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From: Adelman, Howard
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 10:29 AM
To: LINDA TAYLOR
Subject: Addressing Social and Emotional Well-Being: Beyond the Pandemic

Addressing Social and Emotional Well-Being: Beyond the Pandemic

Oh, Oh – let's not get side-tracked!

Headlines in Michigan and Los Angeles Newspapers

Schools use therapy-based programs for 'overwhelmed' kids

A New Lesson for Anxious Kids: Therapy

As a co-directors of a national Center concerned with embedding mental health in schools, we are pleased to see the increased focus on students social and emotional well-being as a way of dealing with current pandemic anxiety.

At the same time, we know that schools need to move beyond the crisis mentality that leads to responding with yet another "fix."

Certainly, it's good to add a *curricular* focus on "helping students manage their feelings."

However, let's not forget that ameliorating the range of overlapping learning, behavior, and emotional problems many students are experiencing requires that schools move forward in making transformative improvements in how they work on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students.

The number of students manifesting life-altering problems in too many schools is staggering, and while "therapy-based" programs may be therapeutic, they are nowhere near sufficient to address the problems experienced by these students, their families, and their schools.

Besides focusing on therapy-based curricular programs, this is the time to move forward with improving existing student and learning supports by ending the long-standing marginalized and fragmented approaches currently in place. This means coalescing and broadening efforts related to MTSS, PBIS, Community Schools, and other crisis-responding initiatives in order to develop a *unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports* that can produce significant gains in addressing the multifaceted and complex problems that schools must cope with now and in the future. Such a system focuses on the needs and resources of students, families, teachers, and all school staff.

Combining existing resources with pandemic relief funds provides an immediate opportunity to move forward.
See

>*Why Schools Need to Transform Student/Learning Supports and How to Move Forward*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/10-6-21.pdf>

No one really thinks that adding one more program is sufficient to (a) address major barriers to learning and teaching and (b) promote the well-being of students in need. It is time for schools, families, and communities to work together to produce a fundamental, systemic transformation. Such a transformation is essential to enhancing social and emotional development, closing the achievement and opportunity gaps, reducing dropouts, and increasing the likelihood of schools being prized as treasures in their neighborhood.

As John Dewey wisely proclaimed:

*What the best and wisest parent wants for his (her)
own child that must the community want for all its children.
Any other idea ... is narrow and unlovely;
acted upon, it destroys our democracy.*

And doing less than transformative system changes is a narrow and unlovely approach that makes legislative and value commitments to equity of opportunity and every student succeeding simply rhetorical statements.

For more indepth details on how schools can better address barriers to learning and teaching, see

>Improving School Improvement
>Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide
>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change
all three can be accessed at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

In addition, we offer free TA and coaching for those who are moving toward transforming student/learning supports - see
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coach.pdf>

We don't have email addresses for all who we hope will read this, so please share this with your colleagues.

And as always, we ask that you share with us whatever you think others might find relevant. Send to
Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Best wishes, be well,

Howard & Linda

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