ENEWS

A Monthly Forum for Sharing and Interchange

May, 2009 (Vol. 13 #8)

ENEWS is one of the many resources provided by the School Mental Health Project/Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. This electronic 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 federally supported 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

**Emerging Issue

>>Are Small Schools Playing and Effective Role in
         Addressing Barriers to Learning?

**News from around the country

**Recent publications relevant to

>Child and adolescent mental and physical health

>School, family, & community

>Policy, systems, law, ethics, finances & statistics

**This month's focus for schools to address barriers to learning

>May – Time to help students and families plan successful transitions to
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>Upcoming and archived webcasts and online professional development
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>Training and job opportunities

**UCLA Center update

**Comments, requests, information, questions from the field

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*EMERGING ISSUE

  >Are Small Schools Playing an Effective Role in Addressing Barriers to Learning?

Small schools differ from each other on a variety of dimensions that go beyond schools size. Some are small by choice, others are not. When small schools are designed as an education reform, the intention is to establish a supportive learning community to enhance the relationship between school staff, students, and families. Advocates of small school emphasize the positive impact. In their 2009 review of empirical evidence about school size effects, Leithwood and Jantzi conclude that the weight of the evidence "clearly favors smaller schools. Students who traditionally struggle at school and students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds are the major benefactors of smaller schools."

Other education leaders, however, point out that while small makes a difference for some, for too many students, small schools are not addressing factors that interfere with equity of opportunity in succeeding at school. They point to a common downside of small schools which is that budgets are too sparse to provide the type of student and learning supports needed to address such factors. For example, in her comments on the recent evaluation of the small schools movement, Diane Ravitz noted: "[The] mistake was in believing that there is a silver bullet to solve the problems of inner-city schools, which enroll large numbers of students who are poor, have limited English language proficiency, and are more likely to require special education.... And many students have health problems and issues related to their family's poverty that even the smallest of schools can't solve...."

For more on this, see our recent Center Policy and Practice Analysis Brief *Learning Supports and Small Schools* –
online at*:* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/learningsupportssmallschools.pdf

What are your experiences with the impact of small schools in addressing barriers to learning and re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom instruction? Send your comments to ltaylor@ucla.edu We hope to use the relevant comments sent to us to amend the report.

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*NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

>SEEING OUTBREAK WARNING SIGNS, SCHOOL NURSE SET RESPONSE IN MOTION

It was a routine call from a diligent high school nurse that put health detective in New York City on the trail of a swine flu outbreak. The school nurse called the city's school health nurse to report about 75 students with symptoms including upset stomach, nausea and fever. A team from the health department arrived at the school, by which time the number of sick students had risen to about 150. 4/27/09 http://www.nytimes.com

>EDUCATION PROGRAMS ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

Under the state budget deal crafted this spring, California legislators broke "categorical" programs into three tiers, giving strong protection to two groups but lumping more than 40 programs into a so-called "Tier III" that allows their funds to be raided, or the programs to be eliminated completely. The idea was to give superintendents flexibility in balancing shrinking budgets. Tier III includes: regional occupational centers, high school counseling, Gifted and Talented Education, Principal training, Indian education centers, adult education, education technology, community day schools, bilingual teacher training, arts and music block grant, class size reduction in 9th grade. 4/8/09 http://www.mercurynews.com

>STATES SLASHING SOCIAL PROGRAMS FOR VULNERABLE

President Obama's $787 billion stimulus package is helping to alleviate some of the pain, providing large amounts of money to pay for education and unemployment insurance, bolster food stamp programs and expand tax credits for low earners. But the money will offset only 40% of the losses in state revenues and programs for vulnerable groups have been cut in at least 34 states. 4/12/09 http://www.nytimes.com

>RESTRAINING OF STUDENTS QUESTIONED

Each day, Massachusetts teachers face the daunting question of whether to physically restrain students who are threatening to hurt either themselves or others. Too often, advocates say, teachers are making the wrong decision. With a surge in the number of students with behavioral issues, and teachers on edge because of increasing school violence, the question of whether and how to physically restrain students has become the subject of growing controversy. Congress will hold hearings on the topic in coming weeks. *BOSTON GLOBE*
http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2009/05/04/restraining_of_students_questioned/

>IN FOUR DECADES, HIGH SCHOOL PROGRESS IS ALMOST NIL

According to a new report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), U.S. high school students have made no significant gains in reading or math since the early 1970s, according to The Wall Street Journal. The study looked at results of the highly respected federal test, known as the "Nation's Report Card," for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds over four decades, finding that while the younger groups have progressed, scores for 17-year-olds are virtually unchanged, advancing a single point on a zero-to-500-point scale since 1971 in reading, and two points in math since 1973. In simple terms, the scores mean students can make generalizations about what they read, and perform moderately complex mathematical procedures, such as computing with decimals and simple fractions. The new report, based on "long-term trend" tests given to a sampling of about 52,000 public- and private-school students in early 2008, comes as colleges and employers are complaining that too many students earn diplomas without skills for college or the workplace. Gov. Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, says the scores indicate a "washing out" of gains by students as they get older: "What we are learning is that they need help all the way through."
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124096292138666025.html
An alternate take: http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2009/04/the-education-f-19.html

>STEROID TESTING QUESTIONED

Texas lawmakers, skeptical about continuing to spend $3 million a year to test high school student athletes for steroids, are considering abolishing the program or at least scaling it back. Only 11 Texas high school students tested positive for steroid use among nearly 29,000 students tested during the first two years of the random testing program mandated by legislators.*HOUSTON CHRONICLE*
http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/6406076.html

>PRINCIPALS: DO SCHOOLS NEED THEM FULL TIME?

Site councils across the Tucson Unified School District try to figure out how they want to spend precious, shrinking resources at their schools. Some are poised to scale back on vice principals. Other are looking at half-time principals. That freedom to choose also means choosing no principal, if they can come up with a way to ensure duties typically carried out by principals are still completed. Phi Delta Kappan, a professional education journal, has run research papers highlighting a growing debate in the country about reforming the top-down leadership structure at schools, indicating teacher-led school models are becoming more popular in some parts of the country. 4/11/09 Http://www.azstarnet.com

>GOSSIP GIRLS AND BOYS GET LESSONS IN EMPATHY

The emphasis on empathy in schools nationwide is the latest front in a decade-long campaign against bullying and violence. Many urban districts have found empathy workshops and curriculums help curb fighting and other misbehavior. Many parents praise the empathy focus, but some students complain that the school has no business dictating what they wear or how they act in their personal lives. Others say that no matter what is taught in the classroom, there is a different reality in the cafeteria and hallways, where the mean girls are no less mean and the boys will still be boys knocking books out of one another's hands. Nationally, some question whether such attempts at social engineering are appropriate for the classroom or should remain the purview of parents, churches and youth groups outside of school hours. 4/5/09
http://www.nytimes.com

>DISPARITIES BETWEEN CHARTER, PUBLIC SCHOOLS SEEN

Students at Baltimore's charter schools tend to come from more advantaged backgrounds than their peers at regular city schools, according to a new report. The charter schools also serve fewer special education students. Overall, they also are more racially diverse than traditional schools, attracting more whites and Latinos, though some that converted from neighborhood schools are almost entirely segregated. The city operates 25 charters, serving 5,520 students -- or 6.8% of the system's total enrollment.
http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/bal-md.charter28apr28,0,5655866.story

>HOUSE AGREES TO SCHOOL SPANKING CHANGES

North Carolina districts, where corporal punishment is allowed, would have to give parents the option of exempting their children from such a penalty in legislation that cleared the House. The measure also would require school officials to make a "reasonable attempt" to contact a parent before such punishment is used. The bill doesn't go far enough for some lawmakers who have wanted to ban spanking in North Carolina's schools.
http://www2.journalnow.com/content/2009/apr/28/house-agrees-school-spanking-changes/news-ncpolitics/

>FAILING SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS:
MISSISSIPPI'S CHILDREN FIRST ACT OF 2009.

This act includes provisions for establishing a recovery school district within the department of education to provide management and oversight for all districts that are subject to state conservatorship; prescribes training requirements for school board members and superintendents in failing school districts; clarifies that education employment procedures do not apply to any category of employee in a school district subject to a state conservatorship; requires districts with schools determined to be failing to establish community-based education councils that are accountable to the community.
http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2009/pdf/history/SB/SB2628.xml

>DOWNTURN PUTS NEW STRESSES ON LIBRARIES

As the national economic crisis has deepened and social services have become casualties of budget cuts, libraries have come to fill a void for more people, particularly job-seekers and those who have fallen on hard times. Libraries across the country are seeing double-digit increases in patronage, often from 10% to 30% over previous year. 4/2/09 http://www.nytimes.com

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> "I guess I'm not really used to people with tears in their eyes. It has been unexpectedly stressful. We feel so anxious to help these people, and it's been so emotional for them."

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Rosalie Bork, reference librarian.

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

Also access other news stories relevant to improving addressing barriers to learning through links at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsnew/linkstolatest.htm

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*RECENT PUBLICATIONS (in print and on the Web)

Child, Adolescent, Young Adult Mental and Physical Health

>Motives for risk-taking in adolescence: A cross-cultural study (2009) M. Kloep, et al, *Journal of Adolescence, 32,* 1 pp 135-151. Http://www.sciencedirect.com

>Autonomy, belongingness, and engagement in school as contributors to adolescent psychological well-being (2009) M. Van Ryzin, et al., *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*, 1, 1-12. Http://www.springerlink.com

>Relationship quality and the mentoring of aggressive, high-risk children (2009) T. Cavell, et al., *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 38*, 2, 185-198.

>Gatekeeper training as a preventative intervention for suicide (2009) M. Isaac, et al., *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 54,* 4, 260-268. Http://www.cpa-apc.org/

>Impact of a mental health teaching programme on adolescents. (2009) P. Naylor, et al., *British Journal of Psychiatry, 194,* 4, 365-370. Http://bjp.rcpsych.org

>Effectiveness of school-based prevention and intervention programs for children and adolescents with emotional disturbance: A meta-analysis (2009) L. Reddy, et al*., Journal of School Psychology, 47,* 2, 77-99. Http://www.sciencedirect.com

School, Family & Community

>The effectiveness of volunteer tutoring programs for elementary and middle school students: A meta-analysis (2009) G. Ritters, et al., *Review of Educational Research, 79*, 1, 3-39. Http://rer.aera.net

>The impact of high school size on math achievement and dropout rate (2009). Jacob Werblow & Luke Duesbery. *The High School Journal, 92*, 14-23.

>The mentor-youth alliance: The role of mentoring relationships in promoting youth competence (2009) D. Zand, et al., *Journal of Adolescence, 32,* 1, 1-17. Http://www.sciencedirect.com

>Group membership, group norms, empathy, and young children's intentions to aggress. (2009) D. Nesdale, *Aggressive Behavior*, ePub. Http://www.interscience.wiley.com

>Accountability and assessment of emergency drill performance at schools (2009) M. Ramirez, et al., *Family and Community Health, 32,* 2, 105-114. Http://www.familyandcommunityhealth.com

>The clinical effectiveness of different parenting programmes for children with conduct problems. (2009) J. Dretzke, et al., *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, 3,* 1, 7. Http://www.capmh.com

>Interpersonal relationships, motivation, engagement, and achievement: Yields for theory, current issues, and educational practice (2009) A. Martin & M. Dowson. *Review of Educational Research, 79,* 1 327-363. Http://rer.aera.net

>*Implementing Response-to-Intervention at the School, District, and State Levels: Functional Assessment, Data-based Problem Solving, and Evidence-based Academic and Behavioral Interventions* (2009). Howard M. Knoff. http://www.projectachieve.info/rtiandsprintproduct.html

Policy, Systems, Law, Ethics, Finances & Statistics

>Disconnected youth: A look at 16- to 24-year olds who are not working or in school (2009) Adrienne L. Fernandes & Thomas Gabe. *Congressional Research Service* . www.crs.gov

>Socioeconomic inequality in exposure to bullying during adolescence: A comparative, cross-sectional, multilevel study in 35 countries (2009) P. Due, et al., *American Journal of Public Health,* ePub. Http://www.ajph.org

>*Screening for child and adolescent depression in primary care settings: A systematic evidence review for the US Preventive Services Task Force*. (2009) S. Williams, et al., Pediatrics 123, 4, e716-735. Http://www.pediatrics.org

>Assessing and quantifying high risk: Comparing risky behaviors by youth in an urban, disadvantaged community with nationally representative youth (2009) M. Swahn & R. Bossarte, *Public Health Reports, 124*, 2, 224-233. Http://www.publichealthreports.org

>School, Neighborhood, and Family Factors are associated with children's bullying involvement: A nationally representative longitudinal study (2009) L. Bowes, et al., *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, ePub. Http://www.jaacap.com/

>*Why high stakes accountability sounds good but doesn't work – and why we keep on doing it anyway*. (2009) G. Sunderman & H. Mintrop, Civil Rights Project at UCLA. Http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

>*Closing the graduation gap: Educational and economic conditions in America's largest cities* (2009) Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Http://www.americaspromise.org

Note: The 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. Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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"So far, the administration has not described its plans for the education law's 2014 deadline for schools to bring 100 percent of American students to math and reading proficiency, which experts have likened to a certain date by which the police are to end all crime."

Sam Dillon

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***THIS MONTH'S FOCUS FOR SCHOOLS TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

May – Time to Help Students and Families Plan Successful Transitions to a New Grade or a New School

See the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: Using ARRA Funds to Drive School Reform and Improvement* – http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/uses.doc

May is a key month for planning and implementing transition supports. Among the many recommendations in the 4/24/09 guidance issued by the U. S. Department of Education for ARRA that are relevant to this concern are:

"Create 9th grade academies staffed with highly effective teachers to help students transition successfully to high school, and create summer programs that prepare struggling students to be successful in gateway courses ..."

"Extend learning time for students. Expand after-school and summer learning programs for two years in conjunction with existing community providers to provide more time for learning, including one-on-one and small group instruction, opportunities for service, internships, the arts, and other activities that both enrich the curriculum and address the specific needs of low-performing students."

"Strengthen preparation for college and careers. Offer dual enrollment courses and student internships and train school staff to help students understand college and career options, provide effective guidance, and create a college-going culture. For students with disabilities, employ transition coaches for two years to identify work-study, community service, internship, college, and career opportunities and to establish community partnerships that can endure after two years"

The various suggestions related to transitions and the opportunities for strengthening support at multiple points (from preschool through post high school) opens a wide range of possibilities for strengthening learning supports and addressing barriers to learning.

For guides, resources, and road maps for transitions see the online clearinghouse Quick Find on
>*Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcome*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

For brief overviews to share with administrators related to transition programs you might want to strengthen at your school or in your district, see
>*Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/transitionsninthgrade.pdf
>*Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students and Their Families*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/welcomingstrategies.pdf
>*Notes on Transition Planning for College*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/transitiontocollege.pdf

Note: It is important to anticipate major concerns that arise with regularity over the course of the school year. These provide natural opportunities to strengthen support for learning. For a calendar of monthly concerns and themes, see Ideas for Enhancing Support at Your School this Month on the Center's homepage at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

"I have been impressed with the urgency of doing.
Knowing is not enough, we must apply."

Leonardo da Vinci

*OTHER HELPFUL INTERNET RESOURCES

>Youth involvement in systems of care: A guide to empowerment
http://www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov/headermenus/docsHM/youthguidedlink.pdf

>Highlights of the Edward M. Kennedy Service America Act

Establishes a Summer of Service program to provide education awards for 6th to 12th graders, a Semester of Service program for high school students, Youth Empowerment Zones for secondary students and out of school youth.
http://www.nationalservice.gov

>Campaign for a White House Office on Children and Youth

"To provide coordinated leadership and vision across departments and agencies; develop and oversee interagency implementation of a National Youth Strategy laying out the child and youth well-being results our nation must achieve and the reforms necessary to succeed; and provide young people a voice in the policies which impact them directly."
http://www.whitehouseofficeonchildrenandyouth.org

>Poverty and Potential: Out of School Factors and School Success
www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Berliner_NonSchool.pdf

>National Assessment of Educational Progress 2008: Trends in Academic Progress
http://nationsreportcard.gov/ltt_2008

>Service Learning: A strategy for rural school improvement and community revitalization
http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam98.html

>Children and Trauma: Tips for Mental Health Professionals
http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/kids-trauma-tips.html

>Exposure to substance use prevention messages and substance use among adolescents, 2002 to 2007. http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/prevention/prevention.cfm

>Recommended adolescent health care utilization: How social marketing can help
http://www.nihcm.org/pdf/nihcm-socialmarketing-final.pdf

>Scaling up evidence-based practices in education
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/resources/detail.cfm?resourceID=224

>Autism Spectrum Disorders: Knowledge Path
http://www.mchlibrary.info/knowledgepaths/kp_autism.html

>Children living with substance-dependent or substance-abusing parents: 2002-2007
http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/saparents/saparents.cfm

>Indicators of school crime and safety: 2008
http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009022

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

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   From the Urban Dictionary:
      "Baraking: The act of causing necessary change. Usually followed by the
      motivational expression 'yes we can'. "
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*LINKS TO

         >Upcoming Initiative, Conferences & Workshops
         http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm

         >Calls for Grant Proposals, Presentations & Papers
         http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upcall.htm

         >Training and Job Opportunities
         http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm

         >Upcoming/Archived Webcasts
         http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm

Note: Information on each of these is updated on an ongoing basis on our website. Just click on
the indicated URL or on What's New on our website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu. If you
would like to add information on these, please send it to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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*UCLA CENTER BRIEF UPDATE

New Publications:

>*Schools as Centers of the Community: Moving Forward in Hard Times*. In the Center's Spring,
2009 quarterly newsletter – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/news.htm

>*Learning Supports and Small Schools*. A Center Policy and Practice Analysis Brief
         Explores the potential of small schools to connect to all students; confronts the
         limitations in resources when more is needed to address barriers to learning.
         http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/learningsupportssmallschools.pdf

>Addition to the Series of Information Resources on Enabling System Change
         Brief Overview of "Diffusion Theory and Knowledge Dissemination, Utilization, and
         Integration in Public Health" by L. Green, et al., (2009) from the *Annual Review of
         Public Health.* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/diffusiontheory.pdf

>*Personalizing Personnel Development at Schools: A Focus on Student Engagement and Re-
engagement.* Addition to series of Guidance Notes – Outlines a range of processes for
personalize on the job learning – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagement.pdf

>"Re-engaging Disengaged Students" (March 2009). Article by Center co-directors in *School
Climate Matters, 3*, Issue 1. – http://issuu.com/csee/docs/cseenewsletter-v3i1/6

Note: We continually update the resources on our website. A convenient way to access information is through the Quick Find online clearinghouse. Alphabetized by topics, you can access information over 130 topics relevant to addressing barriers to learning. Each includes links to Center Resources, online reports, others centers focusing on the topic, and relevant publications. Go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu and click on Quick Find. If you would like to add a resource, let us know. Ltaylor@ucla.edu. For more information on the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, go to the website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu or contact Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor, Co-directors at the School Mental Health Project for Mental Health in Schools, UCLA, Department of Psychology, Los Angeles, CA 90095. Phone(310) 825-3634. Toll Free (866) 846-4843. Fax (310) 206-5895. Email: smhp@ucla.edu

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Check out our sister center, The Center for School Mental Health at http://csmh.umaryland.edu or contact Mark Weist, Director, CSMH, University of Maryland at Baltimore, Department of Psychiatry, 737 W. Lombard St 4th floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. Toll Free (888)706-0980. Email: csmh@psych.umaryland.edu

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*COMMENTS, REQUESTS, INFO, QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

We were asked to share the following:

(1) "I share with you a vision of providing meaningful education that empowers intellectual growth, personal awareness and social progress. I wrote a teacher training text titled *Surpassing Standards in the Elementary Classroom: Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement through Educational Drama* (2009, Peter Lang Publishing). It moves from theory into practice with over 40 hours of model lesson plans that integrate social and emotional learning within a standards-based approach to literacy and social studies instruction. It also discusses the potential for defining a uniquely American approach and identity for our dysfunctional education system based on the relationship between traditional American values and SEL concepts. You can take a look at
http://www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?vID=310307&vLang=E&vHR=1&vUR=2&vUUR=1

(2) "I want to tell you about our new Signs of Self-Injury Program — is there any way it could be mentioned in your e-news? It's based on the same model of our SOS program and takes a universal school-based prevention approach to identify the signs of non-suicidal self-injury and how to get help. Barry Walsh out of the Bridge helped us develop it.
Http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/selfinjury

(3) "A final copy of the briefing memo on Student Attendance is online. I do hope that you will be able to mention this somewhere in your monthly email and refer people to our website "Strengthening school attendance policies/practices to address educational neglect and truancy"
http://studentadvocacy.net/AttendanceMemoFinal4-6-09.pdf

(4) "Dr. Gil Noam and the Program in Education, Afterschool & Resiliency at Harvard University and Mclean Hospital announce the launch of a new website. "Assessment Tools in Informal Science" Could you post the news about its availability? http://atis.pearweb.org

(5) Invitation to participate in a study from researchers Elizabeth Mellin (Penn State University), Laura Bronstein (Binghamton University), Jennifer Green (Miami University), Dawn Anderson-Butcher (Ohio State University) and Anna Ball (Ohio State University):

   Topic: Interdisciplinary collaboration in schools. What is (and what is not) working well. This study is designed to collect information about your perceptions of the extent of interdisciplinary collaboration in your school, associated influences, and the extent to which you believe your academic training program prepared you to engage in the model of practice. You can participate online (https://www.surveymonkey.com/interdisciplinarycollaboration). It takes 15 minutes; the deadline to participate is Friday, May 25 2009.

   As appreciation for involvement, after completing the study, each participant will be invited to enter a drawing to win 1 of 30, $25.00 Target gift certificates; 1 out of every 10 participants up to 300 will win. Contact Elizabeth Mellin at 814-863-2414 or eam20@psu.edu with questions or concerns about this study.

Responses to last month's Emerging Issue

> **>The Role of Student Problems Poverty, and Other Interfering Factors in Measuring and Rewarding School and Teacher Effectiveness**

Usually we would edit down the responses, but we didn't want to undercut what these colleagues took the time to share.

(1) "In response to your question: Is it fair to focus narrowly on teacher results? I would have to say ABSOLUTELY NOT. I have been a teacher in LAUSD for 23 years, both at elementary and secondary levels. First of all, the results are not the teachers' results; they are results garnered by the students. We as teachers are supposed to be facilitators and guides through their educational journey. However, our roles are relegated to that of police, psychiatrists, parents, nurses, psychics, social workers, etc. What am I supposed to guide: the mental well-being of the students? Their physical well-being? Their lack of educational support in the home environment? Their ability to rebound from almost constant trauma and unstable living conditions? Under these circumstances, does it surprise anyone that an 8th grader couldn't care less about atomic structure or calculating slope?

   Secondly, it is ever present in my mind that I do not make widgets, small plastic objects that can be pressed out like cookie dough. I work with people: dynamic, ever changing, malleable young people many of whom survive under the harshest of conditions. Unless we as a society mitigate the educational disadvantages that many of our students have, we cannot hold teachers accountable. Thirdly, why not hold parents accountable? They are the ones that bring children into this world where they then abdicate their parenting role to the schools and the government. Clothing children, feeding them, and providing shelter are the least of what being a parent is about! Lastly, I would like to suggest that we look at our students from a holistic perspective and tie in social/health services to the services provided by the schools. I bet we would lessen any duplication of efforts and streamline services and costs to the taxpayers."

(2) "I saw your request for feedback to the question "*Is it fair to focus narrowly on teacher results*? "in this [mentalhealth-l] ENEWS: April, 2009 (Vol. 13 #7) newsletter, and I thought I would answer it using my experience as a parent only as a guide. I have two children, one is 14 and an honors student, the other is 12 and a special needs student.

   I believe that in most ways, it IS quite fair to expect teachers to "get results" (depending on what that means- test results?) in the classroom despite the three impacting factors mentioned- (1) students coming unprepared to learn, (2) poverty, and (3) lack of parental involvement. In fact, I find them to be no excuse. I am not sure that I expect a school to do the job of solving the problems of poverty and parental involvement, but if our kids are not learning, I am not sure who

else's fault it should be. There are stories of kids who are successful with "the right teacher" regardless of all of those issues and have gone on to achieve great things. What we need is more of those "right teachers" and less of the wrong ones. This assumes too that this means that if a child is at least in middle class and their parents are involved and they come prepared to learn, that they will. I am not sure that I see the scientific correlation there.

Teachers have one job- prepare my child for the future educationally. I guess that I am not seeing all teachers where I am at trying as hard as they possibly can to do just that. In regards to the three roadblocks mentioned, as a parent who would like to be involved more in my child's education, but yet I work 40 hours a week with 2 hours of commute each day, I feel like my children's teachers do not try hard enough to communicate with me, some refusing to keep an e-mail address or to do communication logs for a child who is having issues learning. Teachers who are in high school hold one event a year where they talk to parents, and in K-12 they have 2- fifteen minute sessions, unless your child is on an IEP. Mind you, most of them if you call them they will call you back, but the parent has to take the initiative. Some parents were just not brought up with their parents involved in school, so schools are just going to have to take the first step initiate this themselves, putting their best effort forward, and not just for parents that have the time to volunteer in the classroom.

Poverty as a standalone issue should not be considered as a barrier to learning - you would have to break it down from there on out. Malnutrition would be more accurate. Lack of sleep. Stress related to financial issues. If these are an issue, a teachers should be calling the parent, and perhaps a social worker to get involved. This may not create any budding friendships with parents, but if you are a teacher and you need kids present and healthy to learn, then this is the only way a teacher has to approach this. There may be services that a parent is entitled to that they are unaware of that could help. Sometimes just another adult working with you to help your child is what you really needed to turn things around, and a teacher is in the best position to do so.

To look at this issue differently, in looking at the teachers that my children have had, there are some that were incredibly talented that knew how to keep a kid engaged, who were creative (even given the testing that needed to take place), who knew how to deal with discipline issues in a way that did not escalate the situation. THEN there were teachers who are not talented in this regard- who don't care to make the material interesting, whose personalities do not fit the age group they are charged with teaching, who do not want to put in any more than the hours they are slated to appear. THOSE teachers need to go- they were not meant to be teachers. They are giving other teachers a bad name and doing our kids no favors. In K-6, if your child is saddled with an ineffective teacher, that is a year of their life where not a lot happens and they are uninspired, or falling behind. As adults, if we encountered this at our job, we would take it much more seriously, looking for a new place to work or a way to get out of that position, but for some reason, it is alright to let our children languish for a year or so with someone that they cannot learn from. If this were any other profession, say sales, these people would be out of a job. If you failed to sell a car because you could not make your sales pitch interesting, if you fail to negotiate the terms of an agreement with a customer poorly, then you should not be a salesman. If teachers want to keep being revered the way they are in my town, then they have to do something more to earn that reverence than just showing up and doling out the material. They need to care about the students they have, and meet each one where they are at and get them to learn from there with the tools they have at their disposal. THAT, to me is results."

(3) "I think it is essential that we give all employees feedback about how well they are doing their jobs. So, in a sense, we need to take a narrow focus on teacher results so that the teachers know whether or not whatever it is they are trying to do is actually happening. You can't make corrections unless you first know something needs to be corrected! However, I see a couple of problems with the current public school teacher evaluation system that prevent this from happening to date:

* evaluations tend to be VERY general, based on personal opinions (rather than facts)

* since evaluators are human, results will be tainted by personal biases, prejudices, and "halo effects"

* teachers are rarely given specific directives regarding exactly what outcomes they will be held to. (And when they are, the outcomes can be trivial or irrelevant. For example, I once knew a school psychologist supervisor who gave a monthly report of how many tests each school psychologist had given in the time period, presumably as an incentive to increase the number of tests given.)

* even though teachers have total responsibility for the outcomes, teachers have ZERO control over the "inputs" to the system (quality of curriculum, equipment, facilities; readiness of the students to learn the concepts; level of parental support; number of desks & chairs as compared to the number of students; number of times per day the principal interrupts instruction with an intercom announcement; general sense of safety and security; quality of mother's prenatal nutrition; number of students in the room, whether the heating/air conditioning system provides sufficient oxygen for the number of people in the room, etc.)

* And in the case of specialists, I think they are rarely evaluated by somebody who really knows the specialty (for example, for years as a school psychologist I received my annual performance evaluation from a special education teacher turned special education director who was required to use a district evaluation form designed by and intended for high school guidance counselors!)

I think it might be possible using current technologies to give teachers feedback on how well students are improving. For example, curriculum-based probes of basic skills provide a good way to track at what level the student began, a way to set a goal for the end of a particular time period, a way to measure progress towards that goal, and a way to use decision rules to decide when/if to change the current methods/materials. Whether the student came into the room advanced, average, or behind, that type of "narrow focus on outcomes" would provide solid data about what happened during the school year.

Even if the student made little progress, there would be a fairly large stack of information about what doesn't work. Would that type of "output" measurement be objective enough to get around teacher complaints about evaluations being too biased by personal opinions?

Of course, we don't have curriculum-based probes for all curriculum topics, especially the higher-level thinking skills, but I suspect some kind of frequent progress measurement could be developed to show individual student trends in learning that provide teachers with sufficient feedback to know whether they need to make mid-course adjustments of not. A teacher-made final exam or a published achievement test given at the end of the year creates only one data point and is insufficient to determine a trend.

One thing that I think such frequent progress measurement would reveal is that students vary in how much time they need to practice a particular concept before they really understand and remember it. (Duh!) If we are ever going to increase the amount of "stuff" remembered by the slower-learning students, we are going to have to abandon the current practice of moving everybody along to the next topic (because most of the class is ready to move on) and thus guaranteeing that the slower student's work to date on that topic will be for naught (because they will forget it due to insufficient rehearsal.)

Another thing I think this will show is that teachers vary in the number of individual students they can monitor at once. I suspect newbie teachers are still thinking quite a bit about themselves (what do I say, what do I do, what time is it?) because they are inexperienced and they spend less time with their focus of attention on the students than do experienced teachers. So, the practice of giving all teachers exactly the same number of students regardless of topic, teacher skills, student knowledge, and student self-management capabilities will likely fall into disfavor.

A danger of all narrowly-focused teacher outcome measurement studies - and I _think_ this

may be the basis of union objections to such a thing - is that the amount of progress made by teacher A with student cohort B on topic C is NOT comparable to how well teacher X does with cohort Y on topic Z. It's obviously "apples and oranges", but principals, supervisors, school boards, and the public routinely miss that fact when looking at student outcome measures.

If I remember correctly, some time ago the Rand Corporation looked at what factors influenced student academic achievement. The one with the biggest effect size was "class size" (smaller is better) and "up- to-date materials & equipment" (a map that shows the Belgian Congo smack dab in the middle of Africa is not as helpful as one showing the current political boundaries) was next. Could it be that even relatively unskilled teachers could do a good job given a small enough class and good materials/equipment? Could it be that simple?

Maybe with a few students every teacher could get to know the needs of each individual student in depth and have the time to make necessary accommodations? Would we even have to worry about what would be the "right" type of high stakes test given at the end of the year if we had plenty of teachers surrounded by small groups of students?"

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THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF E-NEWS

See below for source identifying information