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School Practitioner Listserv

A Weekly Community of Practice Network for Sharing and Interchange

Mental Health in Schools UCLA Center Program and Policy Analysis*

February 6, 2017

Request from a colleague
  >*Employing student support staff over the summer*
        • **Center Comments**
        • **Comments from Colleagues in the Field**

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources for
    >*continuing education and professional development*

Follow-up Comments from a Colleague in the Field
    >*on professional development for behavior problems*

Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports,** this is being sent to and forwarded by over 114,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

Request: "I supervise 34 Social Workers who provide mental health in our inner city public schools. Staff work on 10 month contracts with summers off. Each summer we lose about 1/3 of our staff who find summer employment elsewhere and don't return. This year I am seeking ideas to help generate funding by providing summer services to retain our highly trained exceptional staff. I am reaching out to other School based MH providers to seek ideas on what their staff do during the summer months(if anything)."

Center Comments: Strong summer programs and supports are essential for students who struggle to keep up. Here are some resources related to funding and programing:

>*Moving Summer Learning Forward:*
A Strategic Roadmap for Funding Streams in Tough Times –
http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/resmgr/mott_/3.12.13_nsla_moving_summer_l.pdf

>*Summer Learning: Missed Opportunities* –
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Special_Report_on_Summer_052510.pdf

>*Countering Summer Slide* – http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10824669.2012.688171

>*Enhancing Summer Learning* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sumlearn.pdf

Comments from Colleagues in the Field: To prime the pump for responses from the field, we sent this request to a few colleagues; here are their responses:

(1) I work for a large school district on a 10 month contract. The district gives us the option of "flex time." We can take time off during the school year as we need it. We still work 10 months but have staff during the summer to continue to work with summer school students/families, as well as keeping contact with students we see during the school year.

(2) Well, first our School Based Mental Health staff (who are housed in our School Based health centers-so they are medical homes for students in schools) are required to work year round. It is part of their funding requirement under their grant/contract with us/MDHHS (aka "the state"). So that makes things a little different because our staff have to be there year-round/in the summer. On that note, it is challenging for our staff to stay busy during the summer months when less students are around/in school. Many of our inner city schools offer summer school however so that helps a bit.

   Our MH providers offer groups during the summer and include food (lunch or snacks) which always helps. They also work on programming, purchasing curriculum, attending trainings, preparing for the new school year, meeting with administrators and/or community members to support their efforts.

   Another thought I have is to look for grant funds to help support summer programming. One of our districts rec'd grant funds to run a physical and mental health summer day camp for several weeks. It included breakfast, lunch, snack and transportation. It was a huge hit!

   One last thought is to ask the staff what they would want/need to help them stay engaged and invested...I'm confident they would have ideas.

(3) We are on a 12 month pay schedule here in LEUSD. Perhaps a stipend could be paid for summer work and cost offset by the increased medical billing? I would suggest putting new hires on a 12 month work schedule so then they will be paid for the summer when student's aren't present. We also do not pay union dues or elected insurance- type fees during the summer months which increases my take-home by quite a bit. If the usual monthly charges are subtracted on a 10 month schedule then less money is needed to pay the same net earnings for people working in the summer. All this would need to be synthesized by

personnel/payroll departments. Stipends might be for summer programs (grant funded?) or summer school. If staff are not returning after summer my guess would be that the "new" job pays more, pays 12 months and may have better conditions. benefits package.

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Invitation to listserv participants:

So now let's hear from you!

What do your local schools do during the summer to provide supports that address barriers to learning and re-engage disconnected students?

**Share lessons learned. Comments. Recommendations.
Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

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Featured Set of Center Resources for

>continuing education and professional development

Here are a few Center-developed resources to aid school/district professional development:
>*Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families*
Unit I: *Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf
Unit II: *Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement and Re-engagement* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageii.pdf
Unit III: *Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiii.pdf
Unit IV: *Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiv.pdf

>*Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf
Unit I: *Personalizing Learning*
Unit II: *More is Needed to Address Barriers to Learning*

>*Response to Intervention Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports*
Unit I: *Response to Intervention: Improving Conditions for Learning in the Classroom* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtii.pdf
Unit II: *Implementing Response to Intervention Sequentially & Effectively* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiii.pdf
Unit III. *Response to Intervention: Beyond Personalization* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiiii.pdf
Unit IV: *Pursuing Response to Intervention as One Strategy in a Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiiv.pdf

>*Developing Resource-Oriented Mechanisms to Enhance Learning Supports* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/developing_resource_oriented-mechanisms.pdf

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Follow-up Comments from a Colleague in the Field
>on professional development for behavior problems

During the week, a colleague weighed in on the request included in the 1/23/17 practitioner [about what professional development should emphasize for reducing classroom behavior problems see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner(1-23-17).pdf]:

··· If I were King of the School District, I'd try to limit the presentation to those few teachers who are really interested, perhaps just a grade level, or just the first year teachers. We could talk about actual situations, real students, and demonstrate how a consultative problem-solving model would work. Also, a small group would make it easier for educators to admit to struggling with classroom behavior! I suspect we might uncover systemic barriers to more effective behavior management that the group as a whole could then take to the principal for further discussion.

In planning a panel presentation, I like to include some master teachers who have years of success with students who have challenging behavior. Master Teachers will have lots of practical solutions to the problem of translating highly theoretical psychological research on behavior management into easy-to-do classroom adjustments. If the team consists, say, only of school psychologists who have never been solely responsible for a room full of students, then the audience may wonder about credibility. ...

... School-wide management systems come with particular underlying philosophies. Which one will be the best match for the largest portion of the staff? Sometimes there are simply too many students with troubled lives in one classroom with one teacher; the solution might be hiring more teachers and creating smaller classes. In today's economic climate, how do you do that? Does your school have the will to be excellent in supporting students with behavioral problems?

... good behavior management is a long-term project. One lecture won't do it. You need an on-going commitment. And even then, a certain percentage of the staff will firmly believe it's not their job ....

What follows is a sample of the comments and recommendations this colleague offers in consulting with teachers.

PREVENTION AT THE CLASSROOM LEVEL

I've seen discipline systems based on a progressive series of increasing punishments and some minimal rewards. They can be popular because they give the educators specific steps to do at certain times with all students. In my experience, they seem to work best with students who already "know how" and need a little reminder now and then when their frustration tolerances are low. Students who are fragile, inflexible, and explosive seem to do much worse under these conditions, just the opposite of what you want.

Preventing a problem is more effective than trying to set things right again after the fact, so do what you can to make misbehavior difficult. For example, I visited a first grade class that had lots of little reading nooks students could crawl into and get cozy. Of course, the bullies could crawl in, punch somebody, and not be observed. The teacher rearranged the class so it was easier to monitor. Problem solved.

To the greatest extent possible, also make sure instruction is high quality, quickly paced, activity-based, and engaging. Busy students don't have much time to get in trouble. However, students who learn quickly and students who are below average will need additional support or else you will lose their involvement.

Classroom rules should be as few as possible and worded positively. Describe what you want to see and hear, NOT what you don't. Using negative language tends to make people think more about what they are NOT supposed to do. (Example: DON'T imagine an orange-striped hippo! To understand this instruction, you first have to think about the hippo.)

Post these rules on all four walls of the classroom. That way, the teacher is always close enough to quickly point to the rules and ask "Which rule needs work right now?" (The sign may need graphic icons to assist those who need help with printed words.) Rules need to be taught early and reviewed frequently (say, after every holiday break.) Teach rules in the context where they will be performed (lunchroom rules taught in the lunchroom, playground rules taught on the playground, etc.) You may need special rules for unique events. If the rule is "Keep your hands away from the decorative balloons in the hallway as we walk to the assembly," then rehearse in that very hallway several times prior to the event. (Have the students discuss the best way to remember "hands off the balloons" so they own the solution.)

One classroom I visited had one rule: Everybody in this room has the right to learn as much as they can. When a student broke this rule, the teacher asked guiding questions such as "What are you doing?……How does this help you and the students around you to learn as much as they can?……Can you think of a better way or do you need help? OK, then, how about letting Teacher X help you make a better plan……"

The conversation was usually respectful on both sides, facilitated by completely side-stepping the need to place the adult in the role of the condemning judge and the student in the position of the bad kid who needs punishment. It reminded me a bit of Glasser's Reality Therapy approach, which has been the basis of some schools'' entire discipline system! (Nice Glasser summary at http://olameegdcequared.blogspot.com/2013/01/reality-therapy.html)

Nothing brings out misbehavior faster than having a cluster of students not knowing what to do, or how to do it, or where to get materials, or where to put the finished products, or how to ask for help. I volunteered in a class with multiple behavior outbursts and they often happened after students completely clueless about what to do sat too long with an assignment sheet. I just circulated through the room helping students to get started. Some of the students were so far behind the rest of the second grade that I needed to assist letter formation hand-over-hand. But the classroom climate eased a bit with just a little 1-1 to get things going.

Routines and transitions need practice, too. See some ideas for routines here http://www.safeandcivilschools.com/news009.php

<center>INCENTIVES</center>

For schools that like to change behavior via positive attention to appropriate actions (or at least baby steps in that direction), you may like the Tough Kid materials by William Jensen, Ginger Rhode, H. Kenton Reavis, & Susan M. Sheridan. Positive attention systems can be deceptively simple and there are many ways adults can accidentally cause them to fail. For example, if you set the goal so high nobody ever wins a prize, then your incentive system will fail. (BTW-Students should earn at least 80% of all possible prizes.) Tough Kid materials can help prevent such errors. http://toughkid.com/tk-products/tk-bundle.html

The "Good Behavior Game" has a long history of research documenting its effectiveness. In short, divide the class into two teams. Pick a behavior that needs improvement. Whenever a team member breaks that rule, the teacher tallies it. Sometimes it helps to put the tally on a white board or chart so people can see the "score." The team with the fewest tallies at the end of the day gets some prize, although

simple bragging rights has been shown to work.

    One teacher I knew tallied how many times students said "……um……" or "……er……" when answering. (Such place-holders were marked down in the district's public speaking rubric.) If the day's tallies were lower than the previous day, everybody cheered! The students pointed out the teacher said "um" too, so tallies for all adults in the room were added to the game.

SCHOOL-WIDE PLANNING

There are a number of school-wide behavior management programs that prevent problems by making certain that core curriculum, classroom rules, and classroom procedures are solidly in place before moving on to bigger problems. Particularly in schools where students have several different teachers each day, it can be less confusing for everybody to have the same rules, correction procedures, and consequences. For more information, check out Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support (https://www.pbis.org).

TALKING IT OUT

Those charged with talking to students about behavior problems ... will probably need to be skilled in a variety of techniques. I've already mentioned Glasser's approach. Dr. Ross Greene has a program for dealing with inflexible/explosive students who can go from zero to 100mph in a few seconds. (http://www.livesinthebalance.org) Solution-Focused Brief Therapy techniques are well-suited to school environments because students don't have to sign up for dozens of sessions and the emphasis is on practical problem-solving ideas. (http://www.solutionfocused.net/what-is-solution-focused-therapy/) ...

RETURNING TO CLASS

Removing a student from a classroom can cause feelings of rejection and/or humiliation. These are risk factors often found in people who take an extremely violent path. As soon as possible, when a student returns from the office, there should be opportunities for the student to use areas of personal strength to do meaningful work for the school. The idea is to create a situation in which the student can be seen as a productive, valuable member of the community as a counter-balance. (Example: a middle-school student who frequently ran in crowded hallways used his above average art skills to make "don't run in the halls" posters. They were legitimately wonderful and he received a lot of positive attention for his work.)

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

If student behavior is so extreme that someone is likely to be hurt, it may be safer to do a room clear than to send to the office. Procedures can be part of a general school safety program or individualized to the needs of certain students. Anyone attempting to physically restrain an explosive student should be properly trained. Physical contact can multiply the violence of the event, so it should only be used a last resort.

    When the school-wide and classroom-level systems aren't powerful enough, you'll have to design a specific plan for a specific student. A good tool to help create understanding from what otherwise may look like chaos is the "Functional Assessment of Behavior." Many School Psychologists know how to do this. It involves a lot of observing and data analysis. But at the end, you should know what "sets up" a behavioral incident and also what "triggers" it; this information is critical for intervention planning.

LAST BIT OF ADVICE

Beware thinking that all aspects of the behavior problem reside within the student and all you have to do is "fix" that part the student. I believe that people are probably doing the best they can at the moment. Even "misbehavior" may be appropriate at some level from the right point of view.

For example, I knew a first grade student who became loud and violent at times. But not all the time. After getting to know the parents and the student, I learned that the father had a history of beating the mother. In fact, there was a restraining order preventing the father from being around the house. Sometimes, the mother would get lonely and invite the abusive father back. When the father was in the house, the student would be edgy, loud, and violent at school. He was trying to get sent home so he could protect his mother. He wasn't ADHD, or Seriously Emotionally Disturbed. He was just a first grader who had to get home, didn''t want to let others know his dad was back at the house, and also didn''t have enough experience to figure out another way all by himself.

Schools are very complicated socio-political ecologies. People have amazing individual differences. Interactions abound. When you feel certain you know that A causes B and there is only one skill or intervention that will help, step back and take a broader look. You may be surprised.

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In the 1/23/17 practitioner, various Center resources were noted. For example, see

>*Rethinking How Schools Address Student Misbehavior & Disengagement* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring08.pdf

>*Rethinking discipline to improve school climate* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/disciplineclimate.pdf

Also see the Featured Resources section of this Practitioner.

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THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THE INTERCHANGES BECOME!
Sign-up for the Listserv mailings – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.
We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange*
on our website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and on *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)

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*For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

See report from the National Summit on the *Every Student Succeeds Act and Learning Supports: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching to Enhance Equity of Opportunity* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summitreport.pdf .

And note that our new book detailing the prototypes
and related resources is now available.

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