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

July 19, 2017

Topic: *Countering student-deficit biases*

Center Comments to Stimulate an Exchange

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources on

>*Promoting Resilience/Protective Factors &
> Positive School Climate*

Other Online Sources for Locating Effective Interventions

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).

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

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, 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.

Center Comments to Stimulate an Exchange
>About countering student-deficit biases

A challenge and opportunity for strengthening support for all students involves countering student-deficit biases. Countering such biases requires (1) an appreciation that most students learning, behavior, and emotional problems do not initially stem from some deficiency or defect within the student and (2) a commitment to developing strengths and well-being for all students.

With respect to mental health in schools, the need is to broaden thinking by moving from a traditional clinical model to a public health perspective. A clinical model tends to over-identify problems and too often mislabels common problems as disorders (often for funding purposes) and skews policy and practice toward an overemphasis on person-pathology. In contrast, a public health perspective stresses the need for a full continuum of interventions to (a) promote whole child development, (b) prevent problems, (c) respond quickly when problems arise, as well as (d) providing for remaining chronic problems.

There is widespread acceptance of the idea of a full continuum of interventions. Many schools have adopted such a continuum in the form of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). However, as widely adopted MTSS frames essential interventions in too limited a way. MTSS needs to be reframed into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system that (a) delineates the full *continuum of interventions as subsystems* and (b) organizes specific interventions into a refined set of *arenas of activity* that interact across the continuum. And the framework needs to emphasize the importance of weaving together school-community-home resources to develop the system. We discuss all this in relation to the Every Student Succeeds Act; see *ESSA State Consolidated Plans: Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essamtss.pdf

Below are a few excerpts from various sources stressing the importance of a public health perspective in broadening practitioners' thinking about learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

> ... a person's mental health is determined by her individual makeup, interacting with the culture she navigates, the neighborhood she lives in, the environment to which she is exposed, and the systemic challenges and injustices she may face at a population level. This kind of analysis is well understood in the world of public health. With this in mind, the fit between public health, with its emphasis on social justice, and population mental health is a good one. ..It is... important that practitioners be engaged with broader understandings of what contributes to mental health and resilience for all people.... *From: National Network of Public Health Institutes –* https://nnphi.org/framing-mental-health-affects-strategies-action-population-level/

> In a 2016 article, Atkins, Rusch, Mehta & Lakind emphasize that addressing the complex and urgent needs of the most vulnerable children and families requires a new alignment of ecological theory and public health. They reference core principles of ecological theory to emphasize "how contextual factors impact behavior and allow for the reciprocal impact individuals have on the settings they occupy, and an alignment of these principles with a public health model to ensure that services span the prevention to intervention continuum." They offer examples from ongoing work in urban schools and stress implications for "fitting interventions within settings that matter most to children's healthy development and for utilizing and strengthening available community resources." (See http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15374416.2015.1050724.)

> In 2010, Miles, Espiritu, Horen, Sebian, & Waetzig offered their public health approach to children's mental health. They emphasized that intervention should focus on helping all children optimize their mental health as well as reducing mental health problems among children for whom a problem has been identified. They stated that: "Doing so can improve children's overall health, competence, and later functioning and life satisfaction. Strengthening children in this way can also reduce the burden on an overtaxed mental health care system while simultaneously improving society's potential for academic success, economic well-being, productivity, competitiveness in the global market, ability to protect the nation's security, and quality of life."

"...The guiding vision for this effort is that communities, as well as society at large will:
- work to positively shape and strengthen children's physical, social, cultural, political, and economic environments in ways that promote optimal mental health and help prevent mental health problems.
- provide a full continuum of services and supports, from promoting mental health and preventing problems to treating problems and reclaiming mental health, which help all children manage environmental, social, and emotional challenges, thrive, and be contributing members of society."

(See https://gucchdtacenter.georgetown.edu/publications/PublicHealthApproach.pdf .)

The bottom line is that a public health perspective helps counter student-deficit biases and broadens the focus of intervention. The broadened focus doesn't ignore student deficits. Rather, it balances such concerns by emphasizing (a) the essential nature of promoting whole child development and well-being and preventing and ameliorating many problems and (b) this requires making changes in the social and physical environment in neighborhoods, homes, and schools.

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Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

What changes are needed at schools to counter student-deficit biases?

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources on

>>*Promoting Resilience/Protective Factors & Positive School Climate*

For resource links on these (and other) topics, start with the following Center Quick Finds.

>*Resilience/Protective Factors* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/resilience.html

>*School Climate* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm

Here is a sample of some of the Center resources that can be accessed through the Quick Finds or by using the URLs indicated below:

>*Protective Factors (Resiliency)* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sampler/resiliency/resilien.pdf

>*Promoting Youth Development and Addressing Barriers* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall99.pdf

>*About Resilience and Schools* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resili.pdf

>*About Positive Psychology* –
http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/positivepsychology.pdf

>*Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf

>*Schools as Caring, Learning Communities* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/caring.pdf

>*Enhancing Classroom Climate for All Students* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall11.pdf

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Other Online Sources for Locating Effective Interventions

Social Programs that Work – http://www.evidencebasedprograms.org/: Summarizes findings from well-designed randomized controlled trials that have particularly important policy implications – because they show, for example, that a social intervention has a major effect, or that a widely-used intervention has little or no effect.

Promising Practices Network – http://www.promisingpractices.net/programs_outcome.asp: Features descriptions of evaluated programs that improve outcomes for children.

Community Preventive Services – http://www.thecommunityguide.org/violence/default.htm: Contains The Community Guide's systematic reviews of the effectiveness of selected population-based interventions for reducing or preventing violence by and against children and adolescents.

National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) – http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov: This service of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides a searchable database of interventions for the prevention and treatment of mental and substance use disorders.

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If you missed the quarterly ejournal for summer 2017 or the monthly ENEWS or haven't browsed our new free book entitled *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide,* you can access them and more from the Center's homepage http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/

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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/)

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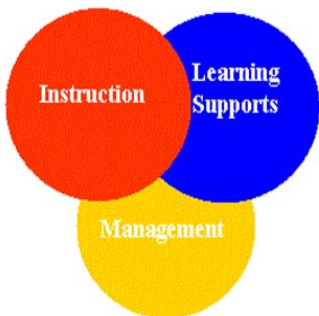
*Information is online about the

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

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