



**School Practitioner
Listserv**



A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange

*27 years
& counting*

January 13, 2014

Feds Offer Guiding Principles for Improving School Climate and Discipline

Request:
**>Mental Health and School Coordinators:
*Not another service provider!***

Lessons Learned:
**>Cold Weather Crisis: Many schools & districts
 will be updating plans**

Featured Center Resource
**>Beyond general conferences: Targeted dissemination
 and facilitating implementation**

**Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested.
 The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.**

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of
 the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu
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Feds Offer Guiding Principles for Improving School Climate and Discipline

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>

While the main focus is on concerns about discipline, the first guiding principle stresses improving school climate and prevention. We have already heard from colleagues who feel they can use this to help decision makers move forward in unifying and developing a comprehensive system of student and learning supports.

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Request: "I oversee 6 community agencies in that have received grant funding from the State to develop and implement school based mental health services in 12 schools located throughout the state. Our role is to enhance efforts to get schools to adopt/ enhance specific programs and approaches

- >for addressing problems through school-wide, ‘universal’ interventions
- >for promoting healthy social and emotional development through developing a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive component for systematically addressing barriers to student learning at every school.

One of the agencies has a clinician working as the Mental Health and School Coordinator. Her task is to develop and implement the state model for school based mental health services. We use a continuum of interconnected systems model focusing on prevention and early intervention. The clinician has expressed concerns in how the school administrators view her role in the school. She is not a school staff member, yet, she has been expected to perform the duties associated with school counselors and social workers. She describes the challenge as follows:

‘Numerous unexpected personnel changes have reduced the number of student support staff. At the end of last year the school principal resigned leaving the assistant principal to perform both the job of assistant principal and principal. Recently, a temporary interim principal was hired for an unspecified period of time. Multiple school staff have been laid off or had their hours reduced. The school counselor has been reassigned which has created service gaps especially in crisis intervention duties. The school administrators have come to expect me to perform the duties of school counselor.’

How can this clinician reestablish boundaries and clarify her role and duties?"

Here is how we responded: The matter raised is at the core of schools and communities working together. (We have many online resources related to this.) What is described, of course, is the widespread reactive and crisis driven approach so common in schools. The irony is that neither school personnel nor their community partners want to continue working in this way. We have found that the best way to keep such a coordinator from being enlisted to do the work of a school counselor or a service provider is for the coordinator to delineate and advocate a strategy by which s/he can recruit additional resources for the school.

This might begin by recruiting professionals-in-training. In our experience, reaching out to local colleges and universities who have credential programs in school counseling, social work, psychology, etc. can provide a range of young pre-professionals who work under supervision with groups and individuals. To address students with chronic and serious

problems, a coordinator can outreach to community agencies to see if there is interest in providing services at school sites or at least develop ways to facilitate student access to their services. And, every school needs to establish a system for recruiting, training, and retaining a host of volunteers (retired professionals, families, including parents, grandparents, older brothers and sisters; university students; senior citizens; members of service clubs; members of churches, etc). These provide additional assistance throughout a school (in classrooms, offices, hallways, playground/field, cafeteria, etc) to support students and provide guidance when small problems arise.

In our work in a large urban district, we created the position of an organizational facilitator to work toward unifying student and learning supports and develop a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. This work included maximizing the way the school deployed its existing learning support staff, used district learning supports, and augmented these with volunteer and community resources. See

>*Organization Facilitators: A Key Change Agent for Systemic School and Community Changes*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/orgfacrep.pdf>

>*Volunteers to Help Teachers and Schools Address Barriers to Learning*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/volunteer/volunt.pdf>

See the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find entitled: *Collaboration: School, Community, Interagency* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ql/p1201_01.htm

Listserv Participants: What are your thoughts about this? Share your suggestions about how to help school administrators and teachers see the value of using such a person to enhance resource use and move toward prevention, rather than taking on a case load? Let us hear from you so we can share with others. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Lessons Learned:

>Cold Weather Crisis: Many schools & districts updating plans

As we do with many crises, we sent out a reminder about resources and asked for information to share about planning. Here is some information about school/district actions:

Excerpt from the Washington Post (1/7/14)

"School districts throughout the region reacted differently to the forecasts of frigid temperatures, with some opting to open as usual, others deciding to close for the day and some delaying their start by two hours.

The different responses meant some of the area's students stayed at home while others waited at bus stops or walked to school in rare near-zero temperatures. Some parents questioned the rationale of delaying the start of school for two hours, as temperatures held in the single digits - before factoring in wind chills - throughout the morning.

One city took some extra precautions by keeping the heat turned up at schools overnight. Bus drivers arrived to work early to make sure the buses were warmed up. By making the decision early officials hoped parents would have time to

prepare and make sure their children were bundled up....One Middle School lost heat after a gas line froze and one High School had flooding due to a leaky roof. Both those buildings canceled classes. Four schools in Montgomery closed early because of problems with power, heat or water. ... Earlier in the day, a fire alarm went off at a High School in Potomac, apparently because of a malfunctioning water pipe. Students were evacuated to the outdoors for 10 minutes. Some were without coats while they waited for the building to be deemed safe....

Prince William County schools officials made the decision to cancel school because the cold snap was too much of a risk to the safety of the children who walk to school.

'The combination of a forecast of record-breaking cold and unprecedented wind chills led to the possibility of anger, especially for the more than 20,000 walkers we have,' said a school spokesman.

For Loudoun schools, classes were canceled for the second day in a row. Officials were mostly concerned about icy road conditions, particularly on the dirt and gravel roads that still run through much of the county. By Tuesday, they were worried about the temperatures. ... Some parents argued that it was too cold for children - especially those whose parents can't or don't drive - to make their way to school. Unlike suburban school systems, the District does not provide school buses except for students with disabilities. Some students take public transit, while many others, especially elementary school students, walk. ... The school system opened its buildings 45 minutes early so students wouldn't have to wait outside. But staff worried that wouldn't be early enough for many children, who leave home when their parents go to work. ...

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/area-school-districts-treat-cold-weather-differently/2014/01/07/d96d82d8-77b0-11e3-af7f-13bf0e9965f6_print.html

Here's what we heard directly from colleagues:

(1) (GA) "Fortunately, our community has resources for families without heat or shelter, and I pray that all who need it are getting it. We are using our phone system to check on families and see who might need assistance. So far, we have been able to refer them to an agency for help. It helps that we work with these agencies so regularly as part of the learning supports work."

(2) (MN) "We have just canceled school again for tomorrow. I've been contemplating the impacts these frigid winter days have on our families and students. I meet next week with the Learning Supports Resource Team (psychologists, social workers, nurses, counselors) and we will discuss how to help support and anticipate potential issues that families may face. I know buildings have a strong handle on coats, money for gas/transportation, heating assistance, food insecurity, etc. However, appropriate child care remains an issue for many families facing financial struggles. If we develop any innovative ideas or plans, I will loop back with you. Thank you for taking the time to share.... It helps me think ... in a systemic approach."

(3) (MN) "We actually are in uncharted water in that district staff have not had to report to work either. In the past it has been only students and staff that work with students who have not had to report. My first concern was for our students who are from non-English speaking homes who may have dropped kids off or sent kids to the bus stops

to wait. Because we didn't have any staff report, I was concerned about us not having anyone there for unexpected students. I talked to our administrators about having staff sweep each site for students. I am going to bring your question to the district leadership team. This is something that needs additional focus as it is a barrier that we deal with every year. I will keep you updated on our discussions."

(4) (IL) We are in Southeastern Illinois and have now been out of school the past four days. The roads are snow and ice covered. ... This storm has been our second one as we missed four days in December because of ice and snow. We are far enough south that the city and county did not order salt for the highways and so even in town the roads have been awful!

So, what do we do and what have we learned?

Everyday is like groundhog day - will we or will we not be back in school. For teachers and students I would like to know early enough to let them know when we will return to school and classes so that they can get ready. Teachers want to be prepared for how they are going to "make up" for time lost and both teachers and students need to mentally be ready to get back to work and structure.

That is another learning - most of us need structure in our lives. Our high school principal was talking yesterday about all that he needed to do and how now that he had the time he saw that indeed he needs the structure and fast pace of school. That is exactly how our teachers and kids react. They love to miss a day or two but now they are ready to be back to a schedule and accomplish something.

One of the big worries that I have had has been food, shelter, and warmth for our families. We have an elementary school of 1100 students and 63% of them live in poverty. We have several programs that help and assist these families such as the backpack program where on Friday the kids take a backpack home with food for the weekend. Because of Christmas break the backpack was full this last time but certainly not full enough to last the vacation and then an extra week. One little 2nd grade boy has real struggles so I called his grandmother and they had some heat and they did have food. However, life is a struggle in their home on a sunny warm day so it will be best for that young boy to be back in school as soon as possible. Another young mother who has many problems herself called our office and the elementary school because she needed medicine for her son. Our elementary principal found the one pill that he had at the nurses office and took it to her home.... So, the first learning is that we are always trying to provide for the safety and needs of our students and staff. We are a community school!

The second learning is focus on what matters. As we work to align curriculum, teach to the core, plan for PARCC assessment, evaluate teacher, plan for annexation of another district - etc. etc. etc. we often focus on all of our tasks, the rules, the regulations, the stress of change and all that we have to do. Coming at the New Year of 2014 with ice and snow we can see this as perhaps a gift of time to reflect and focus on what really matters. For us, it is about student and staff learning. I would hope that we can keep the attitude of learning versus the race to get material covered. It is a fine balance for all of us and yet maybe this is a wake-up call.

And the third lesson and reminder for me is that it is all about the PEOPLE, the PEOPLE, the PEOPLE! ... Storms bring out the best in all of us and as our community and school work together we will get back to school in 2014 and make it the best ever!

I have probably shared more than you wanted but I so appreciate your question because as I have worked here every day from Sunday through today I have enjoyed catching up, looking at data, getting ready for the next board meeting, writing my 'State of the

District' report, planning for a Hearing with the Regional Board of Trustees, etc. but what has mattered has been that we have a wonderful staff of folks who have cleared our parking lots, kept us warm, and kept in touch with our students and families. So, thanks for letting me think!"

Listserv Participants: Anything you'd like to share about planning for the next cold weather crisis? Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Center Featured Resource:

>Beyond general conferences: Targeted dissemination and facilitating implementation

A colleague who has been following our work for many years and is just starting to see some pieces of this take hold throughout the state, asked: "Have you ever considered hosting an annual conference?"

We, of course, were pleased to hear the work was taking hold, and we e-mailed back that we would love to feature the work and examples as part of our continuing efforts to share "Where's it happening?" (See Trailblazing and Pioneering Initiatives – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm>).

The question about hosting a conference is one we are frequently asked. Early in our work we did national and regional summits and institutes for state departments of education and districts across the country. These taught us the value of targeting our limited resources to those specifically interested in integrating a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports into school improvement. It also led us to developing ways to disseminate the ongoing work through our various delivery systems such as the "Where's It happening?" website feature.

In addition, we have helped establish networks such as the *District and State Collaborative Network for Developing Comprehensive Systems for Learning Supports* which includes leaders eager to share and learn from each other about moving student and learning supports in new directions. Our Center facilitates the work of the collaborative and sends a monthly update of what's happening and where. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/network/network.html>. All who are interested in participating in the network are welcome to join.

As to *facilitating implementation* of a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, we offer online resources (e.g., see our *System Change Toolkit* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>) and provide online and face-to-face mentoring and coaching. Related to all this are our efforts to develop online resources for professional development (e.g., an online leadership institute, webinars, power point presentation, etc.) If you think any of these resources might be helpful to you, let us know, and we will guide you to them. And, note that all of this is free (except for reimbursement of costs when we are asked to travel somewhere).

Please share! Send in relevant resources ideas, requests, comments and experiences to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Note: Responses come only to the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA for possible inclusion in the next week's message.

We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and to the *Facebook* site (which can be accessed from the Center's website homepage <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)