Featured

>*Request from a district about revamping its approach to mental health*

>*About strengthening positive mental health*

>**Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

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For discussion and interchange:

Request from a colleague:

"We are working to revamp mental health in our district. Do you have resources that might help us?"

Center Response:

With the growing interest in mental health in schools, many districts are working to enhance their programs and services. Here are some resources to share with those exploring what and how to strengthen supports for students.

First, consider what a *broad* focus on mental health in schools involves (e.g., especially for prevention and promoting mental health). Here are few resources for discussing this:

>*About Mental Health in Schools*

>*Time for straight talk about mental health services and mental health in schools*

>*Prevention and Schools*

>*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports*

Second, consider how to avoid over-identifying and over-diagnosing mental health problems.
See
>*Screening Mental Health Problems in Schools*

   Highlights the following issues for discussion:
   How appropriate is large-scale screening for mental health problems?
   Will the cost of large-scale mental health screening programs outweigh the benefits?
   Are schools an appropriate venue for large-scale screening of mental health problems?

>*Countering the Over-pathologizing of Students' Feelings & Behavior: A Growing Concern Related to MH in Schools*

Third, map the resources schools and district have and how to use them most effectively.
See
>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What It Needs*

>*Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change*

Fourth, create positions of leadership and new roles and functions for existing school staff.
See
>*Call to Action: Student Support Staff: Moving in New Directions*

>*Framing New Directions for School Counselors, Psychologists, & Social Workers*

>*Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started*

>*Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff*

Fifth, watch out for "pernicious funding" that leads to over-pathologizing student concerns. See

>*Pernicious Funding Related to Student and Learning Supports*

>*Funding Stream Integration to Promote Development and Sustainability of a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*

The trend for some time in trying to find "extramural" funds for student and learning support has been to reach for and accept whatever is around. Increasingly, however, concerns have been raised that some sources of funding can distort the essence of what a comprehensive student support system should be and can work against development of a full continuum of support interventions. Some major examples cited include: funding for Supplemental Services under Title I (which has focused only on tutoring and has limited and skewed afterschool programming), Medicaid funding for school-based services that ends up redefining the roles of some school support staff (by turning them mainly into providers of fee-based clinical services),

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it inevitable that public schools will change in fundamental ways over the next few years. This is particularly the reality for how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and for efforts to reengage disconnected students and families.

Certainly the pandemic has increased the numbers experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems and increased the need for student and learning supports. However, it is widely acknowledged that student/learning supports have long been marginalized in school improvement policy and practice. As a result, such supports are developed in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner. Implementation is fragmented and at times redundant. Those involved often are counterproductively competitive, especially when funding is sparse (and when isn't it?).

For discussion and interchange:

>**About Strengthening Positive Mental Health**

When folks discuss mental health, the tendency is to focus mostly on individuals displaying emotional and behavioral problems. As noted, in revamping approaches to mental health in schools, the opportunity arises to enhance the promotion of positive mental health and the prevention of mental health problems.

In some form or another, every school has goals that emphasize a desire to enhance students' personal and social functioning. Such goals can be seen as reflecting views that social and emotional growth has an important role of play in

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

Here are a few resources to stimulate discussion of these matters:

>*About Positive Psychology*

>*Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH*

>*Gratitude in Youth: A Review of Gratitude Interventions and Some Ideas for Applications*

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

And, for more, see related Center Quick finds. For example:

>*Social and Emotional Development and Social Skills*

>*Prevention for Students "At Risk"*

>*Resilience/Protective Factors*

>*Social Determinants of Health, Mental Health, and Academic Achievements*

Why Emphasize Gratitude?

From *Time magazine*:
...Gratitude acts as a kind of course correction, easing us away from the dark paths to which our minds gravitate—minds that are built to see the glass as half empty. All of us, to a greater or lesser extent, have what's called a negativity bias. We pay more attention to what is negative about any situation than to what is positive, we give the negative more weight, and we have better memory for negative events and feelings than for positive ones... This tendency to focus on what is wrong can impact how we make decisions, and how motivated we are to take risks. Although the negativity bias may be corrected and even reversed as we grow older, it shapes our views of ourselves and the world around us for much of our lives.
   Gratitude is a kind of social glue. When directed toward others, gratitude boosts feelings of connection and commitment in relationships, and in this way eases loneliness....
   The greatest benefit of reaching for gratitude: It can turn our usual views of ourselves and the world upside down. It can take what's invisible in the background and bring it front and center. ...

From *Enhance Mental Health With A Culture Of Gratitude*

...Gratitude can be defined broadly in a few different ways. You can think of it as an overall attitude of appreciation or a way of being—a focus on what's positive in life. Gratitude is also an emotion—when you feel thankful for a situation or toward someone for something they've done, for example. And gratitude is an expression as well—when you demonstrate your attitude or your feeling through actions and the things you say or do....
   Gratitude has a positive impact on mental and emotional states and on physical health as well. And it tends to predict pro-social behaviors like helping others.... When people feel recognized and acknowledged, they tend to feel greater levels of job satisfaction which drives more engagement and more likelihood to reciprocate....
   Gratitude can reduce impatience and enhance a sense of calm and presence. ... When people express more gratitude they tend to also report greater levels of happiness.... Depression is often characterized by feelings of closing in or closing down. People may feel trapped and overly emphasize their own negative feelings, losing a broader perspective. Gratitude tends to focus people more broadly—expanding viewpoints to others and to circumstances....

>**Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

Benefits, Mechanisms, and New Directions for Teaching Gratitude to Children

The Relationship Between Gratitude and Happiness in Young Children

Internet impropriety: Moral identity, moral disengagement, and antisocial online behavior within an early adolescent to young adult sample

Sesame Street and APA: How to Integrate Racial Justice into Your Work with Children

I know you don't want to go to school, but if kids didn't go to school, more mothers would have severe mental health problems.

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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

4/5 Mckinney-vento 101: Basic Requirements of the Mckinney-Vento Act

4/6 Enhancing school capacity to address violence

4/7 Transitioning out of foster care

4/10 Family based alternatives justice programs

4/11 Start and sustain a youth advisory board

4/11 Internet of things privacy concerns

4/12 Supporting children exposed to violence

4/12 Whole child policy

4/13 Community-Based Alternatives to Youth Incarceration

4/18 Living, Learning, and Working After High School

4/20 Youth ambassadors to improve health literacy

4/20 Effective communication with the IEP team

4/25 Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility

4/26 Building campus relationships from the inside out

4/27 Resolving disputes through the special education process

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**

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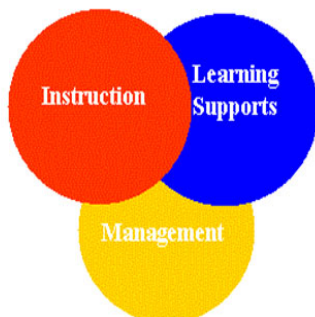
For information about the
National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

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.

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**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.

**We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange
on our website a**t http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)