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**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



June 9, 2014

Concerns from a Parent

>Impact of excessive homework demands

Follow-up

>Tragedy prompts review of crisis planning

Featured Center Resource

***>Using summer to enhance plans for addressing
barriers to learning***

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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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C oncern from a Parent

"I found your post after searching 'the effects of homework on mental health'. My son typically works on homework from about 6-10 pm. Then he gets up at 6:30 am to finish, he typically works about an hour in the morning. He is in sixth grade. If he forgets to show his work in math for example, the teacher won't even give it credit. My son does have dysgraphia, so it does take him longer I think than the average student. And he is in all accelerated classes. However the amount and expectations seem unreasonable. What he is learning from the homework is to hate school. He already knows the content. I do help him with his homework when he needs it, and he does have 'homework meltdowns.' I'd say weekly. He also turns down extracurricular activities because 'I can barely get through homework now mom;' it breaks my heart. ... I think we are damaging our children by continuously pushing their college prep back to first high school, then middle, and increasingly into grammar school. Kids have no time to be kids now, and I think that is sad, and I worry about the detrimental effects."

C enter Response

Finding the right balance in homework, time for family, and extracurricular activities is a commonplace struggle. As we note in *Homework is a Mental Health Concern*:

It's time for every school to have an in depth discussion about homework as a major concern. So many problems between kids and their families, the home and school, and students and teachers arise from conflicts over homework. The topic is a long standing concern for mental health practitioners, especially those who work in schools. Over the years, we have tried to emphasize the idea that schools need to ensure that homework is designed as "*motivated practice*," and parents need to avoid turning homework into a battleground.

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

Anyone concerned about these matters may want to look at the resources listed on our Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Homework Help for Educators, Students, and Parents*. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/qfhomework.htm> .

Listed there are Center developed resources such as:

Homework Avoidance – This is one of a series of practice notes from the Center focused 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. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeworkpn.pdf>

Also listed are links to a broad range of resources from others such as:

- >Avoiding the Homework Blues
- >Five Homework Strategies for Teaching Students with Disabilities.
- >Guidelines for schools in developing a school based homework policy
- >Helping Students with Homework in Science and Math
- >Helping Your Students With Homework: A Guide for Teachers
- >Homework: What Does the Research Say?

- >Homework Policies That Support Students with Disabilities
- >Homework Policy
- >Homework Tools: Interventions for Handling Parent-Child Conflicts Over Homework
- >Homework wars provoke debate: Experts face off
- >How School Troubles Come Home: The Impact of Homework
- >One School's Homework Philosophy and Corresponding Policies
- >Online Homework: Does it Make a Difference.
- >Parental involvement in homework: A review of current research and its implications
- >Research Shows Homework Does Boost Academic Achievement; But ...
- >So what is there to say about homework?
- >The Trouble With Homework

Listserv Participants

How do your local schools/district guide teachers, students, and parents with respect to addressing the impact of homework on learning, motivation, family/school relationships? Any guidance resources that can be shared? If local schools have not done much about this, can you act as a catalyst for establishing guidelines about ways to ensure homework doesn't produce problems for students, parents, and the school? Send resources, comments, and/or questions related to this critical matter to ltaylor@ucla.edu .

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Follow up

>Tragedy prompts review of crisis planning

Any tragedy that involves schools and students has lessons for updating crisis planning.

Following the deaths in the college town of Isla Vista, CA, we contacted colleagues and the local schools to share resources to support their crisis counseling and to garner lessons learned. Here are a couple of notes from colleagues in the School Psychology program at UC Santa Barbara about their experiences:

>From a faculty member: "... Many of us have been mobilized and are providing psychological first aid, both on campus, in the community, and in our local schools I am currently writing from a mobile crisis support team at a local school. We have all been extremely appreciative of the outpouring of support and we have had many volunteers from near and far on site to be of assistance. I will certainly be back in touch to contact you as additional needs become apparent."

>From a Graduate Student: "Thank you for reaching out. It is indeed a great tragedy that the community is facing; I just recently returned from a memorial service to honor the lives that were lost. There has indeed been a lot of outreach between the UC school psychology program and the local schools and communities - more experienced students are offering brief, free crisis counseling, faculty have been working all weekend to organize resources and to provide counseling services, and we also reached out to local schools to offer any aid as well. I volunteered to help at

a high school today. We have continued to offer our support if and when the need does arise. ... I did attend a TA training today as I will be leading a university class tomorrow morning and wanted to be prepared to empathize and validate the needs of the university students I work with. I know that I can turn to Center resources available online if and when I need support."

Listserv Participants:

These responses got us to thinking about the need for schools to review their crisis plans with respect to how they include community resources, such as the local university or college, the local churches, the nearby hospitals. **How do your local schools use such resources in responding to crises? What plans are in place for an influx of volunteers should a tragedy bring them to your community?** Let us hear from you so we can share good ideas and lessons learned. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu.

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Featured Center Resource

>Using summer to enhance plans for addressing barriers to learning

Over a school year, it is hard to find enough time to stop, think, and plan new ways of doing things. It is a bit like Winnie the Pooh's experience going downstairs. As Milne describes it:

"Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he know, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it."

In the last practitioner, we explored summer opportunities to enhance student learning. Now let's think about summer as a time to enhance what we do to advance new directions for student and learning supports.

At most schools, student/learning support staff have had to keep "bumping their heads" as they struggle each day to meet the demands on them. This usually means reacting with a limited set of piecemeal and fragmented strategies. Summer provides an opportunity to think long enough to plan better ways to become proactive and more effective. In particular, it allows staff who work year round to further develop student and learning supports into a more effective system. Such periods also allow for upgrading the focus of personnel development plans (for all staff) with respect to learning supports.

In addition to system development, the summer also is time to help expand staff development plans for how teachers and student/learning supports personnel work and learn together to promote a caring and supportive context for student learning. In general,

- (1) teachers need to learn more about how to address interfering factors and to work with others in doing so;

- (2) support staff need to learn more about how to work with teachers and other staff (and to do so in classrooms as much as is feasible), as well as learning how to work more productively with district and community resources to enhance practices for prevention and for responding quickly when common problems arise;
- (3) administrators need to learn more about leading the way by expanding policy, enhancing operational infrastructure, and redeploying resources to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

Beyond system development, teacher and student support staff need to learn more about how to:

- work collaboratively in the classroom to prevent and address problems as soon as they arise
- establish a classroom infrastructure that transforms a big classroom into a set of smaller units to enable effective personalized interventions
- include specialized assistance in the classroom as an integral facet of response to intervention
- move away from overreliance on extrinsics to an emphasis on intrinsic motivation
- establish a comprehensive system of learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide

The Center has a variety of resources to help with all this. For example, we have a great deal related to how to develop a unified, comprehensive and equitable system for addressing barriers to student learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Planning and developing such a system not only can end fragmented approaches, it can move toward eliminating counterproductive competition for resources and end the marginalization of student support staff in school improvement planning.

The Center's website provides free and ready access to a wide range of online resources that can enhance system and staff development. Some have been prepared as *Quick Training Aids*. Most can be adapted for workshops, independent study, or for use by a group that joins together as a *community of learners*. See, for instance, the section of website resources devoted to:

>***Guides to Policy And Program Development/practice*** –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/guidestopolicy.htm>

Also see:

>***Beginning Steps in Personnel Development Related to Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*** –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personneldevelopment.pdf>

This is a brief guide to beginning personnel development for school staff (teachers, support staff, administrators) using free online resources. These resources are intended to provide an introduction to the concepts and practices that form a comprehensive system of learning supports and how to get such system development going at a school.

And watch for the summer special edition of the quarterly e-journal/newsletter which is devoted to *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: It's Happening!*

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/>)