25 Years & Counting

ENEWS

A Monthly Forum for Sharing and Interchange

March, 2012 (Vol. 16 #6)

ENEWS is one of the many resources provided by the School Mental Health Project/Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. This electronic journal/newsletter is sent to those concerned with enhancing policies, programs, and practices related to addressing barriers to student learning and to promoting mental health in schools.

For more on what our national Center offers, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

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**We encourage you to forward this to others. If you have been forwarded this ENEWS and want to sign up to receive it directly, please let us know.
Contact smhp@ucla.edu**
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WHAT'S HERE THIS MONTH

**Continuing Concern

>**The Down-Side of High Stakes Testing on Schools**

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CONTINUING CONCERN

The Down-Side of High Stakes Testing on Schools

Because achievement tests continue to be the mainstay of school accountability, it has become increasingly essential to do something significant to counter the negative impact of high stakes testing. Of particular concern is the increasing level of student and staff stress that permeate a school as testing days approach. The problem is not just "test anxiety," it is the negative impact on the overall climate at a school. The nature and scope of teaching and learning are reshaped; anxiety and fear dampen enthusiasm for learning and performing.

Addressing all this is an urgent need. The overall press is for interventions that can maintain a positive school climate, minimize the stress on students and staff, and enhance students' motivation to try their best during test days. This involves much more than "tips for taking tests" and "hints for stress reduction." For instance, much more must be done to avoid the overemphasis on test preparation. And much more attention must be given to the impact on students' motivation, especially their intrinsic motivation (e.g., with respect to test taking, minimizing avoidance motivation, enhancing motivational readiness, maintaining motivation so that participants stay mobilized; enhancing motivation as an outcome).

What do you recommend related to this continuing concern?
Send to comments to ltaylor@ucla.edu

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Together for Tomorrow, **a new federal initiative** – The White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service announced *Together for Tomorrow*, a new initiative to spotlight existing and spur new community engagement in turning around persistently low-performing schools. The initiative will promote a community culture where education improvement is viewed as everyone's responsibility. The work of skilled principals, teachers and school staff, in concert with dedicated parents, community organizations and volunteers will achieve positive results with the support of Together for Tomorrow. Together for Tomorrow will also spotlight exemplary programs underway that have strong capacity to manage school-community partnerships and demonstrate progress. Supporting services will involve providing guidance on how to harness existing federal, private and nonprofit funding streams in addition to connecting local programs with technical assistance opportunities. Following the official launch, regional Together for Tomorrow events will be held in demonstration site locations and other areas across the country in urban, suburban, rural and tribal communities. (2/24/12) http://www.ed.gov

Report shows crime at US public schools on decline – Violent crime at the nation's schools is declining, and students and schools are reporting less bullying and gang activity. But new government data reports an increase in cyber bullying and youth suicides. Some school safety advocates question whether the numbers are accurate, noting the data is collected through surveys and not incident based reporting. (2/22/12) http://www.washingtonpost.com

A quarter of state's students chronically absent – A quarter of Oregon's public school children miss at least 10 percent of the school year, according to a new analysis of state education data by a coalition of nonprofits that believes school attendance is closely tied to student achievement. The analysis found that the worst attendance was in the early years of kindergarten and first grade as well as high school. Among kids from poor families, about 28 percent miss school more than 10 percent of the year. That's twice the average for students who are not poor. (2/1/12). Http://www.gazettetimes.com

Asking for help isn't easy for some students – New research suggests that students' ability to speak up for themselves and seek help from a teacher often varies by economic and social class. Children of working class parents seemed more reticent in asking teachers to review directions, provide more instruction or even check their work. (1/4/12) http://chicagotribune.com

Some success turning around grammar schools, not high schools – Chicago's "turnaround" elementary schools produced better academic gains that other "worst of the worst" schools that did not undergo similar reforms (3.5 months ahead in reading). High schools were another story. After four years, "turned around" high schools did not perform differently than similar struggling high schools. (2/9/12). Http://www.suntimes.com

Education gap grows between rich and poor – Analyses of long term data finds family income appears more determinative of educational success than race. One reason for the growing gap could be that wealthy parents invest more time and money than ever before in their children, while lower income families are increasingly stretched for time and resources. (2/9/12) http://www.nytimes.com

Utah bill focuses on evaluation of administrators to improve schools – Improving and evaluating school leadership is now at the hear of a Utah bill that originally hinged on performance pay for teachers and loosening termination laws. Up to 15 percent of school principals' salaries would be based on an evaluation that would factor in student achievement at the school, feedback from teacher, parents, and supervisors, and how thoroughly the administrator conducts teacher evaluations. (2/13/12) http://www.desertnews.com

Superintendents say students feel impact of state budget cuts – Texas school district superintendents say that state budget cuts are hindering their ability to educate children as a result of teacher layoffs, bigger class sizes and fewer services for students who need academic help. (1/30/12 Fort Worth Starr Telegram) http://www.star-telegram.com/2012/01/30/3697752/school-leaders-say-students-feeling.html

Staff removed at school during abuse probe – The entire staff at a Los Angeles elementary school is being removed while authorities investigate allegations of sexual abuse by two of the school's teachers. More than 120 staff, everyone from the principal and teachers to the cafeteria works, are being replaced because a full investigation of the allegations will be disruptive and staff will require support to get through the scandal. An entire staff has been selected to come into the school to take over teaching for the time being, and there will be a social work in every classroom to help students and staff cope with any issues. (2/7/12. Associated Press)
http://news.yahoo.com/staff-removed-la-school-during-abuse-probe-085638310.html

Demise of school counselors possible as funding continues to dry up – It's a tug of war as school district officials and their boards attempt to remain fiscally solvent at the expense of eliminating services designed to lay the foundation for students' futures. In one district, budget reduction include 23 high school counselors as well as seven junior high school intervention counselors. If the reductions become reality, the district will have no high school counselors. Last year a nearby district approved the elimination of all its counseling programs, which consisted of 68 employees. Counseling was mandatory in 2006 in California with increased funds available; in 2009 state law makers took away the mandatory restriction and informed struggling districts they could use the money any way they wanted. (2/13/12 Contra Costa Times)
http://www.contracostatimes.com/california/ci_19943796

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Quote from above article:
> "...schools cannot take any more cuts. People need to realize that when we don't properly fund education and they cut counseling services of prevention and early intervention, we end of paying a lot more down the road for all of the at risk students..."

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Fred Conklin

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Among the sources used in gathering the above items are:
>The ECS e-clip at http://www.ecs.org
>The Public Education Network Newsblast at http://www.publiceducationorg
>The Update from the American Orthopsychiatric Association at
http://www.aoatoday.com/news.php

Note: Each week the Center highlights newsworthy stories online at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsnew/linkstolatest.htm

If you see a story that should be included, let us know. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu or
smhp@ucla.edu

<h1 style="text-align:center">RECENT PUBLICATIONS (In print and on the web)</h1>

Child, Adolescent, Young Adult Mental and Physical Health

>Empirically supported family based treatments for conduct disorder and delinquency in adolescents (2012) S. Henggeler & A. Sheidow. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*(1) 30-58 http://www.interscience.wiley.com

>Precipitating events in adolescent suicidal crises: Exploring stress-reactive and nonreactive risk profiles (2012) R. Hill, et al. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, 42*(1) 11-21. Http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com

>Grief and trauma intervention for children after disaster: Exploring coping skills versus trauma narration (2012) A. Salloum & S. Overstreet. *Behavior Research and Therapy, 50*(3) 169-179. Http://sciencedirect.com

>Subjective well-being in school environments: Promoting positive youth development through evidence-based assessment and intervention (2012) J. Bird & R. Markle. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 82*(1) 61-66. Http://www.aoatoday.com

>Practitioner Review: Self-harm in adolescents. (2012) D. Ougrin, et al. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 53*(4) 337-350. Http://www.interscience.wiley.com

>A meta-analysis of risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder in children and adolescents (2011) D. Trickey, et al. *Clinical Psychology Review, 32*(2) 122-138. Http://www.sciencedirect.com

Schools, Family & Community

>"School Success for at-Risk Kids" a series of brief articles in the *American Psychological Association's* February 2012 Monitor. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/apa/monitor_201202/index.php?startid=15#/48

>Special issue of *Excellence and Ethics* focuses on bullying, promoting kindness, and creating a safe and supportive learning environment http://www2.cortland.edu/dotAsset/a7bc96d9-acad-472c-8ae4-a1891781a0d6.pdf

>Measuring school related subjective well being in adolescents (2012) R. Long, et al. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 82*(1) 50-60. Http://wileyonlibrary.com/journal/ajop

>A Second's Chance: Gang Violence Task Force Prevention Program (2012) K. Hughes, et al. *American Surgeon, 78*(1) 89-93. Http://www.sesc.org

>Innovations in Practice: Empowering parents, empowering communities (2012) C. Day, et al. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 17*(1) 52-57. Http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com

>Perceptions of teachers' support, safety, and absence from school because of fear among victims, bullies, and bully-victims (2012) R. Berkowitz & R. Benbenishty. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 82*(1) 67-74. Http://www.aoatoday.com

>The relationship between school multiculturalism and interpersonal violence: an exploratory study (2011) T. Le & S. Johansen. *Journal of School Health, 81*(11) 688-695. Http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com

>High school dropouts: Interactions between social context, self-perceptions, school engagement, and student dropout (2011) A. Fall & G. Roberts. *Journal of Adolescence. 11*(4) 1-12. Http://www.elsevier.com

Policy, Systems, Law, Ethics, Finances & Statistics

>*Rebuilding for Learning -- Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching, and Re-engaging Students. Case study of Gainesville City Schools (GA)*. Prepared by the Education Development Center (EDC).
http://www1.gcssk12.net/images/shared/other/rebuildingforlearning.pdf
http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/casestudy.pdf

>A systems relations model for Tier 2 early intervention child mental health services with schools: an exploratory study (2012) Van Roosmalen, M. et al. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, ePub. Http://ccp.sagepub.com

>Lifetime co-morbidity of DSM-IV disorders in the US National Comorbidity Survey Replication Adolescent Supplement. (2012) R. Kessler, et al. *Psychological Medicine,* ePub. Http://journals.cambridge.org

>A meta-analysis of randomized placebo controlled trials of antidepressant medications in depressed children: small benefits, large stakes (2011) A. Drews, et al. *Journal of Mind-Body Regulation, 1*(2) 89-95. Http://mbr.synergiesprairies.ca

>Negotiating the multiple meanings of participation within multi-agency working: children participation at policies' crossroads (2012) *Power and Education, 4*(1)
http://www.wwwords.co.uk

>An exploration of the relationship between trait anxiety and school attendance in young people (2011) H. Richards & J. Hadwin. *School Mental Health, 3*(4) 236-244.
Http://www.springerlink.com

>School disengagement as a predictor of dropout, delinquency, and problem substance use during adolescence and early adulthood (2011) K. Henry, et al. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence.* Published online 4/27/11. Http://www.springerlink.com

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FYI: Safety Lit is a useful resource for abstracts related to injury prevention policy and practice. Http://www.safetylit.org

If you see a publication we should include in ENEWS, please let us know. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu or smhp@ucla.edu

Note: The Center's Quick Find online clearinghouse at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu is updated regularly with new reports and publications such as those listed above. Currently there are over 130 alphabetized topic pages with direct links to Center materials and to other online resources and related centers. Let us know about publications and reports that should be included in this dedicated online clearinghouse. Smhp@ucla.edu

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"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain."

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March: Spring Can Be a High Risk Time

There are three interacting dynamics that collide at this time of year in a school:

(1) Helping students stay motivated through the second semester slump

Excerpt from "Spring Slump" by Amanda Gray – http://www.ndsmcobserver.com
"I noticed a trend lately a sleepy, tired and sad trend. We're growing, slowly but surely, more impatient and grumpy as the year progresses. I'm calling this phenomenon the 'Spring Semester Slump.' It's common sense, really. We start out the school year relatively excited to be back on campus, with friends, possibly even excited to be in class. Fall break comes, and while it's well-appreciated, we can come back to school without much coaxing. School has yet to get truly difficult ...This goes out the proverbial window, however, after Fall Break....Winter Break cannot come fast enough. Those three beautiful weeks are the shortest three weeks of my life.... After that brief respite, spring semester begins."

While a second semester slump may have a small effect on motivated and successful students, there is a sense of mounting frustration for students who aren't doing well (socially, emotionally, academically) that can lead to problems in attendance and effort. For some, it is just that the school year seems so long and their motivation lags. For others, it is clear that they aren't doing well and are unlikely to catch up. For those in their last year at a school, a version of "senioritis" hits, and they hope to coast through and survive the last few months.

(2) Spring Slump or Not Here Comes Achievement Testing!

There is great debate about the wisdom of using high stakes testing to measure student progress, teacher value added, and school success. Since tests continue to be the cornerstone of assessment and accountability, how can we create conditions that increase our confidence that the students are trying their best so the tests are valid and reliable. As the above description implies, the stress throughout a school as the date of the test approaches is high on students and staff. This is not about "test anxiety" in the usual sense, it is about creating a climate for learning and demonstrating that learning.

Excerpt from "Take Out Your No.2 Pencils: Taking the Stress Out of Standardized Tests" by Donna Clovis *Scholastic* – http://teacher.scholastic.com

"American students may be the most tested kids in the world...results of these tests are taken very seriously by educators, parents, administrators, and even local government officials, for they are viewed as a measure ofteacher and school competence and, in some cases, can affect a child's future placement in a school. ... All this pressure is not lost on children. Even good students who are well prepared can be derailed by the general air of anxiety surrounding the tests. ..."

Rather than "tips for taking tests" and "hints for stress reduction", preparing students to do their best on achievement tests is based on a motivational foundation:

Motivation, and especially intrinsic motivation, must be considered in all facets of an intervention. What's required is
> developing a high level of motivational readiness (including reducing avoidance motivation) so participants are mobilized
> establishing processes that elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that participants stay mobilized
> enhancing motivation as an outcome so that the desire to improve oneself and address problems increasingly becomes a positive intrinsic attitude that mobilizes activity outside the intervention situation

(3) Spring Slump + Achievement test anxiety = a recipe for increased emotional problems

It is essential to keep emotional problems in perspective and not overpathologize. In any school, there are young people who are not very happy. Youngsters who are unhappy usually act on such feelings. Some "internalize;" some "act out;" and some respond in both ways at different times. The variations can make matters a bit confusing. Is the youngster just sad? Is s/he depressed? Is this a case of ADHD? Individuals may display the same behavior and yet the causes may be different and vice versa. And, matters are further muddled by the reality that the causes vary (stress from school, peers, family, neighborhood). The causes of negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors range from environmental/system deficits to relatively minor group and individual vulnerabilities on to major biological disabilities (that affect only a relatively few individuals). It is the full range of causes that account for the large number of children and adolescents reported as having psychosocial or mental health problems. Highly publicized events and related policy initiatives have focused renewed attention on youth suicide, depression, and violence. Unfortunately, such events and the initiatives that follow often narrow discussion of causes and how best to deal with problems.

The Challenge for Spring: *Helping staff and students understand the drop in effort/energy/motivation; countering the "slump," and enhancing engagement and connectedness to school.*

For ideas and resources to share with colleagues in doing this work, see

>*Schools as Caring, Learning Communities* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/caring.pdf

>About School Engagement and Re-Engagement –
http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/reengagestudents.pdf

Note: Integrating support for learning and teaching into the natural opportunities and phases of the school year provide unlimited opportunities. For a range of ideas organized by each month, see our home page "Ideas for Enhancing Learning Supports at your School this Month" on the homepage at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush."

<div align="right">Doug Larson</div>

OTHER HELPFUL INTERNET RESOURCES

>Policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics: The pediatrician's role in family support and family support problems
http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/6/e1680

>Outsourcing school health professionals hurts students most
http://neatoday.org/2012/02/20/outsourcing-school-health-professionals-hurts-students-the-most

>Helping students cope with test anxiety
http://www.ericdigests.org/2005-2/anxiety.html

>Equity Alliance: Examining policies and practices through an equity lens
http://www.equityallianceatasu.org

>Frequent residential mobility and young children's well being
http://www.childrends.org

>When the bough breaks: the effects of homelessness on young children
http://www.childrends.org

>Indicators of school crime and safety 2011
http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012002

>Making the connection: health and student achievement
http://www.thesociety.org/programs-CSHP.asp

>Understanding adolescence: ACT for Youth
http://www.actforyouth.net/health_sexuality/adolescence

Note: For a wider range of relevant websites see our *Gateway to a World of Resources* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/gateway/gateway_sites.htm

"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"

<div align="right">Robin Williams</div>

UCLA CENTER UPDATE

Given the school shooting on Monday, we thought it worth reminding everyone about the ***Responding to a Crisis*** resources and gateway on our website. Just click the icon on our website or go directly to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisisresp.htm

New Report

Improving Teacher Retention, Performance, and Student Outcomes
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newteach.pdf

New Guidance Note

Guide to Enhance School Improvement Plans Related to Three Critical Facets for Improving How School Address Learning and Behavior Problems
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/impguide.pdf

Other Recent Reports

RTI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports: A Guide for Teachers and Learning Supports Staff
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/rtiguide.pdf

Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning:
A Collaborative Process
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeinv.pdf

"Not Another Team!" School Improvement Infrastructure Viewed through the Lens of Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Team.pdf

Dropout Prevention: Do Districts Pursue Best Practice Recommendations?
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/drop.pdf

Center work featured in publications from partners and colleagues:

(1) The Education Development Center (EDC) prepared a report highlighting the processes and outlining the successes of Gainesville City Schools (GA) as they create a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports. As part of the AASA/Scholastic/UCLA leadership initiative, Gainesville has created new policies and modified or expanded existing strategies, policies and practices to develop a system of student and learning supports that enables learning and enhances equity of opportunity for succeeding at school. Results-to-date: Graduation rates have increased from 73.3% in 2009 to 81.3% in 2010 and 84.9% in 2011. Referrals for disciplinary action in the middle and high schools have dropped from 91 disciplinary tribunals in 2008-09 to 47 in 2010-11, and the elementary schools saw a 75% decrease. See the report entitled: Rebuilding for Learning -- Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching, and Re-engaging Students –
http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/casestudy.pdf

(2) *School Success for at-Risk Kids* – Innovative work around the country is highlighted as part of a series of brief articles in the American Psychological Association's February 2012 Monitor. The Center at UCLA's framework for a unified and comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students is highlighted in the article entitled "Helping at-risk students succeed." The description of the UCLA work underscores examples of efforts at state departments of education and in districts and notes the Center's collaborations with Scholastic, the American Association of School Administrators, and the National Association of School Psychologists.
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/apa/monitor_201202/index.php?startid=15#/48

Featured Resource:

AVirtual Toolbox for Mental Health in Schools
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/toolbox.htm

This online toolbox compiles various brief resources developed by the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. While it is intended as an adjunct to the book *Mental Health in Schools: Engaging Learners, Preventing Problems, and Improving Schools* (Corwin Press, 2010), the contents of the toolbox should be useful to any school practitioner and those involved in pre-and inservice professional development programs.

The toolbox reflects a broad view of mental health in schools and of the role mental health plays in the well-being of students, their families, and their teachers. Also stressed is the value of embedding mental health into a comprehensive classroom and school-wide system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students as an essential facet of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Each of the nine sections of the toolbox is under continuous development. All feedback and suggestions will be appreciated. The sections are:
>Framing mental health in schools
>Concerns and controversies
>Challenges and opportunities in the classroom
>About behavior problems and social and emotional learning
>Mental Health assistance for students at school
>Focusing on the well being of school staff
>Online clearinghouse Quick Find
>Online continuing education and guidebooks
>Quick training aids and tutorials

Note: See the many center resources online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

And send any requests, questions, comments related to the Center's work to ltaylor@ucla.edu

COMMENTS FROM THE FIELD

We were asked to share the following:

(1) *Regarding Improving Teacher Retention* – "Just a few lines to tell you that if you had been in
Uruguay you would have made the same report as I have just read. I am a veteran teacher of EFL
at public schools here in Uruguay. It is amazing because everything that has to do with 'the
teachers are to blame', about preservice preparation it is absolute true the fact that: ...
'preservice preparation has given short shrift to working with the students who brings problems
with them to school that often affect their learning...' problems with drugs, social problems,
violence. Not to tell the salaries, and not to tell here in Uruguay, lack of buildings, since they are
very very old from the last century (millennium?), crowded, with many deficiencies in terms of
the buildings itself. And to tell you the truth to be a mentor without being paid is too much."

(2) "As parent leaders and advocates, we share the Center's concerns about the lack of focus on
the learning environment in the current education policy discussions. In too many discussions,
students needs for supports are used as an excuse for lack of achievement, rather than as an area
to target for improving programs, policies and practices. Others characterize these excuse makers
as low expectations in order to promote the dismantling of public schools and teachers' unions.
Neither of these conversations is about what ALL schools must offer for ALL students to
develop and achieve to become productive and contributing citizens in our communities and
throughout the globe. The Center is one of the few places looking to shift the conversation.
Please include the interests of parents and committed community members out of the discussion.
Please add families and community activists, along with educators, to the 2012 Challenge."

(3) "... the UCLA Center ... has spent considerable time and energy trying to educate teachers in
how to change their schools. Its time would be better spent educating the many Department of
Education programs in each state how social service agencies need to change the way they
operate. Despite substantial funding, these community programs serving at risk youth (non
profits, criminal justice, government social service programs, etc) have not been required to
provide basic support to students to improve attendance and graduation rates. There exists not
one valid evaluation in the United States documenting improvement in attendance and
graduation by community programs. No state requires community programs to provide actual

statistics of what they have done to impact attendance or graduation rates. More can be done if we coordinate services and require statistics of actual services provided to specific students. State Departments of Education need to be held responsible for unifiying and coordinating the social service and community programs. This goes way beyond a teacher."

(3) "Two new resources from the Arkansas Department of Education's State Improvement/ Personnel Development Grant on the statewide implementation of effective Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2) systems and approaches:

The Arkansas Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2) Model Implementation Guidebook

Overview: The Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2) process is used when students are underachieving, unsuccessful, or unresponsive in the classroom, academically and/or relative to their social, emotional, or behavioral functioning. Grounded in the Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) initiative, this Model Implementation Guidebook provides a step-by-step RtI^2 implementation approach that is practical, field-tested, effective, and student-centered. Organized along a prevention to intensive need continuum, it includes sample forms and problem solving tools to support implementation. Two primary components included in the guidebook are: (a) a process for data-based functional assessment to determine why a student is not responding to effective instruction and classroom management; and (b) a teaming process that involves a multi-tiered Problem Solving, Consultation, and Intervention service delivery approach.

Integrating Arkansas Closing the Achievement Gap and Response-to-Intervention Initiatives: Critical Questions and Answers

Overview: Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) is an Arkansas Department of Education initiative to facilitate effective school practices for all students across the state. It is anchored by a comprehensive effective school and schooling model of research-based practices that help districts and schools meet the diverse academic and social, emotional, and behavioral learning needs of ALL students.

As part of the CTAG model, the Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2) process is used when individual students are underachieving, unsuccessful, or unresponsive in the classroom, academically and/or relative to their social, emotional, or behavioral functioning. When implemented with integrity, the RtI^2 process supports all students learning by identifying the services, supports, strategies, and programs that they need.

This technical assistance document identifies essential questions and answers that help explain the CTAG initiative, and how it links to the RtI^2 process across a multi-tiered instruction and intervention system. These new (free) publications are available to download from the SPDG website at:

http://www.arstudentsuccess.org/intervention-tools-and-resources/rtldata-based-problem-solving.html

(4) "My reaction to the President's State of The Union Address about raising the Dropout Age

I have mixed feelings about this proposal. I believe all students should stay in school until they graduate. I understand the reasons for the President's concern. If America is to be globally competitive, it must have a high performing, highly trained, highly-technologically prepared workforce. And today's demands for a highly skilled workforce require, at minimum, a high school diploma.

There is little data to indicate that raising the age of graduation will result in lower dropout rates. According to a report by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, *Raise the Age, Lower the Dropout Rate? Considerations for Policymakers*, "our review revealed that there is little research to support the effectiveness of compulsory attendance laws in achieving these goals [of lowering the dropout rate]." (p.12)

Education is primarily a state and local responsibility in the United States. It is states and communities, as well as public and private organizations of all kinds, that establish schools and colleges, develop curricula, and determine requirements for enrollment and graduation. The Federal Government presently provides only 10.8 percent of educational financing. Twenty-one states require students to attend high school until they graduate or turn 18. Some of those states include: Nebraska (87.8 percent graduation rate) and Wisconsin (86.7 percent graduation rate) which are high performing states. Other states that are high performing have a compulsory school age of 16 including: Maryland (76 percent graduation rate), Massachusetts (76 percent graduation rate), Iowa (86.6 percent graduation rate), Vermont (86.5 percent graduation rate), North Dakota (86.3 percent graduation rate). Some other states with an 18-year-old requirement have high dropout rates including New Mexico, and the District of Columbia. (Source: *ww.all4ed.org)* So it is not the age of mandatory attendance which determines the dropout rate but other factors. Simply mandating that young people remain in school without addressing the causes for their leaving will accomplish little.

Why children leave school prior to graduation:
>The Silent Epidemic: Perceptions of High School Dropouts, a report issued by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation indicated that one of the primary reasons that children leave school is because they are bored. How will holding a student where they do not want to be until age 18 lessen the boredom?
>Others leave because they feel that the curriculum has no relevance in the real world.
>Students dropout because of teenage pregnancy.
>Some students leave school because there are trying to meet their family's financial obligations.

Expecting states to add additional costs during this recession is foolhardy especially when so many have made cuts into the marrow of education. There will be added costs include adding more classrooms, providing additional teachers, providing additional support personnel such as counselors and paying for alternative on-line courses. Finally, add in the additional costs of enforcing the law.

The President, in his well-intentioned proposal, has provided a sound-bite, simplistic solution to this highly complex problem. You cannot legislate your way out of this crisis."

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF ENEWS

Who Are We? The *national Center for Mental Health in Schools* 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 Project and Center are co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.

For more information about the Center and its many resources, go to the website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu or email Ltaylor@ucla.edu or adelman@psych.ucla.edu

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to smhp@ucla.edu