District

School and community teams worked together over the year to map resources being used to address barriers to learning and to identify gaps using the six content arenas framework. Partner districts were invited to send members of their support staff team. A Resource Fair was offered in partnership with United Way.