**Board Adopts Policy for Universal Learning Supports
as Part of a Comprehensive Set of Policies Related to the Whole Child**

While many places around the country are exploring how to rethink learning supports, few have gotten to the point of establishing new school board policy designed to promote the development of comprehensive systems of learning support at every school. One place that has moved that far is the Berkeley Unified School District in California.

Board member Shirley Issel reports that the board has adopted a: "new policy on Universal Learning Supports (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/bsb-SULSS.pdf) that is part of a more comprehensive group of policies related to the whole child. We passed this group of policies at the last meeting before the retirement of [the previous Superintendent]. I also attach a copy of our ULSS guidelines.... The Guidelines (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/wheresithappening/busd-ULSS guidelines.pdf) show that we have been very busy implementing the vision outlined in the attached policy. (ULSS, or Universal Learning Supports is the name we give to the work we are doing to provide a comprehensive system of learning supports in Berkeley Unified.)

Our approach is unique in that we have developed a group of policies that combine [the UCLA Center's] model of a comprehensive student learning supports system with the 8 component public health coordinated school health model.* I have sent only some of the policies that comprise the group. Mainly I wanted to share the ULSS policy. When we get the group complied into one document, I will forward.

I think it is worth noting that in our case, policy development at the School Board level came after the development of a strategic plan and well after the implementation of the plan had begun. The need to introduce policy became evident during the implementation phase as we saw that there was a lack of understanding about what we were trying to accomplish. Different schools and groups within the schools were heading off in different directions and it was my belief that the development of Board policy would be helpful to move us toward a common understanding. I was especially interested in deepening the understanding of the policy makers——School Board, Superintendent and key administrators and this policy work did help to do that. ... the School Board now has a deep appreciation and commitment to the whole child and all children——what [the UCLA Center] calls the 'many and the few'.

For quite a while I did not see how the development of policy fit into this work. But I see now that without policy, there can be no clarity about the broad vision and goal nor can the work possibly survive various transitions: the coming of a new Superintendent, the election of new Board members, the addition of new staff, etc. I also believe that the existence of policy documents will help a new Superintendent get up to speed. ..."

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*Note from the UCLA Center: The Center's intervention framework for a Comprehensive Learning Support System is described in various online documents (e.g., see Chapters 8 and 9 of the online book entitled: *Mental Health in School & School Improvement: Current Status, Concerns, and New Directions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/mhbook/mhbooktoc.htm). As formulated, the intent is to integrate all categorical programs into the framework. This includes the 8 component public health coordinated school health model formulated by CDC, as well as such initiatives as positive behavioral supports, programs for safe and drug free schools, programs for social and emotional development and learning, full service community schools and family resource and school based health centers, Safe Schools/Healthy Students projects, CDC's Coordinated School Health Program, bi-lingual, cultural, and other diversity programs, compensatory education programs, special education programs, mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act, and many more.

Adapted from the **BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

TO: Board of Education
FROM:
DATE:
SUBJECT: Board Policies - _____ Series

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
The attached Board policies are presented in this agenda for approval and adoption. These policies are a major component of the district's efforts to establish a comprehensive system of learning supports
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POLICY/CODE

FISCAL IMPACT

RECOMMENDATION
Approve

Adapted from the **Berkeley Unified School District**

Board Policy-

Students-Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

Beliefs

The Governing Board recognizes that the economic, neighborhood, family, school, peer, and personal circumstances can create barriers to teaching and learning. The Board believes that that the role of schools and the district is to promote development of the whole child. This includes addressing barriers to learning by creating a comprehensive system of supports that is fully integrated with other District wide and site level school improvement efforts.

The Governing Board recognizes that school, home, and community resources combined together and developed into a comprehensive system can support development of the whole child, can address barriers to learning and teaching, and re-engage disconnected students. Such a support system should include components for prevention, early intervention and intensive intervention when needed. All children, youth, and families members should have equal access to interventions and resources in proportion to their needs. The successful development of such a system is essential to efforts to improve school climate.

It is the intent of the Board of Education that a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports be fully integrated with other efforts to improve instruction and maximize the use of resources at individual schools. The Superintendent or designee shall facilitate the establishment of such a support system by requiring each school to address in their school site plan the elements that provide a successful Comprehensive System of Learning Supports. The following elements should be considered when establishing the system and integrating it into the school plan:

(1) *Classroom-interventions*. Teacher training and assistance should enhance the capacity of teachers to address problems, engage and re-engage pupils in classroom learning, and foster social, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral development. Training and assistance includes strategies for better addressing the student's learning, resilience, behaviors, and emotional problems within the context of the classroom. This includes using student support staff and volunteers to enhance classroom resources and strategies.

(2) *Support for Transitions.* Enhance the capacity of schools to handle transitions for students and families. These include transitions throughout the school day, and over the school year, newcomers entering school, grade level to grade level, school to school and school to college or work. Interventions might include: welcoming and social support programs for newcomers; school and classroom adjustment programs; before and after school and lunch time programs that enrich learning and provide safe recreation; attendance monitoring and support; programs for vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, those in homeless education, migrant education, and special education programs and counseling for vocational and college transition.

(3) *Crisis Response and Prevention.* Establish systems and programs for responding to, and preventing, emergency crises. Interventions might include: the establishment of a crisis team to ensure immediate response, school wide and school-linked prevention programs to enhance safety, reduce violence, bullying, harassment, abuse, and other threats to ensure a supportive and productive learning environment.

(4) *Home Involvement with School.* Enhance home involvement through interventions that support family needs and enhance communication and connection between home and school. These may include connecting those in need with health and social services; family literacy programs; parent education; shared decision making and problem solving affecting the pupil and the school; interventions for reengaging homes that have disengaged from school involvement.

(5) *Student and Family Assistance.* After all appropriate efforts have been made to address factors interfering with a student learning and performing at school (including application of Response to Intervention), special assistance for pupils and their families is provided or pursued through referrals that effectively connect those in need with direct services to address barriers to the learning of pupils at school. Interventions might include effective case and resource management, connecting with community service providers, special assistance for teachers in addressing the problems of specific individuals, counseling or special education.

(6) *Community involvement and support.* Enhance limited school resources through linkages with a wide range of community resources and agencies including: health clinics, probation offices, mental health services, libraries, recreational facilities, community artists; volunteers and mentors, and postsecondary education institutions.

All interventions are to be tailored to the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of students and families in our schools. Interventions to develop the cultural literacy of the school might include the following: continuous development of specialized knowledge and understanding about the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of the diverse student and family groups that we serve, knowledge concerning services available in the community and the ability to make appropriate referrals for our diverse clients and, provide for the provision of information, referrals, and services in the language appropriate to the student and the family.

It is the intent of the Board of Education that a cohesive Comprehensive System of Learning Supports be fully integrated with other school and district program efforts to improve instruction and to maximize the use of resources within our community. Collaborative arrangements with community agencies shall be developed with a view to expanding the resources available to our students and their families to support the overall academic success of each child.

Adopted:

Adapted from the Berkeley Unified School District

Comprehensive System
of Learning Supports

District Guidelines

Contents

* *Adapted from the* Berkeley Unified School District

I. Definition of a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

The Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is a practice under implementation in the Berkeley schools to more effectively and universally address barriers to learning experienced by students. **Under this system,** *all students* **shall receive** *appropriate learning supports,* **regardless of educational designation,** *when challenges first become apparent,* **in the** *least restrictive environment.*

- *Learning Supports* are the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school by directly addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

- A comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive learning support system provides essential interventions in classrooms and schoolwide. To ensure effectiveness, it is fully integrated in school improvement policies and practices designed to enhance instruction and school management.

- The phrase "*all students*" refers to any student in need of assistance beyond traditional classroom instruction and enrichment to support learning regardless of unique designations, circumstances, or diagnoses.

- The phrase "*appropriate learning supports*" signifies the use of interventions that target the specific challenges a student is facing.

- The phrase "*when challenges first become apparent*" refers to intervening as early as possible to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes and to prevent the escalation of student challenges.

- The phrase "*least restrictive environment*" means that, to the maximum extent appropriate: 1) all students are educated within the general educational environment at a school they are zoned to attend, and 2) special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs *only* when the student's learning needs cannot be satisfactorily met through the use of supplementary aids and services within the general education classroom.

A comprehensive System of Learning Supports works to ensure that students who are having difficulties getting their learning needs met within the general classroom environment are identified and provided with appropriate support so they become successful. With an emphasis on supporting the *whole child*, the system calls for developing student support systems to address academic, behavioral, social-emotional, health-related, and environmental difficulties. In coordinating and providing effective supports for students, schools draw from a combination of four sources: 1) site owned or site developed services such as specialized reading, math, or mentoring programs, 2) interventions provided by special education staff members for students without IEPs, 3) school-based or school-linked services such as mental health, public health nursing or other school-agency collaborations, and 4) the development and implementation of concrete strategies for classroom teachers and staff to utilize in the classroom to support a student or group of students.

* Adapted from the **Berkeley Unified School District**

II. Rationale

The design for a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports was created in response to the realization that, for many years, BUSD has focused the majority of its student and learning support resources on the most severe and chronic problems and has experienced limited success with this approach. Such a focus runs contrary to a substantial body of research which confirms that prevention and early intervention are far more effective in meeting student learning needs than intervention at the intensive level. The more intensive a student's learning needs are, the more resources it takes to meet those needs.

For example, in the past, one of the most relied upon sources of student learning supports was special education. In the absence of sufficient or appropriate learning support resources in general education for early intervention, many students who struggled fell significantly behind, yet continued to be served inadequately. This scenario contributed to a cultural pattern within the district of encouraging special education assessment and designation in order to get students help. While students must meet the legal criteria for special education designation, the lack of appropriate resources to intervene early within the general education program allowed the conditions for qualification to arise over time. This pattern led to a high percentage of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs); many of whom would have significantly benefited from the availability of effective interventions when they first began to struggle. The vast majority of these students have not exited special education.

Furthermore, the majority of intervention services did not take the whole child into account; prioritizing traditionally delivered, academic supports, even when difficulties were rooted in external barriers to learning and/or manifested as behavioral or emotional difficulties.

Under a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports, resources are being gradually shifted to enhance BUSD's capacity for providing prevention and early intervention in a variety of areas to improve outcomes for students. This is a system-wide change process in which BUSD is engaged on several fronts, including: 1) developing an infrastructure framework through which a comprehensive system of learning supports can operate, 2) implementing a staffing model that allows all student and learning support personnel, including special educators, to support students who do not have or qualify for IEPs, 3) creating a new administrative office charged with building and coordinating school-community partnerships to support the whole child, 4) providing on-going staff development to strengthen the system, and 5) adding a comprehensive learning supports component to school-wide plans for student achievement. Each of these elements of a comprehensive system of learning supports are described in Section IV, *Implementation Components*.

* *Adapted from the* Berkeley Unified School District

III. Outcomes, Guiding Principles, and Indicators of Success

The purpose of developing and implementing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is to improve student outcomes district wide. The design was developed as an effort by BUSD to achieve the following key **outcomes**:

1. Children are motivationally ready and able to succeed in school every day.
2. All students have access to quality learning supports when they are needed.
3. Students are engaged and feel safe and supported in school.
4. Schools are able to support the learning needs of all students.
5. The school system values and leverages family-school-community partnerships for student success.

With these outcomes in mind, a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports was designed on the premise of the following **guiding principles.** Under such a system, we believe that:

- School, home, and community resources together provide an ecological approach and the universal learning supports necessary to promote student and family well being and address barriers to student learning.
- A continuum of learning supports includes integrated subsystems for the promotion of healthy development, prevention, early intervention, and intensive intervention when needed.
- The continuum of should encompass the content arenas research has shown to be necessary for effective classroom and school wide learning supports.
- All children, youth and families should have equal access to learning supports in proportion to their needs.
- cultural competence must be integrated in all aspects of the system.
- An asset-based approach should be taken to build on the motivation, skills, talents, and strengths of students and their families.
- Partnerships based on trust between schools and community form the foundation of successful collaboration.
- An effective system is outcome driven with all key stakeholders responsible and accountable for results.

Finally, the following indicators help inform the success of implementation:
1. A continuously developing Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is fully integrated into school improvement efforts for all students regardless of educational designation.
2. Enhanced collaborative teaching and consultation between professionals of diverse educational backgrounds
3. Increased attendance
4. Reduced tardies
5. Reduced misbehavior
6. Less bullying and sexual harassment
7. Increased family involvement with child and schooling
8. Fewer inappropriate referrals for specialized assistance
9. Fewer inappropriate referrals for special education
10. Fewer pregnancies
11. Fewer suspensions and dropouts
12. Improved student academic performance

***Adapted from the* Berkeley Unified School District**

IV. Implementation Components
Each of the following activities contributes to the systems change process related to developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports.

A. Operational Infrastructure Framework
While maintaining case-oriented teams, the infrastructure expands to include a designated administrative leader for learning supports at school and district levels and the creation of Learning Supports Resource Teams at each site, a Learning Supports Resource Council for a family of schools (e.g., feeder schools), and a district-level Learning Supports team for purposes of training, oversight, and continuity across the system. These elements are anchoring points for ensuring system development with equitable distribution of learning supports for students *as well as* a critical point of contact for involving community resources to fill major gaps. They also provide mechanisms through which schools, the district, and community organizations can disseminate information about learning supports, as well as obtain updated information about the support needs of BUSD students.

Administrative Leaders
At each school and at the district level, a designated administrative leader is assigned to ensure continuing development of a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports. The responsibilities and accountabilities are delineated in a job description. This leader is responsible for the creation and capacity building of Learning Support teams and works with the district to facilitate development of family of schools councils.

School Learning Support Resource Teams and Family of Schools Councils
Put simply, the teams and councils serve as mechanisms for ensuring that a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is developed to address factors that interfere with learning at school. Team and council members typically consist of a site administrator, student and learning support staff – including special education staff, one or more representatives of general education, and representatives of community stakeholders and resources.

Family of Schools Council consist of representatives from site teams and are convened by a member of the District Learning Supports team once a month to assess learning support needs at school sites, provide technical assistance and training, identify system improvements needs, coordinate resources, and reflect on outcomes. Additional Council participants may include principals and representatives from community agencies providing school-based or school-linked services.

Teams and councils meet regularly. Their functions include:

1. Aggregating data across students and from teachers to analyze school needs
2. Mapping resources at school and in the community
3. Analyzing resources
4. Identifying the most pressing program development needs at the school
5. Coordinating and integrating school resources & connecting with community resources
6. Establishing priorities for strengthening programs and developing new ones
7. Planning and facilitating ways to strengthen and develop new programs and systems
8. Recommending how resources should be deployed and redeployed
9. Developing strategies for enhancing resources and improving procedures (e.g., for Response to Intervention and referrals when necessary, for ensuring appropriate follow-up))
10. Social marketing

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District Learning Supports Team
This team takes responsibility for enhancing use of all district resources available for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting healthy development. This includes analyzing how existing resources are deployed and clarifying how they can be used to build a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach at school sites. It also integrally involves all relevant community stakeholders with a view to integrating human and financial resources from public and private sectors to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Ultimately, a District Learning Supports Team performs essential functions related to the implementation and ongoing development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive approach for addressing barriers to student learning and promoting well-being of students and staff. The team recommends priorities for system development.

B. Special Education Reorganization

Special education is currently reorganizing its service delivery model. Rather than operating as a separate program, focusing on an exclusive and often segregated group of students, special education service providers will systematically integrate students into general education classrooms, offering specialized supports to any child who needs them at the time the student needs them. This reorganization of service delivery is guided by the following parameters.

1. Students are members of chronologically age-appropriate general education classrooms in their zone schools of attendance, or in schools of choice, participating in the same process as all other students for assignment in a zone.
2. Students move with peers to subsequent grades in school, as indicated by IEPs.
3. Special classes exist in so far as they present ideal enrichment or intervention opportunities to meet unique student needs as determined by an SST or IEP team, and such classes continuously support a flow of students in need of its services in and out of its parameters.
4. SST and IEP facilitators, as well as the professional participants, are trained and practice an approach that recognizes the legitimacy of the parents' perspective as valid and critical to the development of a successful SST or IEP plan.
5. Disability label or severity of disability does not preclude involvement in inclusive schools.
5. The staff-to-student ratios for special education teachers and paraprofessionals are based on student needs and are at least equivalent to the ratios used previously in special classes or other segregated arrangements.
7. The special education and general education teachers collaborate to ensure:
   a. the students' natural participation as a regular member of the class,
   b. the systematic instruction of the students' IEP objectives,
   c. the differentiation and adaptation of core curriculum and materials to facilitate all students' participation and learning of standards-referenced goals and objectives as well as other critical skills (social, communicative), and
   d. development and implementation of positive behavioral interventions to support students with challenging behaviors.
8. Supplemental instructional services (e.g., for communication, mobility skills, adapted PE) are provided to students in classrooms and community settings through a transdisciplinary team approach.

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9. Regularly scheduled collaborative planning meetings are held with general education staff, special education staff, families and related service staff in attendance as indicated, in order to support initial and ongoing program development and monitoring.
10. Plans are developed for the transition of students to subsequent grades and schools of attendance.
11. Effective instructional strategies (e.g., differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, teaching to multiple intelligences, employing universal design principles, infusing technology) are supported and fostered in the general e education classroom.
12. Classrooms promote student responsibility for learning through strategies such as student-led conferences, classroom meetings, student involvement in IEPs and planning meetings.
13. Ability awareness education is provided to staff, students and families at the school site through formal or informal means.
14. Natural peer supports are facilitated among students, as are instructional Arrangements that decrease reliance on paraprofessionals.
15. Ongoing personnel development needs for all members of the school community are identified and addressed.

A goal of all educators is success. Identified success in a unified school district setting is graduation from high school with skills that will enable students to become productive members of the adult world in whatever capacity suits the individual. When students are educated with peers the evolution to *in*dependence is supported. As the focus moves towards *supporting* students and assistin*g* them in recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses, a system of self-advocacy can be developed that will give all students a life long skill. Recognition of needs, learning styles and self-advocacy will build self-confidence and foster independence. Furthermore, this recognition will encourage an appreciation for others' differences, and promote a community of learners and a fellowship of support. As such, all students can be expected to benefit from an authentic and rich educational experience in a truly diverse classroom.

C. Office of Learning Supports

This Office focuses on supporting development of a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports and enhancing the resources for learning supports at school sites. Toward these ends, it works to: 1) coalesce and redeploy all specific, district-owned resources that provide or enhance learning supports in the schools and 2) build community-wide partnerships to expand learning support resources in ways that fill major gaps in the system.

D. Staff Development to Enhance Capacity

Implementing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports requires significant changes to school culture and teaching practices. Schools need support in their efforts to embody a more inclusive and prevention/early intervention oriented approach to addressing student learning needs. Initial staff development focused on the development of the system at the sites, assessing student and school needs and resources and then reorganizing resources as necessary. The District has developed several staff development modules which they deliver to school sites as requested. These modules address such issues as differentiation of instruction, Positive Behavioral Supports, and collaborative teaching practices. A critical staff development need that is emerging involves helping schools to effectively utilize research-based programs and practices that have the proven ability to meet specific learning support needs. BUSD is initiating work in this area in the current school year by developing a district-wide inventory of research-based learning support programs currently available in the schools.

E. School Site Plans for Academic Achievement

Every site's School Governance Council develops a school plan under the leadership of the principal. The document outlines instructional goals, strategies, and provides justification for site resource allocation. Since Spring 2006, BUSD has asked the K-8 schools to address three specific goals in their plans. One of these goals, *implement interventions that address barriers to learning*, was designed specifically to ensure that schools would work toward the implementation of various components of ULSS. As such, on an annual basis, each School Governance Council (SGC) now reviews or develops objectives pertaining to how their Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is operating, ensuring that the system enhancements are implemented over time.

V. Community Advisory Partnerships

With respect to special needs that must be addressed to ensure that *all* student learning needs are properly addressed, there are presently two community advisory groups working to develop these. The groups are the *Inclusive Education Advisory Panel* and the *Schools Mental Health Partnership*. The work of these advisory groups is described in greater detail below. As the work evolves, there are likely to be new groups forming to address various content areas.

A. The Inclusive Education Advisory Panel

The Inclusive Education Advisory Panel is an advisory group to the Superintendent that makes recommendations specific to the re-organization of special education, to ensure that students are provided high quality, preventive, early and intensive interventions, in the least restrictive environment. Panel members include parents, teachers, site and district administrators, and educational specialists. The panel is currently working on developing concrete modules describing various aspects of the system as they relate to special education, to help educate and inform BUSD administrators, teachers, parents and the community.

B. The Berkeley Schools Mental Health Partnership

The Berkeley Schools Mental Health Partnership (SMHP) is an interagency collaboration committed to building a comprehensive system of school-based and school-linked mental health care, for the purpose of ensuring that all Berkeley students have access to the social and emotional support they need for healthy development and school success. Critical to this mission is a focus on building positive social and emotional supports for all students by creating school environments in which students and staff can thrive. Current SMHP partners include BUSD, the Berkeley Alliance, City of Berkeley Mental Health, City of Berkeley Public Health, the Zero to Five Action Team of the Berkeley Integrated Resources Initiative, and school-based mental health providers. The SMHP is facilitated through the Office of Learning Supports. The SMHP has recently completed a comprehensive strategic plan for a school mental health system that is fully embedded into the framework for a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports.

* Adapted from the **Berkeley Unified School District**

VI. Implementation Goals: 2007-2008 School Year

Schools

The schools are at different levels of readiness regarding implementation. While some schools have already phased in various elements, others are just getting started. The following goals for the schools are designed flexibly, such that schools can create their priorities based upon their available resources and degree of readiness. District support will be given for each item.

- Identify and implement feasible, school-year objectives to better meet the diverse needs and capabilities of students within the general education environment.
- Strengthen the capacity of School Learning Supports Teams.
- Develop capacity to effectively utilize research-based programs and practices. BUSD is initiating work in this area in the current school year by developing an inventory of research-based programs and practices currently in use at the schools.

District

BUSD's central office will support the school-site initiatives and the overall implementation at schools in the following ways.

- Sustain special education staffing in the schools with lowered caseloads such that teachers can better collaborate with classroom teachers, provide services in the general education environment, and help support the coordination of services efforts.
- Develop a district-wide inventory of research-based learning support programs currently available in the schools.
- Provide technical assistance to the schools on developing and implementing school year objectives for improving the effectiveness of Learning Supports Teams and enhancing the learning supports system.
- Address staff development and other capacity building needs to strengthen implementation and support continuity across the system.
- Enhance the availability and use of mental health and public health services to fill gaps in the system.
- Expand participation of community stakeholders and providers on Learning Supports Teams and on case-oriented teams to support case management.
- Evaluate progress of school plans as they pertain to implementation.

VII. Toolkit

This section contains documents to be used in relation to a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports. Most of these documents are intended to be photocopied on both sides of a page.
- School-Site Implementation Checklist, 2007-2008
- Forms for Case-oriented Interventions

***Adapted from the* Berkeley Unified School District**