April 7, 2014

Request

>About classroom and school-wide interventions to address behavioral and mental health problems

For Your Consideration

>Use the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Initiative* to advocate for a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports

Featured Center Resource

>A focus on encouraging student/learning supports personnel to lead in moving in new directions

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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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Request: "I am the new coordinator for my school district for 504 compliance. I am also a new special ed middle school supervisor. As you can imagine, I deal with students with behavioral and mental health issues daily. Schools are struggling with what interventions to put in place with these students. most do not qualify for intensive services due to the evaluation criteria not addressing diagnosed mental illnesses for OHI. Schools are asking for guidance. Can you suggest something for behavior interventions for our high poverty rural schools with limited resources. Most do not have access to school psychologists, social workers, or counselors on their campus. We connect them to community resources, but they need help coming up with ideas for interventions."

Listserv Participants: How are you working with teachers and school staff to minimize problems in the classroom and school-wide? Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Center Response: As we often do, we reached out to a few colleagues to see what they would recommend. Here are two initial responses:

(1) "This is a common issue in schools and it only serves to illustrate how school systems are poorly equipped to address high-needs students. There really is no one intervention that would fix this problem, but perhaps there are some fundamental approaches that can get them moving in the right direction. Before offering any suggestions, however, I would explain that interventions are designed to address specific issues, so there must be a clear understanding of what those issues are. Therefore, there must be some kind of process in place to help identify these issues and conduct a needs assessment. We wouldn't ask a physician to give us interventions for treating a group of students with health problems because we know that each student is likely to be suffering from any number of health conditions (ranging from common illnesses to more severe diseases). In the same manner, we can't provide interventions for an entire group of students until we have assessed their individual problems. In reading the question from this administrator, I can only assume there is no systematic process for identifying and assessing student needs. If there is, it isn't clear from the email. It appears they are looking for interventions a teacher can implement in a classroom with 20+ students. It would be impossible for a teacher to address (successfully) the individual needs of a student without having more information about the specific student. Thus, there must be a systematic process for getting this information. Then interventions can be tailored to the individual needs of the student.

　　That being said, there are many things a school can do to address the struggling students (and teachers). They might consider implementing the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model as a start. They also might want to look at the *40 Developmental Assets* from the Search Institute as a framework for school-wide instruction of social and emotional development. In addition, they could implement a school-wide mentoring program (adults - can be staff or community volunteers), a peer mentoring program, or a friendship facilitation program. None of these interventions require additional money, but they do require hard work and a commitment to change. They also require staff development so that everyone is trained in these approaches and is implementing interventions consistently. There are

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a host of interventions that a school can implement, but they all require a commitment to change and the system has to change with it. If they aren't willing to make this change, then they will continue to struggle.

   I will close with this comment: If they are desperate to help these students and are strapped for resources, the one intervention that has stood the test of time, is building relationships with the students. It's the <u>one</u> intervention that really works."

(2) "This sounds like my life. PBIS strategies are the most effective. I would also suggest using the behavior-focused resources your Center has posted. The coordinator needs to bring the principal and other relevant school personnel to this discussion. My experience is that no matter what the hierarchy was, nothing different was going to happen if the principal wasn't on board. Even in poor rural districts there should be some money available through IDEA funding for some consultation services. The coordinator should look for someone in the region who has strong behavior management skills and is willing to consult to schools. (Also, check that the consultant's philosophy is consistent with the direction that will likely work with the school.)

   Absolutely cultivate the local resources. They have much more training in mental health than we educators do. That said, I have had some success with looking within and identifying my teacher(s) who had the strongest skills for behavior intervention. I have them re-assigned them. Twice I totally re-assigned students,giving more to some teachers. That allowed for the creation of a smaller group that focused on social skills. The other teachers were just as happy to be able to return to the kind of teaching they wanted to do, even if it meant more students to case manage.

   Finally, don't forget to involve the students. I always want them to know what is changing, why, and what they need to do to return to the previous schedule. These students are often resistant to talking (understatement!). I've had the most success with this question, "There are no promises that it will happen; but, if you could make changes to create your ideal school day, what would it look like?" Sometimes we should be letting the students lead."

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We understand the challenge and see the opportunity to strengthen the skills of the teachers and provide the needed supports for students. Given the emphasis in the above comments on PBIS, we encourage readers to look at our latest Center e-journal/newsletter which discusses some concerns about PBIS as related to school climate. Online at:
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring14.pdf

Beyond that, here are some resources from the Center to consider sharing.

(1) Take a look at the series of topical *practice notes* from the Center. For example, the following focus on daily classroom dilemmas teachers experience, and some initial ways to deal with such concerns. The emphasis is on engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning.

   >*Bullying* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/bullypn.pdf

   >*Students in Distress* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/distresspn.pdf

   >*Fidgety Students* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fidgetypn.pdf

>*Disengaged Students* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/disengpn.pdf

>*Working with Disengaged Students* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/disengagedstudents.pdf

>*Minimizing Referrals Out of the Classroom* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/referralspn.pdf

>*Addressing Neighborhood Problems that Affect the School* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/neighpn.pdf

>*Homework Avoidance* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeworkpn.pdf

(2) For more extensive coverage, take a look at:

>*Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School* --
http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf

>*Addressing School Adjustment Problems* – This guidance focuses on (a) addressing transition problems, (b) enhancing engagement in learning, (c) working as a team to prevent problems from escalating. Also, included are links to in-depth prevention and early intervention strategies. --
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjustmentproblems.pdf

>*Engaging and Re-engaging Families When a Student is Not Doing Well* – These guidance notes highlight ways for schools to understand barriers to school involvement and how to address such barriers. –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/familyengage.pdf

(3) Finally, visit our website's Quick Find section –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm

Examples of topics to browse:

Anger	Learning problems
Anxiety	Oppositional defiance disorder
Autism	Rural School Mental Health
Behavior Problems	Classroom/School Climate
Conduct	Classroom focused enabling
Depression	Early Intervention
Emotionally disturbed	Engagement/motivation
Impulse control	IDEA and accommodation

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For your information:

>**Using the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Initiative* to advocate for a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports**

A colleague recently asked us what we thought about the announcement from ASCD and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about their new *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model*. Here's our take on this:

> Another well-meaning effort. The problem is that the "Whole" focuses mainly on how schools can do more to accommodate health and safety concerns with additional attention to the social and emotional climate of school and classroom environments and community involvement. While all that's clearly important, it is an old message dressed up in new clothing. CDC is trying to reinvigorate its long-standing Coordinated School Health Program, and ASCD's added focus on "greater alignment, integration, and collaboration between education and health" is unlikely to do much to end the marginalization (and ongoing fragmentation) of efforts to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

What we recommend is embedding the initiative into a much broader framework for a unified and comprehensive system of student and learning supports, and then using the growing interest in the "whole" as a catalyst to effectively weave together the full range of existing school home-community resources. By doing so, this can become more than just one more initiative; it can be an opportunity to work with local schools/districts to strengthen efforts to develop a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.

See the announcement for the initiative at http://www.ascd.org/programs/learning-and-health/wscc-model.aspx .

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Featured Center Resource:

>**A focus on encouraging student/learning supports personnel to lead in moving in new directions**

If schools are to end the marginalization of student and learning supports, continuous advocacy for moving in new directions is essential. And leadership for this must come from student/learning supports personnel.

Since 1995, our Center (and since 1986, the School Mental Health Project) at UCLA has pursued advocacy and leadership development

- to encourage school personnel (and others) to become involved in school/district decision making bodies to keep learning supports in the forefront of decision making and planning (re. budgeting, staffing, strategic planning, school improvement, etc.)

- to prepare and widely disseminate information to administrators and policy makers to underscore the imperative for ending the marginalization by moving in new directions for student and learning supports (e.g., to expand school improvement policy and practice so that learning supports becomes a third primary and essential component, along with instruction and management).

As part of that effort, we emphasize how important it is for student/support leaders to be at budget decision tables. In too many districts, such personnel don't get involved until lay off notices start arriving, and then they hope that money will be found over the summer to ensure their continued employment. This is like waiting for crises that are preventable, rather than working for prevention.

Prevention involves bringing new ideas to planning tables.

In this respect, here are some brief Center resources that may be helpful:

> *Rethinking District Budgets to Unify and Sustain a Critical Mass of Student and Learning Supports at Schools* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/financebudget.pdf

> *What Every Leader for School Improvement Needs to Know About Student and Learning Supports* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/whateveryleader.pdf

> *Policies and Practices for Addressing Barriers to learning: Current Status and New Directions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newdirections/policiesfull.pdf

> *Designing School Improvement to Enhance Classroom Climate for All Students* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolclimate.pdf

> *School Improvement Planning: What's Missing?* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolimprovement/whatsmissing.pdf

> *Framing New Directions for School Counselors, Psychologists, & Social Workers* -- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/framingnewdir.pdf

And, finally, here is an excerpt from a new report entitled *The New Separate and Unequal* that highlights the importance of student and learning supports and stresses reallocation of budget. http://www.blackorganizingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/LCFF-POLICY-BRIEF-FINAL-VERSION-3-20-2014.pdf

Note: The report was prompted by the new Local Control Funding Formula in California, but the arguments for student and learning supports are universal and highly relevant.

"... Because of the Local Control Funding Formula, there is now more focus on educational equity in schools than perhaps ever before. All across the state, policymakers and communities are having much-needed discussions about how state funding can help to better address the needs of our children and youth. These conversations are covering many of the most significant barriers that students face in obtaining a high-quality education. ...
     For years, school districts have been expanding their police forces on the hunch that it would improve school safety, and by extension, school performance.

However, not only is there no credible evidence to support this approach, there is ample evidence showing that schools with heavy police presence, which are invariably found in low-income communities of color, tend to create hostile and unwelcoming school climates that alienate students and fuel the familiar indicators of school failure: misbehavior, violence, absenteeism, and high dropout/pushout rates. ...

Schools will never be equitable so long as some students attend caring, nurturing schools with regular access to guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses, and other support services, while other students attend heavily-policed schools in which they are always just one minor misstep away from being handcuffed, put in the back of a police cruiser, and winding up in juvenile court.

School districts now have a rare opportunity to address their past school-safety missteps, reassess their priorities, and ensure that all schools are well-structured to meet students' developmental needs ...

Looking at the broader statewide pattern, California schools have severely under-funded school support staff. For example, statewide in 2012-13, there were 808 students for every counselor, 1,332 students for every school psychologist, 2,723 students for every school nurse, and 14,315 students for every school social worker.This continues an embarrassing trend in which California was last among all 50 states in providing counselors to students, and 45th in providing student support personnel, in 2010-11. Given the variety of academic, psychological, behavioral, emotional, and physical challenges that our students face on a daily basis, this level of staff support is grossly insufficient. ...

To create safe and effective schools, the best strategies ... involve taking a 360 degree approach to building the strong, supportive, high-functioning environments in which the full array of students' developmental needs are met. The new Local Control Funding Formula presents school districts with a golden opportunity to create such environments for the students who need them the most."

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 the *Facebook* site (which can be accessed from the Center's website homepage http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/