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**School Practitioner
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**



October 27, 2014

Another tragic shooting at a school

Request from a Principal

>Too Many in Special Education

For Your Information

>Motivating adolescent students: Dos and don'ts

Featured Center Resource

>Professional development resources on motivation

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**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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Another tragic shooting at a school.

Every such event raises many concerns. Do you think schools can play a greater role in helping students like Jaylen Fryberg not want to commit such horrible acts? Let us know if you have ideas for schools about this.

And as always, help make certain local schools are prepared when crises occur (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> and click on Response to Crisis).

Requst from a Principal

"I have many challenged students that are in need of services, especially support for my mentally ill students. There are 147 special education students in my elementary school."

Center Response: The above concern reflects the situation in too many places across the country -- too many challenged students, schools, and families, too few resources. After accessing whatever a district's special education and student support staff can provide, districts/schools reach out to whatever other community resources are available. These include local agencies concerned with mental health, programs preparing social workers, psychologists, counselors, and any other organizations that might have relevant resources.

Our Center's website has a variety of freely accessible online resources that those dealing with challenged students may find helpful. Some of these have been compiled into a

Practitioner and Professional Development
Virtual Toolbox for Mental Health in Schools
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/toolbox.htm>

At the same time, it has long been the case that the flood of referrals for special assistance and special education far exceeds school and district resources. Moreover, the problem is exacerbated by referrals that would be unnecessary if there was a greater emphasis on prevention and responding as soon as problems appear.

To stem the flood, schools need to embed their efforts to address diagnosed students into the broader focus on transforming how schools offer student and learning supports. This is what is happening in pioneering efforts across the country. See

>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Trailblazing Initiatives!*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/summer14.pdf>

Such a transformation is essential for advancing how schools address mental health concerns and enhance equity of opportunity for student success at school and beyond.

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity

MAJOR TRANSFORMATIONS AT MOST SCHOOLS REQUIRE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS LEADING THE WAY. We encourage anyone who thinks the local superintendent might be interested to send us contact information, and we will follow-up.

Listserv Participants:

How are your local schools addressing the problem of so many referrals for special education? Let us know so we can share the information. ltaylor@ucla.edu

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For your information

Motivating adolescent students: Dos and don'ts

Excerpt from *Motivating Young Adolescents* by Rick Wormeli

(Published in *Educational Leadership*, September 2014, Vol. 72 Pages 26-31
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept14/vol72/num01/Motivating-Young-Adolescents.aspx>)

"... When it comes to fostering cognitive perseverance, carrots and sticks don't work. Rewarding students who make the honor roll with a special assembly doesn't motivate those students to pursue successful academic behaviors the next semester. And punishing a student for failure doesn't teach him or her to study more thoroughly.

Let's consider six approaches that do motivate....

- The first mind-set teachers need is the recognition that motivation is something we create with students, not something we do to them. Our goal should be a classroom culture that cultivates curiosity and personal investment, one in which students feel safe to engage in the activity or topic without fear of embarrassment or rejection.... A student who seems unmotivated may lack the tools for the tasks, have too many responsibilities at home, or worry that she won't be valued if she attempts a task and fails. It's easier for an adolescent who reads below grade level to make excuses about why he didn't do the homework ('The baseball game ran late' or 'I forgot') than to admit to the teacher and friends that he couldn't do it because the reading was too hard. Such students think, 'Why should I give the world more evidence that I'm an idiot?' They'd rather come off as scatterbrained than incompetent.
- Empathize—and build trust. We must help kids get past such face-saving by empathizing with them and by conducting ourselves in such a way that students know we have their backs. Young adolescents need to trust that teachers won't humiliate them or let them humiliate themselves....Young adolescents intensely

value teachers' opinions of them. They'll move mountains for teachers who they sense respect them....

- The single most motivating practice teachers can employ in the middle-level classroom is to teach in developmentally appropriate ways. ...I can't overemphasize the need to provide a path to learning that's sensitive to students' developmental stages. When asked which teachers motivate them, young adolescents immediately mention teachers who "get" them; who accept them unconditionally (mistakes and all); and who empathize with them (as if remembering what it was like to experience certain concepts for the first time). Teachers tuned to young adolescents' learning preferences also
 - > Incorporate social interaction into any engagement with content; such interactions provide opportunities for content-related conversations, online class discussions, debates, or collaborative inquiry.
 - > Switch activities every 10 to 15 minutes to maintain momentum.
 - > Help students recover from bad decisions and failure.
 - > Teach each topic in more than one way.
 - > Show enthusiasm about their subject, even after teaching it for years.
 - > Offer regular opportunities for self-definition; encourage students to incorporate their own culture into assignments or to develop a unique voice for class presentations.
- Middle school students are thinking, 'Am I normal? How am I doing? How do I know when I know this stuff?' Young adolescents seek comparative yardsticks in every domain of their lives: physical growth, intellectual prowess, hairstyle, family rules, and the capacity to burp the alphabet. So it's important that students have a clear picture of any academic goal and of where they are at any moment in relation to that goal. Only timely, descriptive feedback helps kids get that picture. Motivational teachers provide many exemplars, formative feedback, and opportunities for students to self-assess. ...Feedback-focused teachers recognize the power of allowing students to redo their assessments and assignments in light of specific teacher feedback...

The perform–feedback–revise–perform–feedback–revise cycle is not only motivating to young adolescents, but it also prepares them better for high school, college, and the working world.
- As teachers, we have to cultivate expertise in how the mind learns. Our lessons should show evidence of this expertise. For example, young adolescent minds crave vividness, so let's make content—from bibliographic format to JavaScript to graphing inequalities—come to life....Young adolescents respond well to thematic instruction and integrated curriculum. Making connections among fine and performing arts, with math, social studies, foreign languages, and so on makes these subjects come to life. Motivation flourishes as students apply skills taught in one class to tasks done in another class....
- Young adolescents are storytellers and story receivers. Narratives not only appeal to their theater of the mind, but they also provide connections among disparate parts. ...It's motivating to foreshadow what's to come and challenge students' current thinking...

Although any one of these motivational elements may not work every time, several in tandem likely will. But middle schools will have to be systematic in how they foster students' thirst to learn...."

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Center Featured Resources **Professional development resources on motivation**

For more on enhancing school staff expertise related to student motivation, see the Center's Quick Find:

> *Motivation, Engagement, and Re-engagement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

Link to such resources as:

Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families

This four module set for Continuing Education provides a perspective on motivation that goes beyond mainly reinforcing and enforcing behavior. The emphasis is on:

- expanding understanding of engagement, re-engagement, and intrinsic motivation in the context of school improvement and school climate
- highlighting strategic approaches to engaging and re-engaging students, with special attention to avoiding over-reliance on extrinsic reinforcers and minimizing practices that can produce reactance
- engaging and re-engaging families by attending to differences among families and other primary caretakers with respect to resources, motivation and needs, and barriers to involvement with the school
- stressing that teachers can't and should not be expected to do it all alone. Rather their work needs to be embedded into a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports and that system should be built with a view to engaging and re-engaging students, families, and all the professionals involved at schools.

Module I: *Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf>

Module II: *Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement and Re-engagement* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageii.pdf>

Module III: *Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiii.pdf>

Module IV: *Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engageiv.pdf>

***Please share relevant resources ideas, requests,
comments, and experiences!***

Send 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 *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

For Recent Previous Postings, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>