April 24, 2017

Request from a high school student
>*What are good supports for immigrant/refugee students?*
- • **Center Comments**
- • **Comments from a Colleague in the Field**

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources
>*Providing Learning Supports for Newcomers*

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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 *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*,* this is being sent to and forwarded by over 114,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

RECENT CRISIS AND EMERGENCY EVENTS affecting schools are continuing reminders of the need to update resources and build capacity for responding to and, as much as feasible, preventing such events. See http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisisresp.htm *for crisis response resources and* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107_01.htm *for the Center's clearinghouse Quick Find on Crisis Prevention & Response.*

Request: "I am a senior in high school and I am currently working on a project regarding immigrant children. I read an article you wrote on facilitating equity of opportunity at schools for immigrant youth in America and I was wondering if you would be willing to answer a few questions to assist me in my research.

1. Does being a refugee have a more negative effect on academic achievement than being a first year immigrant?

2. Do you believe it to be more beneficial to have separate classes specific to immigrants or would it be better to integrate with English speaking students?

3. The overall article states that special services or programs for student subgroups is not the best solution so what should schools or other federal authorities do to make sure that immigrants' needs are being met?"

Center Comments: Thanks for your interest in this matter and in our article (*Immigrant Children and Youth in the USA: Facilitating Equity of Opportunity at School* (2015) in *Education Sciences, 5,* 323–344. http://www.mdpi.com/journal/education).

The questions underscore an appreciation of the diversity among students (including diversity between and within immigrants and refugees subgroups). On the one hand, immigrant and refugee students and their families raise special concerns for schools. On the other hand, many of the concerns overlap with those of other students who require student and learning supports to enable them to succeed at school. Rather than enact so many piecemeal and fragmented policies related to specific subgroups of students and problems, it is time to recognize commonalities in the underlying dynamics causing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. From this perspective, interventions to address concerns associated with many designated subgroups can be embedded into a broad framework for enabling success at school. This does not mean ignoring or marginalizing any subgroup. To the contrary, the point is to directly address common underlying factors that interfere with students benefitting from good instruction and to do so in a way that avoids fragmentation, redundancy, and counterproductive competition for sparse resources.

The article cited above and our efforts across the country are concerned with the development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning and student supports for all students, and especially for those experiencing barriers to succeeding at school.

(1) With regard to question one, all immigrants (including those who are refuges) may have difficulties transitioning into a new culture, community, and school. Given that the fundamental teaching challenge is to "match" a student's needs, capabilities, and motivation, the intervention concern for schools is how to establish a good match. This can be especially challenging with newcomers. Fortunately, some newcomers are ready and able to integrate into mainstream classrooms and have already or can quickly master English. Others need help with academics and may be slower with English acquisition. Still others have gone through trauma and require immediate attention to their emotional needs. All newcomers need transition supports (e.g., welcoming, orientation, induction into the classroom and into peer groups, social supports). In all cases, the emphasis is on personalizing intervention to enable learning at school.

(2) With respect to the second question, again some students eagerly integrate into mainstream school academics and social life, while others prefer the company of peers who share their language and culture. Some schools use Newcomer Classes as a transition step. Placing students in segregated classrooms is always controversial. As mentioned in the cited article:

> "Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez note that: In spite of their striking diversity, English learners in secondary schools have typically been lumped into the same English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, with one teacher addressing the needs of students with dramatically varied English proficiency, reading, and writing skills. In elementary schools, a common practice is to pull out English learners across grades K-5 for thirty minutes of ESL instruction. For the remainder of the day these English learners attend regular classes in a sink-or-swim instructional situation, usually with teachers who are unprepared to teach them..."

(3) With respect to the third question, be clear we are not advocating against programs and services. Our concern is how they currently play out at schools and how to transform them into a more effective system of intervention. Here's the point as stressed in the article:

> "Facilitating equity of opportunity to succeed at school means moving away from implementing marginalized, fragmented, and piecemeal programs for specific subgroups of students. Needed is development of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of interventions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching of all students.... The intent is to fully embed concerns about immigrants/refugees, and the many other students who are not doing well at school into a system of student and learning supports designed for all students. The resulting unified approach is increasingly referred to as a learning supports component. A learning supports component encompasses classroom and school-wide approaches and is designed to enable students to get around barriers and re-engage in classroom instruction..."

The system we advocate is a classroom and schoolwide approach that focuses on ensuring personalized instruction and general supports are available for all students and personalized special assistance is offered to those students and their families as needed. We frame the approach in terms of a continuum of integrated, overlapping subsystems and six content arenas that weave together school-community-home resources to address barriers to learning and teaching. Each element is described in the cited article (and in various other documents on the Center's website).

Comments from a Colleague in the Field: We shared the questions with a colleague with expertise in this area and here is the reply:

"These are some great questions! And, of course, there's no easy answer. Here are my thoughts:

Q. #1. It depends. Recently arrived migrant youth who are not classified as refugees per se may still have traumatic experiences. And thus, it may not be an easy nor practical generalization to make on either experiences. With that being said, a general and connection experience of migrant youth (both refugees and some other migrant youth) includes potentially violent and or traumatic pasts. Age of migration and stage of development may also have implications for how these events influence youth in different ways. Regarding academic performance, there are also a multitude of factors that have been identified to influence the academic achievement of migrant and refugee youth such as family composition and separation, past educational background, socioeconomic status of the family, as well as the school-based and larger receiving immigrant context. Overall, education research shows great variation in terms of academic outcomes for immigrants. I would say that in terms of national data, it is hard for large surveys to ascertain refugee status of students. Thus, trends in the research on migrant youth may be hard to compare to studies with smaller samples of refugee youth.

Q. #2. One of the main arguments against having separate tracks for English language learners is that there are less opportunities for students to benefit from the social context and composition of their peers. However, one could argue that if the English language program in a school is very supportive and nourishing the talents of migrant students then this would be a good environment for students. However, the reality is that many ELL programs in high schools do not prepare students for college-going tracks. Another issue with ELL designations is that some students never reach a proficient level of English to be in the 'regular' English classes. In this way, such designations that were initially designed to support students end up being a mechanism for social stratification. However, one could argue that at least for some period of time, there should be an immersion class that helps students learn the basics of English (as opposed to allowing them to fall through the cracks) all the while promoting integration with other students. For recently arrived migrant youth with little educational background as well as English exposure, I would say that specialized efforts to support them need to exist-- however, the way supports work now often lead to tracking and to increased emphasis on English test scores as opposed to nourishing the overall well being and future success of students in school.

Q. #3. The reason why they may not be a solution is likely for the above reasons I mentioned above, from my perspective at least. Often times too, ELL students or recently arrived youth are placed into special education because of their difference. In that way, the differentiation may not play out so well. From my perspective, students' context prior to migration need to be carefully considered and there should be staff in schools that are experts in working with students of different migrant origins. Schools could work better to support migrant families and recognize that migrant students may need to navigate the educational system in a different way than others. Now, with the current presidency, I would think that schools need to become advocated against discrimination on their campuses."

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Invitation to listserv participants:

So now let's hear from you!

What are your views on good ways to support immigrant/refugee students?

Share lessons learned. Comments. Recommendations.

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources
>Providing Learning Supports for Newcomers

For links to a range of resources from our Center and from others related to immigrant/refugee and other newcomer students, start with our online clearinghouse Quick Finds:

>*Immigrant Students* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/immigrantkids.htm

>*Transitions...Welcoming* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

>*Barriers to Learning* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/barriers.htm

Here are some of the resources from our Center that are listed in these resources:

>*Cultural Concerns in Addressing Barriers to Learning*

>*Easing the Impact of Student Mobility: Welcoming & Social Support.*

>*Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*

>*Diversity Competence for Psychological Practitioners: Eliminating Disparities in Psychological Practices*

>*Immigrant Children and Youth: Enabling Their Success at School*

>*International Students: Addressing Barriers to Successful Transition*

>*Being an International Student in the U.S.A.: In Her Own Words Center*

>*Immigrant Youth: Some Implications for Schools*

>*Addressing the Language Barrier: English Language Learners, Bilingual Education, and Learning Supports*

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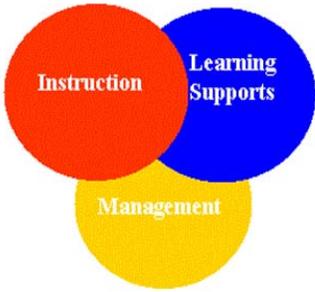
*For information about the

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

See report from the National Summit on the *Every Student Succeeds Act and Learning Supports: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching to Enhance Equity of Opportunity* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summitreport.pdf .

And note that our new book on *Transforming Student and Learning Supports* details prototypes and related resources. Available from Cognella https://titles.cognella.com/ .

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