Implementing The Florida Standards:
Role of Student Services Personnel
Action Brief

Purpose:

The purpose of this Action Brief is to clarify the role of student services personnel in implementing the Florida Standards, inspiring dialogue among professionals sharing the responsibility for successful standards implementation and mobilizing local planning efforts to support the work of teachers and administrators in this implementation. As Florida’s educational communities embark on a global educational effort, Student Support Services personnel must first understand and then embrace how the standards will impact the way students are taught, how they learn and how they will be assessed.

What are the Florida Standards?

The standards are clear and concise to ensure that educators, parents and students have a common understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school. The majority of states adopted these standards so that American students will be fully prepared to compete successfully in a global economy. Information about Florida’s Standards is available at the following hyperlinks:

• English Language Arts and Literacy
• Mathematics

In 2010, Florida’s State Board of Education adopted the standards for Mathematics, English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. These standards impact the way children are taught, how they learn and how they will be assessed. The English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics standards are fully implemented. Assessments will be chosen during the 2013–2014 school year that will be implemented in the 2014–2015 school year. By understanding these standards, student services personnel can contribute to school-based teams implementing effective standards-based instruction.
What are learning supports?

Learning supports are the resources, strategies and practices that 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 (UCLA, Center for Mental Health in Schools, http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/). Learning supports are designed to enable learning by addressing the external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with instruction.

Why do students and teachers need learning supports?

A comprehensive system of student learning supports is fundamental to promoting student success, addressing the barriers to learning and re-engaging disconnected students. Florida’s multi-tiered system of supports focuses on increasing academic and behavioral outcomes for all students consistent with the State Board of Education mission by:

• Enhancing the capacity of all Florida school districts to successfully implement and sustain a multi-tiered system of student supports with fidelity in every school;
• Accelerating and maximizing student academic and social-emotional outcomes through the application of data-based problem solving used by effective leadership at all levels of the educational system; and
• Informing the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation of an integrated, aligned and sustainable system of service delivery that prepares all students for postsecondary education and/or successful employment within our global society.

Good instruction is necessary but not sufficient when students are experiencing internal or external challenges that inhibit learning and engagement. By systematically addressing barriers to learning and re-engaging students who have become disconnected from school, educators are able to more effectively support student success.

Who provides learning supports?

Within a multi-tiered system of supports, student services personnel (school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors and school nurses) and other educators (teachers, special education personnel, administrators, behavior specialists, etc.) are members of school-based teams that provide a continuum of services that address academic, behavioral and social-emotional, health and student engagement factors.
How do student services personnel support implementation of the Florida Standards?

A multi-tiered system of supports provides the framework for organizing the supports that will assure student success by using data to plan for simultaneously engaging students in learning and removing barriers to learning. For this effort to be successful, it is important to recognize that students have varying needs and that correspondingly varying levels of support will be necessary for all students to master the standards. There are three specific ways that student services personnel can accomplish this:

By promoting a multi-tiered system of supports

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services promotes a multi-tiered system of supports within which instructional decisions are based on student response data to improve academic growth and performance. The multi-tiered system of supports is an evidence-based delivery model that focuses on prevention and early identification and allocates resources on a continuum of support based on student need. This “need-driven” decision making seeks to ensure that district resources reach the appropriate students (schools) at the appropriate levels to accelerate the performance of ALL students to achieve and/or exceed proficiency.

By engaging in data-based problem solving

In order to make instructional decisions to implement a multi-tiered system of supports, the use of a structured, data-based problem-solving process is critical to assure that each of the tiers is constructed in response to the specific needs of the students. This team-based process requires that school-based team members apply skills to facilitate the process by:

- Accurately identifying problems and goals;
- Analyzing data and generating and validating hypotheses about why the students are not yet demonstrating the desired skill;
- Designing, supporting and implementing academic interventions and behavioral supports; and
- Using student-centered data to evaluate the response to instruction/intervention.

By fostering student engagement

Student engagement represents both: 1) the amount of time and effort students spend on educationally purposeful activities; and 2) how the school deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that are linked to increased student learning.
According to The National Survey of Student Engagement, perceptions and behaviors related to student engagement can be characterized by five factors of engagement:

1. **Level of academic challenge**: Schools encourage achievement by setting high expectations and emphasizing importance of student effort.
2. **Active and collaborative learning**: Students learn more when intensely involved in the educational process and are encouraged to apply their knowledge in many situations.
3. **Student-faculty interaction**: Students able to learn from experts and faculty serve as role models and mentors.
4. **Enriching educational experiences**: Learning opportunities inside and outside classroom (diversity, technology, collaboration, internships, community service) enhance learning.
5. **Supportive campus environment**: Students are motivated and satisfied at schools that actively promote learning and stimulate social interaction.

Student services personnel contribute both directly and indirectly to all five of these factors of engagement by serving on teams to plan and implement continuous academic and behavioral improvement efforts, working directly with students to remove barriers to learning, facilitating and supporting extracurricular opportunities and engaging families and community members as active partners in education.

**How are student services personnel engaged in the implementation of the Florida Standards?**

Student services personnel (school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses and school counselors) coordinate and collaborate with teachers, administrators, families and community-based professionals to provide the academic, social, behavioral, health and mental health learning supports necessary for a positive school climate and student success.

Student services personnel assist educators, students, and families to remove or ameliorate barriers to learning by facilitating the implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports through skills in data-based decision making; intervention planning, design and implementation; and facilitation of collaborative, data-based and problem-solving teams at the school and district levels.

The supports provided by student services personnel are critical to the effective implementation of standards-based instruction. Some of the critical functions student services personnel perform to support successful implementation of standards include the following:

- Providing a continuum of support services that focuses on prevention and intervention and is responsive to the diverse and developmental needs of all students.
- Working with teachers and administrators to develop a positive school climate, effective behavior management and positive social-emotional well-being.
- Facilitating collaborative, data-based problem solving as members of school-based teams, with essential skills in data collection and analysis, problem solving/hypothesis development and group processes.
- Conducting formative, interim (screening and progress monitoring) and diagnostic assessments that support effective teaching and learning.
- Fostering collaboration among schools and parents and general and special education professionals, as well as with the community.
What next steps are needed?

The next step for student services personnel toward smooth implementation of the Florida Standards requires a clear understanding of the rigorous standards and a common language for open discussions among education leaders, teachers, parents, students, community partners and student service personnel. There are a number of action steps student services personnel can take to begin to implement the standards.

Student services personnel can facilitate activities that support the implementation needs of students and staff. The following action steps can guide this facilitation:

• Familiarize yourself with the standards.
• Frame skills and services in the context of standards-based instruction.
• Participate on multidisciplinary teams to identify and problem-solve barriers to learning.
• Assess multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data in collaboration with school and district staff to identify student needs.
• Analyze available assessment data to identify the current level of student academic performance.
• Engage students, parents, school staff and community partners to assess, plan and implement interventions that result in successful mastery of the Florida Standards.
• Monitor student progress and participate in discussions with school staff related to the readiness of students and the capacity of teachers providing multi-tiered targeted interventions.
• Identify students with academic needs and work with staff to match those needs with appropriate targeted interventions.
• Plan and implement interventions that address barriers to learning.
• Utilize evidence-based interventions to address the needs of students with at-risk factors.
• Develop and implement multi-tiered interventions that support student well-being.
• Integrate strategies for addressing instructional standards into a comprehensive student services plan.
Summary:

For the Florida Standards to have the desired effect on student outcomes, a coordinated and integrated system for addressing barriers to teaching and learning must be in place to support effective instructional systems. School social workers, school psychologists, school counselors and school nurses are uniquely positioned to provide support within the school community as members of school-based teams. These teams function within a multi-tiered system to provide a continuum of services in response to the internal and external factors that interfere with or effectively facilitate a student’s ability to learn. The system of supports is directed and organized by a structured data-based problem-solving process.

Your role in the implementation of the Florida Standards initiative represents an opportunity to actively invest in the success of Florida’s students. With your commitment to professional development and continuous improvement, student services can be the support team that enables success for all students.