

Preface

When it comes to enhancing learning supports, widespread agreement exists for moving in new directions. It is easy to agree that change is needed. It is harder to agree on what the changes should look like. And it is even harder to get from here to there.

Our intent on the following pages is first to underscore the importance of learning supports and clarify what's wrong with the way such supports currently are provided; then we offer frameworks for rethinking programs and policy. Our approach involves analyses and commentary about the state of the art, and we offer conceptualizations, examples, and opinions.

The analyses and frameworks presented are based on our many years of work in classrooms and schoolwide and from efforts to enhance school-community collaboration. Some of what we have learned comes from our direct efforts to introduce, sustain, and scale up innovations. Other insights come from theory and the large body of relevant research. And equally instructive is what we have derived from lessons learned and shared by many school leaders and on-the-line staff who strive every day to do their best for children experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Our analyses clearly indicate the need for systemic changes. This in no way is meant to demean anyone's current efforts. We know that the demands placed on those working in the field go well beyond what common sense says anyone should be asked to endure. And we know that they often feel as if they are swimming against the tide and making too little progress. One of our objectives in writing this guide is to highlight some of the systemic reasons it feels that way, and the other is to move programs and policy forward to improve the situation and enhance school outcomes.

Some of what we propose is difficult to accomplish. Hopefully, the fact that there are schools, districts, and state agencies already trailblazing the way will engender a sense of hope and encouragement to those committed to improving how schools address barriers to learning. Throughout the book, we have included a variety of "tools" to guide analyses and capacity building for new directions. These can be used as training aids and handouts in explaining the need and frameworks for moving forward.

xiv The School Leader's Guide to Student Learning Supports

And as a major companion aid for leaders to use in building staff capacity, we have prepared *The Implementation Guide to Student Learning Supports in the Classroom and Schoolwide* as a companion volume. That work highlights concepts and frameworks presented in this book and goes on to detail teacher and learning support staff practices for making new directions a reality every day.