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& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



May 16, 2016

SPECIAL EDITION – School-Community Connections

Concerns from the Field:

>What’s the best way to integrate community resources into schools?

- Center Response
- Responses from Colleagues in the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources:

>Schools and communities working together

**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 *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.

Concern from the Field: “I have some questions about how to integrate community resources into schools in the best way.

- >What are a few key considerations when putting therapists from the community in schools? Why is not done more often? In an era when caseloads seem to be expanding and student support staff roles are questioned, do school support staff feel they are in danger of losing ground further if professionals such as therapists or social workers are in the school?
- >Obviously police officers are sometimes in school, and counselors can see them as adversaries. Are there ways that student support staff can work with law enforcement?
- >Student support staff can work with organizations offering all sorts of services, from recreation and housing to food and inexpensive re-furbished technology, Are there significant ways we would not immediately think of that student support staff can work with community services? Creative approaches?
- >Some suggest that more school-community connection can't take place until there is school reform. why?
- >Finally, what are the one or two biggest hurdles to overcome in developing effective school-community partnerships to provide necessary services to students?

We know that bringing community resources into schools is a critical and sometimes controversial topic. Because of this, the matter is a basic facet of our Center's work. And, as such, we have addressed it in articles, reports, books, guides, tools, initiatives, and our on-the-ground activity. Schools and communities must work together to advance efforts to enhance equity of opportunity by more effectively addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Given the importance of the topic, this special edition of the *School Practitioner Community of Practice* highlights:

- (1) key points the Center makes about school-community connections and collaboration,
- (2) a colleague's comments on the topic, and
- (3) relevant Center resources.

Center Response: To begin, we want to stress that, given the number of students in need, the focus on connecting community resources to schools should always be discussed as more than a strategy for bringing in a few more clinical/social services to help a few more students in a few schools. Our research and analyses suggest that the scale of need in a school district calls for discussing all school-community connections in the context expanding the policy and practice framework for school improvement in ways that enable transformation of student and learning supports.

If schools are to be effective in helping the many and not just the few, schools do need to connect with community resources. Ultimately, the aim is to develop a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. This involves building a full continuum of interventions (including promoting social-emotional development; preventing behavior, emotional, and learning problems; responding as soon after problem onset as feasible; playing a role in a system of care).

With specific respect to student and learning supports, consider the following:

- (1) The fundamental reason for providing student and learning supports is to enhance equity of opportunity for succeeding in school. Equity of opportunity is a civil right.

- (2) Student and learning supports often are presented and discussed in terms of specific types of personnel and services, but they are best conceived in terms of a systemic approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students and their families.
- (3) Currently, there is not a system. Rather, to varying degrees, there are:
- a variety of school-funded staff involved with student and learning supports (school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, Title I specialists, special educators, etc.) and
 - some resources from the community on some school campuses (school-based health center staff, clinicians and social service providers, police and probation officers, etc.) All this plays out as an ad hoc and fragmented set of interventions (programs and services; special initiatives and projects; demonstrations and pilots).
- (4) Underlying the fragmentation is a *fundamental policy problem*, namely the long-standing *marginalization of student and learning supports* in school improvement policy and practice. Thus, most efforts to directly use student and learning supports to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students are not a primary focus in school improvement planning. The irony is that, because of the marginalization, the continuing trend is to establish student and learning supports through piecemeal policies and implement them in a fragmented and sometimes redundant manner. Then, when budgets tighten, many of these supports are among the first cut. All this contributes to a counterproductive job competition among student support staff and between these school personnel and those community professionals involved with bringing services to schools.
- (5) Student and learning supports need to be understood as more than a set of *services* and certainly more than clinical services. These supports need to be broadly defined as the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school by directly addressing barriers to learning and teaching. In the classroom and school-wide, such supports encompass efforts to reduce the overemphasis on using extrinsic reinforcers and enhance an emphasis on *intrinsic motivation* to promote engagement and re-engagement. In many schools, such resources are estimated to encompass about 25% of a school's budget, especially in situations where school and community resources are operating together. These are essential resources that require innovative thinking to get more bang for the buck and to avoid cuts because of poor outcomes.
- Student and learning supports are designed to directly address interfering factors *and* to do so in a way that (re-)engages students in classroom instruction. Attention to both these matters is essential because, in general, interventions that do not ensure a student's meaningful engagement in classroom learning are insufficient in sustaining student involvement, good behavior, and effective learning at school.
- (6) The desire to provide better health and social services and to do so earlier (pre-k through the primary grades) in order to prevent so many learning, behavior, and emotional problems tends to lead policy makers to simply push for better ways to connect a few available community services to schools and enhance coordination and integration. This simplistic response to a complex problem has resulted in a host of failed initiatives over the last 50 years (beginning with the human service integration movement of the 1960s up through to today). California's Healthy Start is a prominent example (see brief history at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pr/healthystart.asp> . There are many lessons that need to be heeded from the failures, but unfortunately many "experts" and advocates/lobbyists find it inconvenient to discuss these lessons as they push their agenda (e.g., they use terms such as school-linked services, integrated services, one-stop shopping, wraparound

services, seamless service delivery, coordinated school health, co-location of services, integrated student supports, full-service schools, community schools, systems of care, and more). We have discussed this in our brief policy notes entitled: *Integrated Student Supports and Equity: What's Not Being Discussed?* (March, 2014) <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/integpolicy.pdf> Here's the abstract:

“Connecting school, home, and community resources is essential to the well being of children and youth and to enhancing equity of opportunity for them to succeed at school and beyond. With this in mind, many initiatives and policy reports have focused on addressing the widespread fragmentation of supports for families and their children. Considerable policy emphasis has centered on the notion of integrated student supports. While most of the discussion of integrated student supports is well intentioned, the examples most frequently cited have little chance of enhancing equity of opportunity for students across the country. Moreover, as practiced, serious unintended negative consequences have been observed. This set of policy notes stresses the need and directions for moving forward.”

(7) *Just* focusing on connecting a few community services to schools amounts to tinkering that can only help a few more students. The need is to transform student and learning supports in ways that can work toward creating equity of opportunity for the many. This requires major system changes that pull together such supports into a unified component, and then, over a period of several years, develop a comprehensive and equitable system by interweaving all that a school has with all that the community can bring to the table. Establishing such a system involves

- Expanding the policy framework for school improvement to fully integrate, as primary and essential, a student and learning supports component.
- Reframing student and learning support interventions to create a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports in classrooms and school-wide.
- Reworking the operational infrastructure to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.
- Enhancing approaches for systemic change in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability.

We have developed prototype frameworks for each of these concerns. These frameworks are used by trailblazers across the country. See pioneers and trailblazers and lessons learned in working toward this, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm> .

(8) A critical way for staff involved in providing student and learning supports to enhance their value to schools is to assume leadership roles in transforming the current ad hoc, fragmented, and marginalized efforts into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system. They can start by establishing a *Learning Supports Leadership Team* (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>) As they unify and start developing what’s already at the school into a system, they can identify critical gaps, set priorities, and reach out to the community to find if there are resources to fill the gaps. Poor communities can only bring limited resources to a school, and it is essential that such resources be distributed appropriately and not just to create 1-2 showcase schools.

In discussing any of this, it is essential to consider how new proposals to improve student and learning supports will connect with the new federal block grant that the state and districts will be focused on as the result of passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). For a perspective on this, see our latest policy brief entitled: “ESSA, Equity of Opportunity, and Addressing Barriers to Learning” <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essaanal.pdf> .

Response from a Colleague in the Field: We asked a well-qualified colleague to comment on the indicated questions. Here is a portion of the response:

Re: *What are a few key considerations when putting therapists from the community in schools?* “Many schools have very simple considerations such as appropriate space (comfortable and confidential office spaces with doors and phones) and access to students (some teachers resist allowing students to leave classrooms given existing student performance criterion). Other times therapists don’t want to locate in schools because they may not be able to schedule students back to back to fill their day and will ‘waste’ time while students are in some classes, at lunch or otherwise inaccessible. Then there are the challenges of shortened schedules, teacher inservices, and weather related delays and school cancellations. These are only the practical considerations. Parents and community members may also have a negative view when ‘public’ space is used for ‘private’ practice. Administrators tend to be cautious about the public relations angle of this issue.” . . .

Re: *Obviously police officers are sometimes in school, and counselors can see them as adversaries. Are there ways that student support staff can work with law enforcement?* “ABSOLUTELY! Safe school environments are critical to student performance. If students don’t feel safe, they can’t learn. School staff and law enforcement need to work together on the school safety plan to make sure it is current and based on the latest research findings. During the course of their work together, relationships will grow and potentially, they will find ways to connect more frequently, ensure student safety and well-being, and generally make the school environment more positive. (This could include anything from bullying to internet safety.) There are several websites connected to the USDE that offer great ideas for working with law enforcement. This is one that I’ve used often in presentations and workshops: <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.html>”

Re: *Are there significant ways that student support staff can work with community services? Creative approaches?* “Think unmet needs and positive youth development — at the same time. What I mean is that some people always go to “the deep end” and think of students and families that have very complex problems and severe needs. Other people go to the “universal” end of things and only want to focus on those things that everyone can use or find benefit. The simple fact is that even youth and families with complex problems can benefit from universal programs and services and should be allowed to take advantage. Unfortunately, these universal opportunities are not as available to high-risk youth since they are either busy with “high-risk” interventions, or don’t have the resources to be able to participate.” . . .

Re: *What are the one or two biggest hurdles to overcome in developing effective school-community partnerships to provide necessary services to students?* “Probably the biggest challenges . . . relate to funding. Public agencies have policies and practices that are based on funding requirements. They are often restrictive and require administrative approval to get a variance or to make a change. If policies could be made more flexible, funding would probably be the next biggest challenge. That said, there are already a lot of public and private agencies that would LOVE to have access to the student population and may have funds to do some great things for youth. Start with one meeting — a collaborative gathering where agency representatives and school staff and talk about 2 things — what they do and what they wish they could do. I’m sure there will be some common ground where relationships can be built.”

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Invitation to listserv participants: *What’s your take on all this?* Comments? Recommendations? What’s happening locally to connect school and community resources in ways that maximize the role of school/district/and community programs and personnel? ? Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources

>Schools and communities working together

In addition to the references already noted above, see the following:

- > *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* (2015) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf>
- > *Agencies Addressing Problems of Children and Youth: Pursuing a Continuum of Interventions and Working with Schools* (2014) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/agenciesschools.pdf>
- > “Want to Work With Schools? What is Involved in Successful Linkages?” by L. Taylor & H. Adelman (2006). In C. Franklin, M. B. Harris, & P. Allen-Mears (Eds.), *School social work and mental health workers training and resource manual*. New York: Oxford University Press. – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/54_want_to_work_with_schools.pdf
- > *Addressing Barriers to Student Learning: Closing Gaps in School/Community Policy and Practice* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriers/closinggaps.pdf>

For more, see the Center Quick Find:

> *School-Community Collaboration* – (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201_01.htm).

This provides links to Center developed resources as well as those developed by others. Examples of Center resources listed there:

- > *Community Outreach and Collaborative Engagement*
- > *School-Community Partnerships: A Guide*
- > *Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement*. Guidebook in series, Safe and Secure: Guides to Creating Safer Schools. H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor (2007). Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory & Hamilton Fish Institute.
- > *Understanding Community Schools as Collaboratives for System Building to Address Barriers and Promote Well-Being*
- > *Community Schools: Working Toward Institutional Transformation*
- > *Working Collaboratively: From School-Based Collaborative Teams to School-Community Connections*
- > *Schools, Families, and Community Working Together: Building an Effective Collaborative*

*For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE BECOMES!

Send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences to ltaylor@ucla.edu
We 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/>)