



**29 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**



August 10, 2015

Special Edition:

Social-Emotional Learning, School Climate, and the New School Year

Requests from a Colleague:

>ideas for building social & emotional learning at elementary schools

Beginning a New School Year:

>a natural opportunity for enhancing social & emotional engagement and creating a positive school climate

Featured Center Resources:

>for enhancing social & emotional engagement and a positive school climate

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Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested. The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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Note: In keeping with the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports,* this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed.* The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Rquest: “We are working on a grant proposal to help with our learning supports in one particular area of the district. One part of our plan is to have character education/social skills lessons implemented in every grade by the end of the 3 year period. So, we are looking for a curriculum that may help us with this. We’ve written one for the high school grades and have had it implemented for the last several years, but we do realize by the time they get to high school, their values and beliefs are pretty well set. We are desiring to start earlier with our students and are looking for predesigned lessons that teachers can grab on Monday and the school can reinforce throughout the week through announcements, activities, and such.” *Suggestions? Ideas?*

Listserv Participants: What can you share with this colleague about enhancing social and emotional learning at the elementary school level (in classrooms and school-wide, natural and curricular opportunities, authentic and sustained learning)? Is the work you know about having a positive impact on school climate? Send info to Ltaylor@ucla.edu for wide-spread sharing.

Center Response: Here’s some thoughts to kick-off the sharing. Pervasive social and emotional learning arises from what happens in the classroom, school-wide, at home, in the community, from media such as social networking and movies, etc. Much of it arises from various *direct* socialization forces. Some happens as a *covert* result of the processes used in teaching and child-rearing (i.e., what has been described as the “hidden curriculum”). Some is pursued in the course of efforts to *help* those whose social-emotional development seems delayed or dysfunctional.

Proactively, at the elementary school level, a multifaceted approach would be desirable, including

- (1) a direct social-emotional teaching curriculum
- (2) an authentic and natural focus on social-emotional learning and functioning in all *instructional* activity
- (3) an authentic and natural emphasis on social-emotional learning and functioning in all *school-wide* activities
- (4) a direct as well as an authentic and natural focus on social-emotional learning and functioning as a fundamental consideration in all student and learning supports

Furthermore, all interventions should emphasize enhancement of (a) social-emotional attitudes (values), (b) intrinsic motivation for social-emotional functioning, and (c) capacity for effective action (e.g., using a support network as well as developing personal skills).

A note about *Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH*

Excerpt from article at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall03.pdf>

In some form or another, every school has goals for improving students' personal and social functioning. Such goals reflect appreciation that social and emotional growth plays an important role in

- >enhancing daily functioning
- >facilitating students' holistic development
- >enabling student motivation
- >optimizing life beyond schooling.

Sadly, the stated goals too often are not connected to daily practices at a school. Increasing a school’s focus on natural opportunities for personal and social growth requires advocacy,

planning, and building the capacity of school staff. At most schools, student support professionals are among those who could offer some leadership for this. As a starting point, such staff can form a small work group dedicated to moving the agenda forward.

The functions for a work group include:

- developing a “map” of natural opportunities for promoting social emotional development
- delineating ways in which students experience transactions that interfere with positive growth
- clarifying ways for staff to minimize negative experiences and maximize use of opportunities to promote positive growth
- providing a variety of learning opportunities for staff related to each of the above

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>

Note: Most resources mostly stress the skill building facet of social and emotional development. Here is an example that emphasizes skill building as part of everyday activities:

>*Everyday Ideas for Increasing Children's Opportunities to Practice Social Skills and Emotional Competencies* – <http://ecmhc.org/ideas/index.html>

The ideas/strategies presented in this document are available in a variety of formats including: Twitter postings ("tweets"), strategies that can be used in a classroom, and supplemental materials that can be sent home for families to do at home. The strategies are organized by the type of skill that would be targeted when using the strategy: emotions, friendship skills, problem solving, and handling anger and other difficult emotions. For each set of strategies, there are daily ideas which require relatively little planning, weekly ideas that require training and materials, and ideas that can be sent home with families.

For structured curriculum, see the *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning* (CASEL) guidebooks of social emotional programs for elementary schools and for secondary students – <http://www.casel.org/guide/>

Also see the National Registry of Evidence Based Programs – <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/> You can search for social emotional and then ages 5-13. This will bring up a brief description of each program.

On School Climate, see the National School Climate Center – <http://schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php>

For more, see the Center Quick Finds on

>*Social and Emotional Development* at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2102_05.htm

>*School Climate/Culture* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm>

Beginning a New School Year

>A natural opportunity for enhancing social and emotional engagement and creating a positive school climate

There's a great deal to cover with staff, families, and students as new school years begin. As we indicated in a recent message related to kicking off the school year, too often such events are dominated by pressure to cover the many bureaucratic things that need to be understood (e.g., procedures, regulations, requirements, rules). This engenders a perception of "more of the same." Such a perception counters positive social-emotional feelings of renewal and hope.

Creating an optimistic mood and a sense of excitement is important to enhancing school climate. The work requires participatory activities that highlight

- how much all the stakeholders are valued and the critical role they play
- an exciting agenda for renewal
- plans for making renewal a reality
- new opportunities for stakeholder participation and taking on leadership roles

Making it Happen

(1) *Establish a "Kick-off" Workgroup* – As noted, at most schools, student support professionals are among those who could offer some leadership for this by forming a small workgroup to:

- extract from the school's strategic plan the various items devoted to renewal
- use the renewal items to create a variety of attractive ways to present and publicize what makes the coming year so special (e.g., a colorful handout, a feature on the website, a news release, email announcements, a brief video, etc.)
- plan several participatory kick-off events, including
 - >keynote presentations by the leadership that focus on renewal and hope, followed immediately by small discussion groups focused on (a) ways each stakeholder can play a role in making renewal a reality and (b) clarifying what personnel and other stakeholders indicate they will need in order to take on a meaningful role
 - >welcoming events for teachers and staff, families, students, community members (including volunteers) – with buddy and mentor systems set up to support newcomers until they are functioning effectively (Note: Welcoming events are not information sessions; they are meant to be celebratory and relationship building – the capstone for the series of welcoming events might be a communal potluck picnic open to all stakeholders.)
 - >first day and first week welcoming and transition supports for all students

(2) *Establish a Renewal Facilitation Workgroup* – ask this group to develop an implementation action plan for

- each kick-off activity
- each of the welcoming activities
- substantive orientations and support for newcomers (e.g., teachers, staff, families, students, volunteers)
- newcomer induction and transition supports
- building capacity and ongoing support and care related to the renewal agenda
- mobilizing and sustaining stakeholder engagement in moving forward with each renewal agenda item (emphasizing interactions that enhance social and emotional engagement)
- identifying and correcting any problems that arise early in the renewal process
- celebrating the work and publicizing outcomes

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Featured set of center resources:

>for enhancing social & emotional engagement and a positive school climate

Many new resources are being heralded for enhancing social and emotional engagement and a positive school climate.

We mentioned some above. Now go to relevant topics on the Center's Quick Find menu and use them to link to a wide range of resources. Below are a few examples of such topics:

Enhancing Social and Emotional Engagement and a Positive School Climate: Use the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds to Find Resources

- > *Social and Emotional Development and Social Skills* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2102_05.htm
- > *School Climate/Culture* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm>
- > *Involving Stakeholders* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/stakeholders.htm>
- > *Motivation, Engagement, Re-engagement* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>
- > *Expanded Learning Opportunities* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/afterschool.htm>
- > *Mentoring* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/mentoring.htm>
- > *Parent/Home Involvement and Engagement in Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm>
- > *Community Outreach for Involvement and Support* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/commoutreach.htm>
- > *Volunteers in Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/volunteers.html>
- > *Collaboration - School, Community, Interagency; community schools* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201_01.htm
- > *Cultural Competence and Related Issues* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/culturecomp.htm>
- > *Safe Schools and Violence Prevention* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2108_03.htm
- > *School Improvement Planning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/improvement.htm>
- > *School Turnaround and Transformation* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/turnaround.htm>

*For information about the 2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

***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.***

Please share relevant resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences!
Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Note: Responses come only to our Center at UCLA for possible inclusion in the next week's message.

We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>

and to *Facebook* -- access from the Center's home page

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>