



**28 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



July 21, 2014

Request

>About Mentor Programs:

- *What are best practices?***
- *Content for mentors to promote social-emotional development?***

Follow-up

>Reactions to editorial and the article "Not another special initiative" in the UK *Every Child* Journal

Featured Center Resource

>Improving Our Facebook Page: *What Do You Suggest?*

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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

"First I want to thank you for your work with addressing barriers to learning. ... Here in our district we are committed to breaking down barriers to learning. We have a vision to end the cycle of poverty-through education. We have three beliefs: We believe kids can! Connecting is key! Learning unlocks opportunities! We have leveraged funds and have identified a priority in providing a paid mentorship program to our youngest boys in our schools (grades 1-3). Goals that we are trying to achieve with our young youth are the following: teaching life skills, developing students social-emotional competence and self-regulation, reducing suspension and expulsion rates and connecting children to school and community and preparing students for college/career.

I am wondering if you would be able to provide me with a list of mentorship programs that are designed to work with young boys in schools. I have done some seeking and I find many published programs (e.g., Second Step) that can be used as a curriculum to teach the expected outcomes mentioned above; however, I am seeking a mentorship model with proven success. Thank you for your time ... any assistance would be appreciated."

Center Response:

This request highlights both *process* and *content* as major preparation considerations for mentoring programs. Our experience is that too often mentors are paired with students without sufficient clarity about what is to occur during their time together. A volunteer mentor provides an opportunity to enhance social, emotional, and/or academic support for a student, but not without effective training and supervision.

There are many resources to help enhance mentoring programs. Here's a start:

- (1) With respect to mentoring as a topic, see our Center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on *Mentoring* for links to resources from many who have expertise in this area. Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/mentoring.htm>
- (2) For resources on best practice *processes*, see, for example:
 - >Education Northwest's *School Based Mentoring Resources* – <http://educationnorthwest.org/resources/school-based-mentoring-resources-0>
 - >*Chronicle of Evidence Based Mentoring* – <http://chronicle.umbmentoring.org/>
 - >National Mentoring partnership's *Effective Practices for Mentoring* http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222.pdf
- (3) For information on *organizing* a tutor/mentor program as well as processes to enhance the work, see, for example:
 - >Tutor/Mentor Connection – <http://www.tutormentorconnection.org/>
- (4) For content/curriculum that mentors might use to promote social and emotional development, see the Quick Find on *Social and Emotional Development* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2102_05.htm
 - For example, go to Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning's
 - >School based programs overview – <http://ann.sagepub.com/content/591/1/86>
 - >Guides to effective programs and practices – <http://www.casel.org/>
 - >Ratings of elementary programs – <http://www.casel.org/guide/ratings/elementary>

Listserv Participants:

Many schools recruit mentors but stop short of providing them with the tools and resources to effectively use their time with students to enhance student capacity. *What is the situation in schools in your locale?* Let us know so we can share. ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Feedback from colleagues

>Reactions to editorial and the article "Not another special initiative" in the UK *Every Child Journal*

As you know, last week we sent out the following to our listservs.

“We thought you would be interested to see how much the experience in Europe parallels concerns many have raised about educational trends in the U.S. The following is from an editorial in the *Every Child Journal* in the U.K

Excerpt

"The views of the Finnish educationalist, Pasi Sahlberg, are cited to describe “a European-wide movement towards a narrowing of perspectives in education characterised by ‘standardisation; overemphasis on narrow core subjects; minimising experimentation through low risk strategies; economically-based corporate organisation and, most damaging of all, high-stakes test-based accountability’....This isn’t an experience unique to the UK. On page 74, we look at research from the United States. In ‘Not another special initiative!’, academics from the UCLA describe the US experience of what they term ‘projectitis’ in which new legislation and policies, usually foisted on schools following a knee-jerk reaction to a particular calamity, come with funding strings attached so that cash-starved schools – especially in times of austerity – can’t resist following the money trail despite the disruption and minimal gain they offer. As the authors say, in a paragraph that every teacher in the land will probably echo: ‘The good news is that there are many schools where the majority of students and staff are safe and successful, and in all schools, one can find young people who are doing just fine. The bad news is that in too many schools, particularly those serving lower income families, large numbers of students are in harm’s way, academically in trouble, and dropping out. And the impact on teachers and teaching is detrimental.’ The solution, they argue, is school-wide policies that capture the scope of the problems that children face. In other words, it calls for schools to embrace the complexity of diversity on their own terms. The authors have created ... frameworks for this.”

To see the article "Not another special initiative!" referenced in the editorial, go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/everychild.pdf>

If you have any comments to share about the editorial, send them to Ltaylor@ucla.edu . We have received some already (see these in the Appendix to this Practitioner).

As you will see in the Appendix, one of the responses is from a district superintendent in Michigan. He indicates:

“... I find this communication very timely. You can clearly replace the challenges of our foreign counterpart with those being experienced by our American education system. The description of cash strapped districts and the impact on our most vulnerable children and communities is worth sparking an international plea for human rights for all impoverished families and communities. Having read this article, I would be willing to participate in activities that will advance the educational human rights internationally. I strongly believe we must have a collective voice in addressing this human equity issue. If you would like to dialogue further about my comments, please feel free to contact me.”

We did contact him about strategies, and he suggested starting by sharing his comments “as a general concept to get the best thinking around a systemic response to the issue.” So, if you have some specific thoughts regarding a strategy to promote this concept internationally, send them to Ltaylor@ucla.edu .

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Center Featured Resource **>Improving Our Facebook Page: What Do You Suggest?**

A while back, our Center started featuring Center work (including this weekly Practitioner Community of Practice) on *Facebook*. (You can link to our facebook page from the homepage of our website – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or go directly to <https://www.facebook.com/uclacsmh> .)

Facebook provides us with another vehicle for circulating information, ideas, and resources, but our hope was that it would become an interactive site. For example, we wanted to stimulate others to share about resources and to highlight new directions for student and learning supports and to relate how mental health is being embedded in comprehensive and equitable systems for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

We would very much appreciate any suggestions about how to make our presence on *Facebook* more effective. Take a look at the site and send your suggestions to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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APPENDIX

Responses to Editorial and Article in the Every Child Journal

(1) from a colleague in Greece – "The education systems have a tendency to "follow" international trends without the necessary pre-work needed to make basic realistic adjustments to any new world trend in education so it best fits its own system. Each individual country has many characteristics which are unique. I am a school psychologist and I mainly work in the field of special educational needs. However, Greece is also facing many complexities within its school grading system as well as difficulties in the clarity of how to assess its educational

programs. It is plainly visible that the last few years the educational reforms which are presented seem unable to develop curriculum and support services that cater to the many areas of difficulties which exist within the schools. Students do not only have great needs in academics but they are experiencing many social and emotional issues that must be attended to. Yes, to assessment and "production outcomes" but schools are not enterprises they deal with living organisms that need holistic programs and services. Research and experience have noted that the main body of needs and difficulties within the world of the students and their families are very similar in most of the countries in the planet and instead of each country developing its own educational reform package, I PROPOSE that working groups be set up in order to analyze the areas of needs and develop " a paper with guidelines regarding the fundamental key points for best practices in educational and psychosocial support services schools should offer students". Such a project may also discover more humanistic approaches to economically sustainable educational trends for the future. Yes, economics is an issue in education. The whole project may be guided and funded by the United Nations Observatory on Education. I felt the need to express some points that must be looked at if we in the education field believe in what we do..... Teach the minds and the souls of tomorrows' citizens."

(2) from a colleague in Uruguay – "I consider that this issue is worldwide. I would like to tell you that here in Uruguay also schools should have more independence, however, this is being done gradually and very slowly."

(3) from a colleague at the State Dept of Ed in Iowa – "I was so pleased to see this article and that your good work is spreading even farther. I am encouraged that Learning Supports continues to have a presence in statewide school improvement plans and that we have been able to use the framework in our work with the high schools involved in the Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools grant."

(4) from a Principal – "These measures are inextricably linked to our newly minted belief in the primacy of standardized testing. It is the testing mania that creates the conditions that fosters such mind numbing and soul killing initiatives. Analysis of results find these instruments a far more accurate assessment of familial wealth than student ability or teacher efficacy. Misuse of these measures is what allows the narrowing of experience for students while providing misinformation to the public. The latter becomes the stimulus for school/teacher bashing, the pre-eminent demagoguery of privatizing "Reformers" and the black op that foments fear of the economic/political/military abyss in the hearts and minds of the public. Dewey tells us, "fear never gave a stable perspective ... to ... anyone". It is fear that is driving us all into a bottomless curricular chasm."

(5) from a youth worker – "This warms my heart! I have downloaded this to share with my Mission Possible trainees when I do the orientation at the start of our new school year in August. It speaks very well about how we work as a community team to promote whole child success. Your work continues to be a source of great benefit to our youth."

(6) from a Superintendent – "As a sitting superintendent in Michigan, I find this communication very timely. You can clearly replace the challenges of our

foreign counterpart with those being experienced by our American education system. The description of cash strapped districts and the impact on our most vulnerable children and communities is worth sparking an international plea for human rights for all impoverished families and communities. Having read this article, I would be willing to participate in activities that will advance the educational human rights internationally. I strongly believe we must have a collective voice in addressing this human equity issue. If you would like to dialogue further about my comments, please feel free to contact me."

(7) from a colleague working with at risk youth – "Looks like the beat goes on.....all over. We simply need to care for our children on a continuous basis. Thanks for sharing article."

*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 f
or 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/>**