School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
(8/11/21)

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(Scroll down to read about the above and for hotlinks to resources)

Note: Go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ for links to other Center resources.

This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

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For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

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For discussion and interchange:

>A cautionary note about SEL: Manners? Morals? Mental Health?

While it is clear that SEL is on the minds of school planners, it is also evident that there are major differences in agenda and approach, and so a bit of caution is in order.

- Some are approaching social and emotional development as a separate *curriculum* matter designed to
  >promote social emotional development
  and/or
  >promote mental health (e.g., enhance students' personal and social well-being).
- Others want to use SEL with targeted students to address skill deficiencies related to social and emotional functioning.
- Still others are calling for addressing social and emotional growth through natural opportunities in the classroom and schoolwide.

These and other approaches are not mutually exclusive. Whatever the approach, it is important to clarify whether the agenda is primarily to pursue the school's role in (a) socializing students, (b) helping students address problems, or (c) both. This is especially a concern when the focus is on students who need help related to learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

The reason for concern is that a school's socialization agenda often comes into conflict with its agenda for helping students (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/helping.pdf). The problem of conflicting agenda is particularly acute when staff are confronted with the need to both help a student overcome behavior problems and, at the same time, control misbehavior to maintain social order. In such situations, the need for social control can overshadow the concern for helping, and this can exacerbate a student's problems (e.g., can generate psychological reactance, motivate additional misbehavior, increase disengagement from instruction).

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The potential for conflicting agenda is especially concerning as this school year begins. Because of the pandemic, everyone, (students, families, staff) has experienced considerable stress, some have been ill, some are grieving for a relative or friend who died. Students, as well as families and staff, who are having trouble recovering from recent events need support in readjusting to school. As a consequence, the calls for mental health in schools and for SEL are receiving considerable attention.

Clearly, there is a need for addressing the mental health concerns of students (and their families and school staff). And an enhanced focus on facilitating social and emotional learning and development is long overdue (especially when the focus involves enhancing a wide range of *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* and not just socializing behaviors and manners and teaching a limited set of coping skills).

However, while all this is essential, it is not sufficient.

So, as schools pursue the call for enhancing mental health in schools and implementing SEL, it is important to broaden the focus and discuss how to

(1) continuously promote positive social emotional development in ways that create an atmosphere of caring, cooperative and responsible participation in learning, and a sense of community and well-being

(2) embed social emotional learning in existing curricula

(3) map natural opportunities for promoting and supporting social emotional development at school

(4) improve how school staff model social and emotional functioning every day

(5) ensure that students have many opportunities and support for connecting and building strong relationships with positive peers and adults at school

(6) minimize transactions that interfere with positive social and emotional functioning and growth

(7) transform the ways that school staff respond to students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems to ensure that the responses promote positive development, enhance engagement in learning, address barriers to learning and teaching, and generate a positive school climate. (Such a transformation should ensure that SEL and mental health in schools are fully embedded in school improvement policy and practice.)

>For CASEL's work related to SEL, see https://casel.org/resources/
>Also see the various resource links on our Center website's online clearinghouse Quick Find *Social Emotional Development* (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2102_05.htm)
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For discussion and interchange:

>Improving student/learning supports: *It's not just about more staff & stuff*

A few year ago a former superintendent cautioned about the "Give me more stuff" mentality he saw as pervasive in many school districts.

... most school systems are woefully underfunded, and massive infusions of cash would be needed for them to raise salaries, fix infrastructure, update their technology, and overhaul the curriculum. But even so, I've never known a district that couldn't use its existing resources more efficiently and effectively, particularly when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable kids. ...
    When advocating on behalf of struggling students and families, it's always tempting to demand that district leaders hire more social workers or parent coordinators or nurses. Rarely do advocates pause first to ask themselves whether the district's existing services are as effective as they could be. ... https://kappanonline.org/starr-challenges-community-schools/

As schools ramp up for the coming year, the influx of relief funds presents the opportunity to make major improvements. One time funds such as this tend to be used only to address immediate problems rather than also as a catalyst for making fundamental and sustainable system improvements.

This need not be the case.

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In both the immediate and long-term, the increased number of students experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems can be helped by systemic improvements, such as

• mapping existing resources with a view to enhancing how they are used
• using some of the pandemic relief funding to (a) unify student and learning supports into a cohesive component and (b) move forward with developing the component into a comprehensive and equitable system.

To help with mapping, here are two aids that not only identify existing resources, but do so in a way that organizes planning to improve a school's system of student/learning supports and clarifies critical system gaps:

>*Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf

>*An Aid for Initial Listing of Current Resources at a School for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/listingresources.pdf

As a mechanism for doing the mapping, we suggest establishing a Learning Supports Leadership Team. See

>*What is a Learning Supports Leadership Team?*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf

With respect to unifying and starting the process of developing a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports, see, for example,

>*Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall19.pdf

For more details in improving how schools can address barriers to learning and teaching (including mental health concerns) when the relief funding ends, see:

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
>*Improving School Improvement*
>*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*
All three can be accessed from our Center's website. Go to:
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Among the host of other free resources on the Center's website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/, see the System Change Toolkit for system improvement resource aides such as

>*Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf

>*Leadership Infrastructure: Is What We Have What We Need?*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20infrastructure.pdf

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For discussion and interchange:

>Can schools be safe without school police?

For those discussing changes in the relationship between schools and police, here are some examples and guidelines:

From *Pomona school district defunds police, reimagines school safety*
https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-07-02/pomona-unified-defund-school-police

> After a four-year campaign by community activists, the Pomona Unified School District has decided to end on-campus police patrols and instead rely on proctors trained in de-escalation methods, joining a handful of California districts that have moved to defund school police.
>
> The Pomona decision comes amid increased pressure from activists in Los Angeles and elsewhere to reimagine school policing and eliminate patrols on campus, which some say can be traumatizing for students. Others have maintained that school police play a crucial role in keeping schools safe.
>
> Last month, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to reclaim its oversight authority to review Sheriff's Department contracts with school districts.
>
> "This is a milestone that has been met," said Caroline Lucas, a Pomona youth organizer who advocated for the removal of officers at her school, Pomona High. "For me, it means that leaders can experiment with what transformative activists have been trying to do."...The district, which serves 23,000 students, at one time contracted with Pomona police to station one uniformed officer at each of its four high school campuses. In 2019, the district paid the Pomona police about $366,000 to fund two officers. The school board voted on a budget Wednesday that did not include a new contract with the Police Department. Instead, the money will fund resources to help students after a year of remote schooling, Supt. Richard Martinez said. "Our focus has been reengaging students and making sure that they're ready to come back to school," he said....
>
> The district will prioritize the use of proctors, who are unarmed and work as security across all campuses, to de-escalate situations among students. Often, they are parents or recent graduates, Martinez said.
>
> Pomona Unified joins a short but growing list of school districts that have cut ties with police on campuses after a summer of racial justice protests that reignited the debate.
>
> In California, at least six districts have approved efforts to eliminate school police or cut funding, according to a database compiled by the news organization Education Week.

From *Understanding School Violence*
http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/School_Violence_Fact_Sheet-a.pdf

> The goal is to stop school violence from happening in the first place. Several prevention strategies have been identified
> - Universal, school-based prevention programs can significantly lower rates of aggression and violent behavior. These programs are delivered to all students in a school or grade level. They teach about various topics and develop skills, such as emotional self-awareness and control, positive social skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, and teamwork
> - Parent- and family-based programs can improve family relations and lower the risk for violence by children especially when the programs are started early.These programs provide parents with education about child development and teach skills to communicate and solve problems in nonviolent ways
> - Street outreach programs can significantly reduce youth violence. These programs connect trained staff with at-risk youth to conduct conflict mediation, make service referrals, and change beliefs about the acceptability of violence.

From *Building Safe and Healthy School Communities: Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*
https://www.iirp.edu/news/building-safe-and-healthy-school-communities-restorative-justice-and-responsive-regulation

> Research shows that a school climate that is positive, inclusive, and accepting is a key component of an effective school. School-wide approaches are the best for dealing with the challenges of youth violence prevention and school safety and security. Too often, there is a singular focus on the most serious student offenders without a concomitant plan for addressing the potential needs and problems of the full population of students in the school. A comprehensive ,school-wide plan ultimately prevents or reduces serious offenses. School-wide

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approaches can change the climate of a school and reduce the likelihood that the problems characteristically presented by at-risk students will escalate out of control.

Also see: *Cops at the schoolyard gate*
https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/22580659/police-in-school-resource-officers-sro

Our Center's perspective: From our perspective, the agenda for enhancing school safety needs to be broadened. We frame problems experienced at school (such as violence prevention) within the context of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports. See

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide* – access at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Within that framework, school safety and crisis response and violence prevention need to be embedded into the broader concern about transforming student/learning supports in ways that go beyond the limited MTSS framework. The emphasis is first on unifying student/learning supports and then developing them into a cohesive system of schoolwide and classroom-based interventions. The system encompasses a continuum that (a) promotes and prevents problems (e.g., enhances a supportive, caring school environment, assesses whether students feel supported, facilitates social-emotional learning), (b) intervenes as soon as problems arise (e.g., responds quickly to bullying, verbal threats, reengages students who are disconnected from peers and adults at school), and (c) ensures severe and chronic problems are continuously addressed. It also encompasses six domains of student/learning supports that span across the continuum. One of those domains focuses on *Crisis Assistance and Prevention* (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch8crises.pdf; also see the self-study survey http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/crisissurvey.pdf).

Note that transforming student/learning suports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system involves weaving in community resources to improve existing interventions and fill gaps, as well as strengthening connections to community services to facilitate appropriate referrals and follow-through.

For more resources from the Center at UCLA and others across the country on school safety, see the links on the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on:

>*Safe Schools and Violence Prevention* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2108_03.htm

> **Are these topics being discussed in your locale?**
> Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Open Letter to Chief School Officers, District Superintendents, School Board Members, Principals, and All Other Education Leaders *Improving How Schools Address Learning, Behavior, and Emotional Problems and Reengage Disconnected Students*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/7-8-2021.pdf

COVID-19 and School Psychology: Adaptations and New Directions for the Field
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1852852

Comprehensive School Safety
https://www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/policy-priorities/relevant-law/the-every-student-succeeds-act/essa-implementation-resources/essa-school-safety-for-decision-makers

Model School Safety Plan
https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2020/11/ModelSchoolSafetyPlan%20%28final%29.pdf

Helping Kids Make Decisions https://childmind.org/article/helping-kids-make-decisions/

U.S. Department of Education's "Return to School Roadmap" to Supporting Students, Schools, Educators, and Communities in Preparing for the 2021-2022 School Year
https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-%E2%80%9Creturn-school-roadmap%E2%80%9D-support-students-schools-educators-and-communities-preparing-2021-2022-school-year?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

Everyone's Talking About Students' Mental Health: Schools Need to Avoid Five Potential Pitfalls http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm

How School Leaders Can Boost Students' Sense of Belonging
https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-school-leaders-can-boost-students-sense-belonging

State policy options to promote K-12 integration
https://www.ecs.org/state-policy-options-to-promote-k-12-integration/

What's Wrong with Current State Approaches to Addressing Student Mental Health Need?
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7-29-21.pdf

Mentors' approach to relationship-building and the supports they provide to youth: A qualitative investigation of community-based mentoring relationships
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740920322684

The Road to Readiness: Guiding Families of Children and Adolescents with Serious Illness Toward Meaningful Advance Care Planning Discussions https://nam.edu/the-road-to-readiness/

> ***Recent Reports from the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports***
>
> >*Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports*
> >   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evolvecomm.pdf
>
> >*Implementation* Science and Complex School Changes
> >   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implemreport.pdf
>
> Policy brief by the Center prepared for the Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)
> >*Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID 19 Context and Beyond*
> >   https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/pb_adelman_nov2020.pdf

A Few Upcoming Webinars

8/12/21 Strengthening Youth/Young Adult Peer Support: Supporting Culturally Responsive Practice

8/16 Positive community norms

8/17 Planning for transition

8/18/21 The Social-Emotional Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on American Schoolchildren

8/19/21 Recovering from a year of disruption

8/19/21 What matters most as a new school year begins

8/25 Back to School 2021: A conversation about how to get ready

8/26 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

8/31/21 Assessing with Respect: Everyday Practices That Meet Students' Social and Emotional Needs

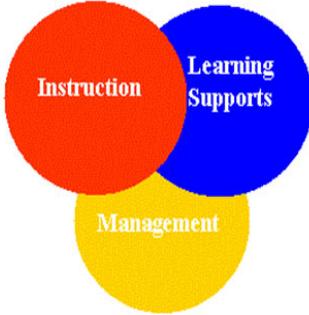9/8/21 Strategies and best practices for returning to school

9/29 Fully Present: Leveraging Attendance Data to Ensure Ongoing Success

Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth
https://preventioninstitute.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4bf5a36bd9f72789255d49a&id=17f472fea9&e=b6757fd9d7

For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm

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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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Invitation to Listserv Participants:

Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.
Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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 at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)