29 years & counting

School Practitioner Listserv

A Weekly Community of Practice Network for Sharing and Interchange

Mental Health in Schools
UCLA Center
Program and Policy Analysis+

April 13, 2015

Special focus on summer & learning supports

Request from a Colleague

>*Planning for summer as part of learning supports*

Perspectives of Colleagues About Summer

Featured Set of Center Resources

>*Summer learning supports are a key transition concern*

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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**

For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

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Note: In keeping with the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*, this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed. The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Request: "One focus of our district learning support leadership team is summer learning. We have some ideas but would like to know what others are doing and what is most effective."

Center Response: With the school year ending, many teachers and support staff are just focused on making it to the finish line.

However, those concerned with the reality that summer is a major transition period must find the energy and inspiration to start planning for summer interventions to support students' transitions to a new grade or a new school and to prevent significant summer learning loss. Such planning involves school/district/community collaboration.

With specific respect to summer learning, the work of a school/district/community collaborative includes identifying:

- available resources (e.g., funds and personnel from schools, parks and recreation, libraries, community agencies, service clubs and volunteer groups, businesses, institutions of higher education, etc.)

- what already is planned and organized for local children/youth

- what's missing with respect to attracting and supporting students who need summer transition supports

- what additional interventions can be developed to fill critical gaps

Some Resources

>The National Summer Learning Association has a variety of helpful resources at http://www.summerlearning.org/ . Of particular note is the links it provides to 45 programs they designate as Excellence Award Finalists –
http://www.summerlearning.org/?page=excellence_finalists
For an example of how they describe the listed programs, see Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) Summer Learning –
http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/D7BA6F70-FA72-455D-AEFA-A0A53DEB5DB1/BELL_Summer_Program.pdf

>The Family Education website offers a variety of summer learning ideas (including online learning activities) that the collaborative group will find helpful –
http://school.familyeducation.com/summer/family-learning/36089.html

>For an example of what a school district recommends, see
http://home.lausd.net/apps/news/article/316806
http://btb.lausd.net/en-us/programs/studentauxiliaryservices/summerprograms.aspx

>For younger kids, see online summer adventure resources developed by PBS Kids Lab –
http://pbskids.org/lab/activity/pbs-kids-summer-adventure/

> For a broad overview on supports for periods of transition, see, the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on the topic – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

Appended to this special edition of the Weekly Practitioner on summer learning is an excerpt from a 2011 report entitled: *Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success*. The excerpt focuses on useful guidelines and "outside of the box" ideas.

Listserv Participants:
Who at local schools is taking the lead in formulating plans to support transitions and fill the opportunity gap related to summer learning? What collaborative arrangements are in place and what is planned? Special programs? We look forward to hearing and sharing. Ltaylor@ucla.edu

##

Perspectives of Colleagues About Summer

As we do regularly, a few years ago we outreached to colleagues across the country to learn what they knew about enhancing summer learning and providing ways to fill the opportunity gap (e.g., countering summer set backs and other problems experienced by youngster over the summer). We asked for examples of ways communities and schools have come together to create an organized and cohesive initiative designed to attract and benefit youngsters who are of the greatest concern. The document produced presented a representative sample of what we learned, highlighted some distinctive programs, and included excerpts from two major policy reports (one from the Harvard Family Research Project and one from the National Center on Time & Learning and the Education Commission of the States). http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sumlearn.pdf .

As noted above, we are asking again for the listserv participants to share about such matters and have outreached specifically to a several colleagues. Here are some first responses:

(1) "I don't have one particular summer program to recommend, but ... in my experience, I did notice that students who came to the middle school to participate in sports in August often had an easier time with the transition from elementary to middle school. Working out with the team gave them contact with upper level team members (who could provide advice), knowledge of the layout of the campus (including bathrooms, lunch rooms, etc.), and a sense of belonging and being involved in the school even before Day 1 began.

Also on the topic of summer activities, I have encouraged parents of students with disabilities to make a family visit to the new campus during 'start-up week', when teachers are preparing their rooms. Everybody gets to know everybody, where the rooms are located, and a head's up on what is going to happen in the year. I encourage students to tell all of their teachers about their particular disability and how it impacts learning. If the student can express that s/he is going to work very hard and s/he knows that the year will go well with the teachers' help, then the educators know what to expect and how to adjust. The alternative is a scenario where the teachers know nothing about the disabilities (because they don't have time to review 250 student files before school starts.) Needed supports aren't provided until after the student does poorly in the first quarter and the disability/IEP requirements/etc. are made known at a grade card conference in mid year. Having the first half of the year be a disaster can be prevented with summer visitations."

(2) "Heavy on project based learning and pertinent needs of Middle School learners (e.g., Healthy relationships and social skills, and problem solving) and for High Schools Service Learning opportunities, where High school students meet standards through integrated curriculum that builds in the same themes of healthy relationships, social skills, problem solving but actually gets involved in a school related issue or a community related issue. Elementary school needs to build in social skills and problem solving with any curriculum used."

(3) "I do have an idea and it's based on a project we completed a few years ago where multiple high schools came together during the summer to provide a 'city-wide' peer helping course. In the case you're helping with, possibly the school district could re-imagine summer school as a place where students learn about service by helping each other with their studies. That is, course of a traditional nature could be offered, but every course has student tutors and student mentors; and every student is paired with one of these students. The summer school is run in the regular way, but dozens of students are selected, trained and supervise to help (or offer help) to every student in summer school. The student helpers could even receive course credit themselves, but could also be attracted by the idea of being able to receive a "service-oriented" recognition letter of recommendation to include with their application for university (in the future), a feature that is becoming more important for admission to universities around the nation."

###

Featured Set of Center Resources

>*Summer learning supports are a key transition concern*

Our online clearinghouse Quick Find covering supports for periods of transition (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm) highlights resources from the Center and elsewhere. For example, the Quick Find provides links to

- a chapter on *Supports for Transitions* (from the book *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*)
- a *Self-study Survey on Supports for Transitions*
- an introductory document on *Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*
- practice notes on *Transition Planning for College*, *Addressing School Adjustment Problems*, *Natural Opportunities to Promotes Social-Emotional Learning and MH*, *Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade*, *Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students and Their Families*
- an information resource on *Enhancing Summer Learning*

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"... Broadening our ideas about where, when, and how learning happens helps communities tocreate richer learning pathways that have the potential to

- Include more youth development opportunities to help young people gain the skills necessary for lifelong learning and a healthy adulthood.

- Offer a seamless learning environment that can help promote school success and stem summer learning loss.

- Efficiently use resources outside of schools to help close the achievement gap.

Year-round learning consists of intentional, community-based efforts to connect school, afterschool, and summer learning. Institutions involved in these efforts are committed to working together to support positive youth outcomes, develop continuous learning pathways, and provide equitable opportunities for both students and families. This approach provides youth—often in distressed areas—with access to quality learning environments across settings, as well as across the year. We offer examples of year-round learning efforts from 14 initiatives across the K–12 system, with many focusing on middle school and high school and some continuing into college. ..."

Principles of Year-round Learning

Four key principles emerge for supporting children and youth through year-round learning:
1. Removing barriers to learning and increasing access to learning supports and enrichment opportunities
2. Being student-centered and family-centered
3. Building on organizational commitment, capacity, and flexibility
4. Engaging and being active in the local community

Removing barriers to learning and increasing access to learning supports and enrichment opportunities

- Acknowledging and working with the effects of disadvantage. The 14 initiatives in this study are trying to remedy some of the disparities affecting their participants through providing experiences and opportunities on par with what is offered in more privileged areas.
- Increasing access to services. In order to alleviate disadvantages to improve student learning, initiatives provide access to a variety of health and social services for both students and families and help families navigate the college testing and application landscape.
- Exposing youth to new learning environments. These initiatives provide youth with learning opportunities that they do not access during the regular school day, such as field trips, college visits, or activities like music or photography.

- Aligning work with school and district standards and curriculum. While several community-based programs actively work with schools to align curricula, in many cases the alignment happens through teachers and staff who either act as liaisons between schools and programs or are on staff as teachers, mentors, or coaches after school.

Being student-centered and family-centered

- Providing key supports to help students get and stay on a pathway to high school, college, and beyond. Programs that are implementing year-round learning can create pathways that lead to acceptance into competitive high schools and colleges, and the attainment of successful careers. This strategy includes building close relationships with school- or community-based role models, and providing internship opportunities and projects that build the critical thinking, life, and career skills needed to succeed.
- Encouraging and tracking participation across the year and over time to ensure youth stay involved and engaged. Being student-centered means paying attention to when and how youth participate; initiatives cannot support students if they are not attending programs.
- Involving families in learning in order to keep youth engaged and help reinforce academic and developmental messages at home. Initiatives are working to understand how to involve the participants' families in learning to create consistency between various learning environments and help families become successful learning partners.

Building on organizational commitment and capacity

- Planning and implementing for year-round learning. Initiatives that offer year-round programming have arrived at this approach over time. Some initiatives have grown out of a long conversation with the community about its needs and wishes while others expand from success of more limited programs.
- Having a champion. These initiatives often have a champion—someone who is leading the charge for reshaping a community's understanding of what the education system can be.
- Establishing common goals and outcomes, often using shared data. Conversations between afterschool and summer providers and school teachers about their respective goals can help all parties to see that they exist to support students and can help each other by working together. Using data to identify student needs and progress is one way to support these shared goals.

Engaging and being active in the local community

- Being participant-driven. Many initiatives rely on local decision-makers, such as schools and parents and students, to determine the scope of their programming, thus ensuring that they are providing services that youth and the community need and want.
- Understanding and being involved in the local community. To truly relate to the local context, people involved with the initiatives need to be part of the community fabric. For example, program staff can make intentional efforts to understand youth's interests and realities outside of the school and program hours. Initiatives can also make sure that multi-site programs are flexible enough to tailor their work to local environments.
- Leveraging existing local resources to offer comprehensive services and learning opportunities. Effective year-round learning requires many stakeholders to share responsibility for learning outcomes. This entails creating partnerships among youth organizations, school districts, parent groups, and public youth-serving agencies."

Of relevance to the renewed emphasis on the opportunity gap:

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.

For information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Also see: *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf

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Some humor sent along from the U.S. Department of Education:

"It's no secret that educators spend most of their time talking with students, colleagues and parents. As a result, many suffer from a lack of wonk fluency when talking with policymakers and politicians. Fortunately on April Fool's Day, the Al Shanker Institute published an Education Policy Glossary to help teachers and school leaders sift through the jargon. Here are some of our favorites:

- **Important:** Reflecting my opinion
- **Thoughtful:** Relatively close to my opinion, given the source
- **Interesting:** Unsuccessful in making me question prior beliefs, but not infuriating
- **Predictable:** Stupid
- **Misleading:** Really stupid
- **Reform:** My policy preferences
- **"Reform":** My opponents' policy preferences
- **"The research shows…":** "I read an online article about a conference paper that found…"
- **"We need to…":** "Other people should"

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

Note: Responses come only to our Center 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/