

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)

June 14, 2017

Request from a Colleague

>How to help large numbers of struggling students?

- Comments from Colleagues in the Field
- Center Response

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources on

>Classroom learning supports

From the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

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Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous 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 100,000 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.

The following request is a good companion to the quarterly ejournal articles sent out last week (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/summer17.pdf>).

Request from a Colleague: “At my school we are already implementing the Tiers of support with an emphasis on Personalized learning. What we are finding in our area is that we have a large group of students who require intensive academic interventions but do not qualify for Special Education services. These ‘marginal learners’ are falling through the cracks. Their cognitive abilities are just as low as their academic abilities so there is no processing deficit to qualify for specialized instruction through special education. They require an enormous amount of remediation that the classroom teacher cannot give enough of due to the expectation of exposing all students to all the standards. Do you have any research on how best to teach these students? Teachers are trying very hard but cognitively these students take a very long time for learning to ‘stick’. Would like any suggestions you might have.”.

Comments from Colleagues: As usual, we reached out for a couple of comments:

>“This is a big problem. They do fall through the cracks. Some ideas that schools have tried include:

1. Utilizing special ed or ELL techniques/strategies to teach the students even though they do not qualify,
2. Offering extra support or tutorials, during a lunch time, after school, or on Saturdays. In higher grades, the student is responsible for bringing the material that they need help with and in lower grades, the teacher specifies the material,
3. Allowing re-takes on quizzes and tests so that the students can master the material,
4. Providing extra time on assignments even though it is not mandated,
5. Peer support - pairing students up with honor students or students in a higher grade level to help them at a scheduled time. Also, having a peer in the classroom help students during class,
6. Providing a copy of teacher notes or a responsible peers notes to the student,
7. Engage the parents — try helping the parents to understand the material if possible,
8. Provide clear directions,
9. Encourage student to email the teacher with specific questions,
10. Teach students organizational skills and study skills.....include parents if possible,
11. Teach the student to advocate for him/herself. So important!

Basically, the students need repetition, more time, practice, and the ability to let someone know when they need help and how to ask for it.”

>“Not having the context for this, I wonder, how do these teachers know that these students have low cognitive abilities? Has it been quantified? (I probably doubt this is the case) or are they making an assumption that they are low cognitively. We know from research that approximately 1/3 of the variance in school outcomes is accounted for through IQ level. So, 2/3 (the majority) of educational outcomes is due to other variables - teacher, environment, quality of instruction, etc. We know from research that all students can learn - even those students who have low IQs. I would say this comes down to beliefs about student learning.

That said, I would work with the school psychologist or even a Talented and Gifted teacher (or another outstanding educator who has proven success with all student abilities) to help this teacher differentiate and universally design their instruction. This is not a quick fix, but imperative from a student learning perspective. Typically, some explicit instruction is needed for students who have particular skill deficits along with the promotion of some organization and planning skills. In addition, instruction has to incorporate generalization and maintenance of these skills - so this needs to be planned within the instruction and follow up.

It seems that this person is relying on special education to ‘fix’ the problem. What we know from research is that special education rarely fixes the problem. As educators, we must have a relentless focus on finding what works for all of our students.”



Center Response: Taking time to plan ways to improve professional development for how best to support struggling learners is a good focus for over the summer and fall. It stresses concerns about student motivation and how to match instruction with and accommodate a wide range of learners. Here are some thoughts from our perspective.

>Excerpt from *Matching Students and Instruction* –

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

“...the fundamental teaching problem is matching instruction to the learner. In a classroom, that problem is compounded by the number of learners and by the number of students manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Researchers have a long history of exploring the problem of match or fit. Teachers wrestle with the problem whenever they try to meet learners where they are. The ideal is to establish an optimal instructional match with the learner’s current status in order to produce optimal outcomes.

For some time, efforts to establish an appropriate match for learning in classrooms have revolved around the term differentiated instruction – sometimes discussed as individualized instruction and increasingly referred to as personalized instruction. Individualized and personalized instruction overlap in their emphasis on addressing variations among learners in capabilities.

However, the concepts differ when it comes to addressing variations among learners with respect to motivation....

We define personalized instruction as accounting for individual differences in both capability and motivation. Furthermore, from a psychological perspective, we stress that the student’s perception determines whether the instructional fit is good or bad. Given this, instruction is personalized only if the learner perceives it as such. Thus, a basic teaching concern becomes one of eliciting a learner's perception of how well instruction matches her or his interests and abilities. This has many fundamental implications for teachers. For motivated learners, either individualized or personalized instruction can be quite effective. Often all that is needed when students are motivated is to provide a good match with their capabilities. For unmotivated learners, however, a first concern is their lack of motivation for classroom instruction and how to engage/re-engage their interest....”

>Excerpt from *Opening the Classroom Door* –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring01.pdf>

“...If all students are to have equal opportunity for success at school, teachers, administrators, and education support staff must learn (a) what should go on in a classroom to address common behavior, learning, and emotional problems and (b) how to help make this happen everyday in every class. Basic to all this is opening the classroom door.

What Should Go on in the Classroom? Curriculum content is learned as a result of transactions between the learner and environment. The essence of the teaching process is that of creating an environment that first can mobilize the learner to pursue the curriculum and then can maintain that mobilization, while effectively facilitating learning.

Mobilizing learners.

No one has control over all the important elements involved in learning. Teachers actually can affect only a relatively small segment of the physical environment and social context in which learning is to occur. Because this is so, it is essential that they begin with an appreciation of what is likely to affect a student's positive and negative motivation to learn. This means, for example, paying particular attention to the following points:

- Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness. Readiness should be understood in the contemporary sense of establishing environments that are perceived by students as caring, supportive, and stimulating places – places that offer vivid, novel, challenging, valued, and doable activities.
- Practices must not only aim at increasing motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but must also avoid decreasing motivation. (This includes not overrelying on

extrinsics to entice and reward because to do so may decrease intrinsic motivation.)

- Motivation represents both a process and an outcome concern. Programs must be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation for pursuing learning activities and for learning beyond the lesson.
- Increasing intrinsic motivation involves affecting thoughts, feelings, and decisions. In general, this calls for practices that have the potential to reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies with respect to learning. For students with learning and behavior problems, this means especially identifying and minimizing experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation.

All this expands definitions of good teaching to encompass practices that enable learning and enhance effectiveness for a wide range of students. From such a perspective, good teaching begins with a caring context for learning, includes development of a classroom infrastructure that transforms a big class into a set of smaller units, and uses school and home strategies that prevent problems and address a wide range of problems when they arise.

To these ends, all teachers, administrators, and education support staff need to be taught an array of strategies for accommodating and teaching students in ways that compensate for differences, vulnerabilities, and disabilities. Teachers need to learn how to use paid assistants, peer tutors, and volunteers to enhance social and academic support and to work in targeted ways with students who manifest problems. Strategies must be developed that enable resource and itinerant teachers, counselors, and other student support staff to work closely with teachers and students in the classroom and on regular activities....”

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Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives:

How do your local schools work with struggling students?

What help do the teachers need in order to provide more support for these students?

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources on

>Classroom learning supports

Here are some additional resources for professional development and school improvement planning related to an enhanced focus on struggling learners and how to maximize their success.

>See our online clearinghouse Quick Find on *Classroom based learning supports*–
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm>

Here are examples of some of the Center developed resources that can be accessed from there:

>>*Classroom-Based Learning Supports: Self-study Survey*

>>*Enhancing Classroom Teachers' Capacity to Successfully Engage All Students in Learning: It's the Foundation of Learning Supports*

>>*RTI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports: A Guide for Teachers and Learning Supports Staff*

>> *Personalizing Learning & Addressing Barriers to Learning* - Continuing Education

>> *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling* – Continuing Education

>> *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* – Continuing Education

Also see the following articles in the quarterly ejournal for summer, 2017 –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/summer17.pdf>

- *Escaping Old Ideas to More Effectively Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
- *Re-engaging Students in Classroom Instruction*
- *Making Motivation a Primary Focus*
- *The Challenge of Ensuring Equity of Opportunity*

AND DOWNLOAD THE CENTER'S NEW (FREE) BOOK

Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

Access this and other free resources from the Center's homepage at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

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 on *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)

*Information is online about the

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

Also online is the 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 see the new book:

> *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*

<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

