

Featured

(1) A teacher asks:

What can teachers do to support mental health of students in classrooms?

(2) *Who are opportunity youth?*

(3) *Links to a few other relevant shared resources*

For discussion and interchange:

>A teacher asks: *What can teachers do to support mental health of students in classrooms?*

I recently left the classroom to join the state Department of Education and am enjoying reading and learning from the emails you send out. Although I don't usually comment on articles, I felt like one important voice was missing in the Hot Topic publication entitled, "About the Student Mental Health Crisis: What do you recommend beyond hiring more personnel?"

What are teachers doing to address these concerns? In the absence or delays with administrative guidance or the inability of social workers being able to adapt their approach to the mental health crisis, I would be interested in knowing how boots on the ground classroom teachers are finding successful ways to address student needs in the classroom without appropriate staffing levels. Is information of that nature included in one of the three books that were listed at the bottom of the email? If so, could you please direct me to which one? Thanks for your help and for addressing these important issues.

Center Comments:

In our work, we stress know that teachers are positioned to play a role in preventing and ameliorating the impact of students' social and emotional problems. That role includes promoting positive mental health and intrinsic motivation for engagement at school and in school learning. Many helpful resources developed by our Center and others can be accessed from our online clearinghouse quick find focused on:

>*Classrooms that support learning*

Examples of relevant Center resources include:

>*Chapters 1-5 in Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

>*Enhancing Classroom Teachers' Capacity to Successfully Engage All Students in Learning*

>*RtI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports: A Guide for Teachers and Learning Supports Staff*

>*Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning*

>*Improving Working Relationships Inside the Classroom*

>*Prereferral Interventions*

>*Supporting Students Experiencing Adjustment Problems*

>*Working with Disengaged Students*

Comments from the Field:

We sent the request to colleagues with relevant expertise. Here's a sample of their suggestions:

- (1) "It takes a village... there is the idea of many layers of application. So if mental health is our crisis, then there are many layers of how to address it.

Some will come in the form of "evidence based practices" and assuring that all are trained in those models. But the deeper layer of application is that every person has something to contribute to the student. So we have to ask ourselves what is happening with our students,

- > what are they experiencing?
- > are they suffering from a mental health crisis?
- > are they concerned with their peers?
- > how are they getting along with the social demands that are placed on them?

We use that as data sometimes qualitative and other times quantitative to share with the school adults regarding what students are dealing with.

At the end of the day, we are encouraging relationships with students and creating community in classrooms as the most effective ways to support students overall preK through grade 12.

We support the cultural lessons that say we all contribute to the mental health of all by the way we treat each other. Sometimes that means we offer training support to paraprofessionals or security or cafeteria workers to respond positively, rather than punitively.

Yes, some students might need specialized care, but that is only part of the solution and might be 1x a week (mental health services) and there are still more hours in the school day that a teacher will be with students.

We have basic training opportunities for all staff in suicide prevention and trauma responsiveness.

We know that we have schools filled with folks who love kids, so we are trying to channel that focus into teaching the kinds of behaviors we want to see in others and feel ourselves...."

- (2) "...First, a district needs to assess the level and types of student need that exist. This assessment need not be a formal survey but could be a simple analysis of behavioral data that is already collected (ex. attendance, grades, office referrals, fights, bullying, special education referrals, etc.). A team from each school needs to look at their school data to figure out what overriding issues exist and where they can make the greatest impact with the least amount of resources (since limited resources will likely be the case).

Chances are that most students will fall into a category where problems are not so serious or where students suffer a "temporary" problem. This category is the perfect place for a classroom teacher or other building staff to connect to students to build resilience. The resilience research is pretty clear. One positive adult/student connection to school can double a student's academic performance. Not everyone on staff will be comfortable reaching out to students, however. Some training for staff may be needed to help adults make an impact. Once a strategy or two is identified, allow staff to work and check back regularly to make certain things are moving in a positive direction for all concerned. Then the team can review the data again to see if their efforts have made a difference over time.

The next (and smaller) category of student need involves a level of concern that can be chronic (for example poverty related issues) or some other barrier that limits student performance. These issues might manifest in behaviors like absenteeism, getting in trouble fairly often, losing ground academically, and so on. For these students, the school team needs to figure out what issues are most prevalent for that group. Again, given limited resources it's important to focus on the primary issues facing these students and then look to the district AND the community to see what resources already exist. For example, if poverty is an underlying issue, what community resources are available to support families? Partnerships are a great way to support youth and their families when barriers to learning exist outside the school environment.

The third and smallest category of students is one with very complex barriers to learning. Here is where hiring more staff comes into play and where individualized supports are needed. Trained professionals are best prepared to deal with more serious student issues. But that's not to say that every staff member in the school can't play a role. When trained professionals meet with staff that come into regular contact with an individual, there is an opportunity to design interventions for teachers that can make a difference. But again, these interventions are specific to an individual and

are most effective when there is a multi-pronged approach. This is beyond what a classroom teacher can manage alone.

.... A classroom teacher is a professional with many tools in her/his toolbox because one size does not fit all. My suggestion is to study the research on learning supports and to devise an approach for school teams to implement in his/her specific state. Perhaps there are ways to link with other state level services within the department so that a unified message gets to all schools. Better yet, investigate state level supports to see if there are ways to partner that can support local agencies and schools together."

- (3) "Even amongst our students who are struggling the most with their mental health, I believe that teachers have the capacity to enhance their students' social-emotional functioning through building supportive classrooms where students want to be. I hope some ideas from a few of our NASP resources will resonate. Welcoming classrooms, affirming schools, and positive relationships with teachers are important protective factors."

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources.>"

From: *Exploring how general education teachers use school-based consultation*

"...Teachers receive consultation to improve classroom practices in many forms. Given the context of high job demands, high stress, and limited resources, it is important to assess teachers' experiences of these various forms of consultation to generate hypotheses about how to best support teachers..."

Of the types of consultation measured (informal, team meetings, formal), teachers reported most often seeking informal consultation from other teachers and administrators... Implicit here is that teachers may be more likely to seek consultation when barriers (e.g., time, distance) to access other professionals are reduced. Additionally, teacher collaboration, and the positive associated impacts may create more natural opportunities for teachers to engage in informal conversations. Given the proximity and availability of teachers and administrators for collaboration, informal consultations may be the easiest, and therefore, the most used avenue for support...

Most teachers sought consultation from other teachers. Given that only 30% sought consultation from behavioral professionals (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, and school-based mental health providers), there is a need to understand teachers' decision-making process in seeking consultation....

A potential implication of these findings is that because teachers are already consulting with other teachers in their buildings, perhaps further attention and training could be given to better prepare key teachers to serve these natural (or even formal) consultation roles..."

I heard the teacher say that opportunity often knocks at a student's door.



Great! Then, I better stay home not to miss it.

For discussion and interchange:

>Disconnected or opportunity youth?

From: *Who are opportunity youth?*

“ among youth ages 16 to 19, 7% of the nation’s older teens- more than 1.1 million young people- are neither working or in school.... While these teens are some-times called “disconnected youth,” the term “opportunity youth” is increasingly preferred, as this phrase is more positive and reflects the potential of these young people to become thriving adults if provided the right opportunities.

Opportunity youth often come from communities with higher levels of poverty or limited resources. Many of these young people have disabilities, experience with homelessness or have crossed paths with the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Youth of color are also disproportionately represented in this group....

Policymakers and leaders from multiple sectors can take steps to reduce inequities and keep youth engaged in school or work, including:

- >Providing access to affordable, accessible high quality early childhood education, especially in low-income communities, sets the stage for academic success and decreases disparities by income and race.
- >Providing equitable access to high quality K–12 education, including ensuring that schools in low-income areas have adequate resources, counselors and support services as well as positive environments and non-punitive discipline policies.
- >Strengthening early-warning systems in schools and communities to identify youth who are struggling and to connect them with needed support, whether related to academics, disabilities, family issues, health care, mental health or other needs.
- >Ensuring that flexible learning experiences are available and tailored to youth needs and offering strong support for the transition from high school to post-secondary path-ways, especially in areas with higher rates of youth disconnection.
- >Increasing access to youth development pro-grams — such as mentoring, after-school and civic engagement — helps youth form relationships with supportive adults and meaningfully contribute to their community.
- >Providing equitable access to high quality employment opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships and career and technical training programs.
- >Creating targeted plans to address the unique needs of communities with high rates of opportunity youth....”

For other discussions about this subgroup of students, see the Center’s online clearinghouse quick finds focused on:

>*Prevention for students at-risk*

>*Transition from adolescence*

Center Comment

There is a simple truth that everyone working in schools knows: persistent barriers to learning must be addressed if students are to come to school and engage in learning.* The negative outcomes for schools and society related to disconnected youth also are well known. Effective school improvement must involve schools playing a major role in easing problems, increasing opportunities, and enhancing the well-being of students and families. Multifaceted and interrelated solutions require various forms of collaboration. Schools must transform how they connect with homes and communities so they can work together more effectively in pursuing shared goals. And teachers must establish regular *in-classroom collaborative working relationships* with other teachers, student support staff, and volunteers to enhance equity of opportunity for students to succeed.

*You may be interested in our chapter on *Student Engagement and Disengagement: An Intrinsic Motivation Perspective and a Mental Health Concern*.

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth
- >Supporting students with mental health challenges in the classroom
- >“Teachers Often See the Red Flags First”: Perceptions of School Staff Regarding Their Roles in Supporting Students with Mental Health Concerns
- >Promoting Student Well-Being Through Classroom Interventions
- >How Fair Is School Funding in Your State?
- >Education Could Enhance Oversight of School Improvement Activities
- >504 Plans: Do teachers do enough to accommodate students?
- >A Fifth of American Adults Struggle to Read. Why Are We Failing to Teach Them?
- >How schools are implementing AI
- >Doing Educational Equity Right: The Homework Gap
- >Embracing the Four-day School Week
- >Want to Tackle Attendance Apathy? Students Will Show You How
- >Transforming Student/Learning Supports & Enhancing Equity of Opportunity: A Journey of Lessons Learned
- >Teacher-student race match and identification for discretionary educational services.

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center’s Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 3/13 Welcoming newcomer students
- 3/13 De-escalation training
- 3/14 Ethical concerns in counseling
- 3/15 Closing the achievement gap for all
- 3/20 Bullying prevention
- 3/27 Building Sustainable Infrastructure to Implement Programs That Promote Healthy Development and Prevent Behavioral and Mental Health Problems
- 3/28 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights
- 4/2 Grief goes to school
- 4/3 Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness
- 4/17 Foster care and unhoused families
- 4/17 Family guide to support students mental health
- 4/17 Bullying in elementary and middle schools
- 4/18 Mentoring
- 4/24 Legal and Ethical Complications in Working with Minors in Schools
- 4/25 Cyberbullying
- 4/25 Social determinants of health

To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what's going on** to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- **For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

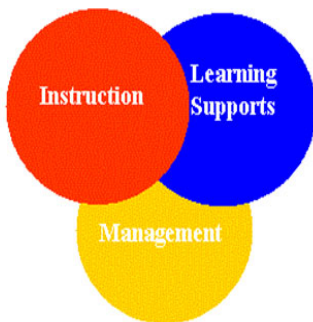
Looking for information? (We usually can help.)

Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports



Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

Let Us Know about what ideas are being proposed for moving in new directions to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

And if anyone is thinking about increasing the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, we can help. Send all info and requests to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER

Who Are We? Recently renamed the Center for MH in Schools and Student/Learning Supports, our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.