

## School Practitioner Community of Practice

(A network for sharing & exchange)

May 16, 2018

### Some Resource Updates From the Field

Links are provided to the following:

- (1) *Civil rights data collection: School climate and safety*
- (2) *Availability of services to support parent involvement*
- (3) *Opportunities for improving programs and services for children with disabilities*
- (4) *Introduction to volunteering in schools*
- (5) *Team/collaborative teaching*
- (6) *Collaborative teaching: School implementation and connections with outcomes among students with disabilities*
- (7) *Instructional aides in the classroom*

### Topical Exchange

>Using end of year conferences to plan transition to the next grade/school

#### Comments from the Field

>An overview discussion and resources for supporting for the many transitions students experience daily and over the school year

### Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

**Note:** Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other resources including

- >Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
- >Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
- >Training and job opportunities
- >Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

This resource is 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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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## Some Resource Updates From the Field:

- > *Civil rights data collection: School climate and safety*  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf>
- > *Availability of services to support parent involvement*  
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018063>
- > *Opportunities for improving programs and services for children with disabilities*  
<http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/reports/2018/opportunities-for-improving-programs-and-services-for-children-with-disabilities.aspx>
- > *Introduction to volunteering in schools*  
[https://www.ibm.com/volunteers/downloads/trainingmodules/ODC\\_Intro\\_Schools\\_0613.pdf](https://www.ibm.com/volunteers/downloads/trainingmodules/ODC_Intro_Schools_0613.pdf)
- > *Team/collaborative teaching*  
<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teamcollaborative-teaching/>
- > *Collaborative teaching: School implementation and connections with outcomes among students with disabilities*  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10852352.2014.855067>
- > *Instructional aides in the classroom*  
<http://txate.org/assets/pdf-files/forum/2016/oatman,-labby-&-maninger-2016.pdf>

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### Topical Exchange:

**We received the following from a parent:** In our PTA meetings, we are talking about the end of the school year and why it is important in transitions. We want to focus the end of year teacher-parent meetings in ways that parents can use that time to gather good information about their student from teachers who know them well -- about strengths and weaknesses, interests and even socio-emotional issues. We want to emphasize why the end of a school year is important for a transition to the next. What can parents do to help make it successful? What should they look for to spot a student who is struggling? How can parents can gather information in ways they can share it with the next teachers/school?

### Comments Received from the Field:

(1) Great questions! And now is the time to begin planning, too. I've been to quite a few teacher-parent meetings, both as a school employee and as a Parent or Foster Parent. (Plus, I've read a lot of reports on how to create an effective space for productive meetings.) Looking back on all that, I'd probably break teacher-parent meetings into two basic types:

- a) Parent is comfortable going to school and talking to educators
- b) Parent is uncomfortable going to school and talking to educators

The reasons are many, but conference planners should ready to meet the needs of all comers. Start by trying to figure out what causes comfort or discomfort in your group of parents:

- Perhaps comfortable parents have been successful in schools themselves, earned advanced degrees, and know the "educationese" lingo?
- Perhaps uncomfortable parents have not been successful in schools, and just crossing the threshold of the school building brings back all those awful memories?
- Maybe the parents and the teachers speak different languages? (This can be taken a couple of different ways.)
- Maybe the home and the school have greatly conflicting beliefs about encouraging positive behavior and punishing misbehavior?
- Comfortable parents may have easy access to transportation to school, the ability to

get off work to attend school meetings, and childcare for the non-school siblings, while uncomfortable parents may have none of these.

Consider the kinds and the amounts of information to be exchanged:

- Children have contact with many adults in the school setting, so some parents may want to choose their conference partners.
- Is the amount of time set aside for the conference reasonable given the amount of information to be exchanged? (I've been to many so-called "two-way discussions" where the teacher barely had enough time to distribute required papers and then, as the ending bell rang, said "any questions?")
- Is it reasonable to have a regular education conference and a legally required special education conference within the same block of time as a regular teacher conference? (Probably not.)
- Realize that teachers may want to distribute mainly academic progress information and parents may want to hear mainly social/emotional information (Is my child happy? Have friends? Feel successful? Safe from bullies? Participating?) Therefore, there must be time in the meeting for both kinds of information.

Make the setting as pleasant as possible:

- Help with transportation to/from the school, as needed
- School social workers to help employers understand the importance of parent attendance
- Greeters right up front, handing out tickets for a prize drawing (start gathering donations now!)
- Clear signage so people know where to go (maybe student guides, too? But not just the student council because other students need ways to give valuable assistance, too.)
- Refreshments (or maybe even a pot-luck dinner so participants can enjoy a meal together first?)
- Child-care for non-school siblings
- Translation services for people speaking different languages, including sign language
- Take-one tables with information about related service agencies and upcoming events
- Have a separate, private area ready for upset people to go to recover

Make the meeting as pleasant as possible:

- Start with the good news, slowly transition to areas of concern, consider what are the next steps, end with a focus on the positives (aka "sandwich method")
- If many conferences happen simultaneously in a large area, be sure the tables have enough space between them to ensure confidentiality
- Perhaps have a DJ in the gym where waiting siblings can go to dance, or access to basketball hoops, etc.
- Prepare give away refrigerator magnets with important phone numbers & other contact info
- Don't give the teachers too much to do! If the teachers don't have time to catch their breath from one meeting to the next, they may get flustered and start sharing information about the wrong student! (It's happened to myself and my wife and believe me, it's VERY hard for a teacher to have any credibility after this.)
- Teachers should have something specific to say, even if the student is doing well in all areas. (It does little good to say there is nothing to say.)

In short, the school is inviting guests to visit. To be a good host, try to anticipate what your guests would need, and then delight them with something extra that they didn't even realize yet that they needed! You want parents to go away feeling, "Wow! That

was a great use of my time, and now I know what I need to do next! Can't wait for the next one!"

Students who adjust to change a bit more slowly may need additional transition time, particularly when moving from elementary to middle, or middle to high school. I've had some success taking these students to their new school during the "start-up week" (when teachers are preparing their rooms but school has yet to open officially.) We walk the campus to locate the office, the cafeteria, the gym, the bathrooms, the counseling center, etc. We make friends with the School Secretary and Principal, if possible. We get a copy of the school handbook, school supplies list, and code of conduct. If lockers are involved, we find the locker and practice the combination. (Parents can provide general lock practice at home over the summer month, especially when we provide a lock.)

We run the student's schedule, and say "hi" to the new teachers. Previously, we've rehearsed the students advocating for themselves so they know what to say. Usually, it's something like: <eye contact> <handshake> "I want you to know that reading is really hard for me. My teachers at X school have been helping, but I'm still a little slow and I hate to read aloud to the whole class. My teachers last year would give me my paragraph to read the day before so I could practice at home, and that helped a lot. I want to do really well in your class and with your help I know I can. <shy smile>"

Change the learning roadblock and the accommodation as needed. If there are a lot of accommodations, say for a student in special education, the parents should schedule additional conferences with each teacher before school starts. Most teachers will not have time to review all the folders before school (in a large high school, that could be over 100 files) and you do not want to start the year with staff ignorant about essential accommodations and special needs! EpiPens, for example.

If the student needs additional practice, we can do the tour and schedule run again. When the student pretty much knows it all, we try to have the parents come in and have the student lead the tour. Say "hi" to as many teachers as possible. This sort of transition planning can be incorporated into the Individual Education Plan, too.

Note: students involved in sports or band will often gain early access to campus for practice sessions. This also helps students transition to the new year. From the first day, these students know where is everything and already have friends to sit with during lunch.

There are a number of printable idea sheets available online:

>General conferencing –

<https://childmind.org/article/teacher-conferences-a-guide-for-parents/>

>Student-led Conferences –

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/john-depasquale/student-led-conferences/>

- (2) Parents "should" have received information at multiple times throughout the year. Sources include report cards, progress notes, notice of unsatisfactory progress, daily information on the class website and specific communication regarding a particular student. So, I'm thinking the request is for more than this. The writer of the paragraph seems to be on the right track. Developing specific questions might be useful. For instance: "strengths and weaknesses"

Which instructional style seems to support my child's learning?

Are there any materials that my child seemed to thrive with?

Was there any specific material that required additional teaching?

Which strategies did you use and a) what worked; b) What did not work?

If you were to write one goal for my child's

-academics -social -emotional -work habits What would they be?

Goal development is a bridge that connects the current teacher's knowledge of a student with next year's teacher starting point. The use of data driven goal development and progress monitoring of those goals over the year is a way to personalize the parent-teacher communication bond."

- (3) There are three main reasons why end-of-the-year parent-teacher conferences are critically important.

First, it's an important time to discuss the progress the child has made throughout the course of the year. How did that progress compare with what the parent(s) and teacher(s) anticipated? Are there particular areas where there was more, or less, than expected growth, in academic as well as social and other areas? If there had been challenges earlier in the year, how did the interventions we used impact those challenges? Parents and teachers can ask each other questions about how their own relationship has worked and how it could have been improved. If the student has an IEP, it's also important to ask questions related to IEP implementation and services and strategies to be included in next year's IEP.

Second, it's the ideal time to talk about what the parent(s) and student can expect next year. How did this year's curriculum, instruction, activities, etc. prepare the student for the coming year? Are there questions the parent(s) have about how next year's curriculum will build on this year's? Does the teacher have thoughts on areas where the parent(s) might expect their student to be more or less successful? If the student has an IEP, it's also important to talk about additional challenges the student might anticipate and how to get ready for them, especially if it is a period of transition (from preschool to school age, from elementary to middle, or from middle to high school).

Finally, it's a great time to talk about what the student might do in the summer to address any potential challenges or get more ready for the coming year. Are there academic areas the parent might want to explore with their child? Are there recommended activities that would help the student be more successful? Are there social opportunities that will help the student feel more comfortable and confident for the new school year? If the student has an IEP, it will be important to discuss whether Extended School Year services are needed so that this can be discussed at the IEP meeting.

There is a nice list of 20 questions to ask during a Parent Teacher conference (at any time during the year) at <https://www.care.com/c/stories/3264/20-questions-to-ask-during-a-parent-teacher-c/>

- (4) I tried to think about this question from the perspective of the "old" teacher, the "new" teacher and the parent. Ultimately, I decided that the best perspective to take is that of the student. While students may not always be able to articulate their concerns about transitioning to a new classroom or school, I believe they all want:

- **To feel safe.** What does the new teacher need to know about a student so that s/he can feel safe in my new classroom/school? Is the student shy? Does the student have a physical attribute that causes them to feel insecure? Has the student been bullied about this insecurity in the past? Is the student likely to act out as a result of an insecurity? Starting fresh in a new classroom or school can help an insecure student escape past problems, but a new teacher should be aware so that small issues are not allowed to develop into larger problems.
- **To feel a part of the group.** In other words, will the other students (and the teacher) like me? What should the teacher know about the student's social skills? Past relationships? Ease of making friends and working in groups to complete tasks? Is the student a leader or a follower? Have there been behavioral concerns in the past? If so, how were they addressed and did it help?
- **To feel successful.** What should the teacher know about strengths and weaknesses? Is the student able to work independently, follow through on assignments and ask for help in appropriate ways? What strengths and interests that could be highlighted to showcase a student's abilities or used to bolster areas of academic need? Are there academic areas of concern that should be addressed immediately? If so, what has already been tried to support the student, what worked and what didn't work? The idea is to build on the successful interventions of other teachers so that the student is not allowed to fail and can continue making progress.

Finally, a student may never share details of life outside of school with their teacher, especially

if their home/family life is challenging. However, it is important for a teacher to know about circumstances that impact classroom performance and/or behavior so they can accommodate and support a student appropriately. For example, a teacher doesn't need to have details of a struggling marriage or messy divorce, but should know why a student may not complete homework assignments or be tired in class due to disruptions at home/outside of school. If a teacher understands the student's situation and puts supports into place, the student is no longer "punished" for failures that are often out of her/his control and is allowed to learn the material in safe, supportive environment.

While I'm not sure I have the "right" questions listed under these three categories, I think the concepts of feeling safe, being part of a group and being successful are important to successful transitions for any student of any age.

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### **AN OVERVIEW DISCUSSION AND RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING THE MANY TRANSITIONS STUDENTS EXPERIENCE DAILY AND OVER THE SCHOOL YEAR**

Transitions are critical times; addressing transitions present opportunities to prevent problems and enable learning. Starting school, changing schools, moving to the next grade level, encountering hassles before and after school, during lunch — students (and their families) are confronted with a variety of transitions every day and throughout each year of schooling. Many schools pay too little attention to providing *supports for transitions*. When this is the case, opportunities are missed for promoting healthy development, addressing barriers to learning, and preventing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Transition stressors can be barriers to school adjustment and thus learning and teaching; they also can exacerbate other factors that interfere with learning at school

***With specific respect to end of the year:*** As students end a school year, new interventions needs arise. Minimally, there is a need to anticipate transitions and assist students and their families in the move to the next teacher(s) and setting. Ideally, efforts should be made to facilitate positive expectations and the beginnings of a strong working relationship

Transitions arise related to each new step in formal education and in moving to and from special programs and to post school living and work. For those making such transitions, well-designed support during the period of transition can make a great difference in their lives. From the first grade-to-grade transition to the move to middle school and high school and every other move to a new school, all call for well-conceived programs designed to support transitions. This means programs that prepare students and their families for the transitions and follow-up to ensure the transition has been a good one.

Programs are needed that

- provide closure related to what the student is leaving behind
- enhance articulation between the old and the new
- welcome newcomers and ensure they have the type of social support that facilitates positive acceptance and adjustment in the new setting
- assess transition success
- implement timely corrective interventions when transitions are not successful

Where transition supports to and from elementary, middle, and high school fit with respect to the full range of supports for transitions. Students are regularly confronted with a variety of transitions — changing schools, changing grades, and encountering a range of other minor and major transitory demands. Such transitions are ever present and usually are not a customary focus of institutionalized efforts to support students.

(This topic is a focus of the Center's resource "Ideas for Enhancing Support at your Schools this Month"; accessible from the Center's homepage at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> – click on Month 9 --May.)

***General supports for transitions:*** Every transition can exacerbate problems or be used as a natural opportunity to promote positive learning and attitudes and reduce alienation. Schools need to build their capacity to address transitions proactively and in the process to be guided

by their goals for enhancing personal and social functioning.

A comprehensive focus on transitions requires school-wide and classroom-based systems and programs designed to (a) enhance successful transitions, (b) prevent transition problems, and (c) use transition periods to reduce alienation and increase positive attitudes toward school and learning.

Supports for Transitions encompass:

- Welcoming & social support programs for newcomers (e.g., welcoming signs, materials, and initial receptions; peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers)
- Daily transition programs for (e.g., before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool)
- Articulation and counseling programs (e.g., grade to grade, new classrooms, new teachers; elementary to middle school; middle to high school; in and out of special education programs)
- Summer or intersession programs (e.g., catch-up, recreation, and enrichment programs)
- School-to-career/higher education/post school living and work (e.g., counseling, pathway, and mentor programs)
- Broad involvement of stakeholders in planning for transitions (e.g., students, staff, home, police, faith groups, recreation, business, higher education)
- Capacity building to enhance transition programs and activities

Anticipated overall outcomes are reduced alienation and enhanced motivation and increased involvement in school and learning activities. Over time, articulation programs can play a major role in reducing school avoidance and dropouts, as well as enhancing the number who make successful transitions to higher education and post school living and work. It is also likely that a caring school climate can play a significant role in reducing student transiency.

See our chapter and the self-study survey on “Supports for Transitions” in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System\**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch5trans.pdf>

For a range of other relevant resources (e.g., Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support; Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade; Addressing Barriers to Successful Middle School Transition; Enhancing Summer Learning; Transitions to and from Elementary, Middle, and High School), see the following Center Quick Finds:

- >Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcoming – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm)
- >Transitions from Adolescence – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition\\_from\\_adolescence.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition_from_adolescence.htm)
- >Transition to College -- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transitiontocollege.htm>

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### **Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives**

**Now it's your turn!**

***What can you share about preparing families to support transitions to the next grade/school?***

Send your responses to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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**\*For information about the  
National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports  
go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>**

**Just published:**

**>Transforming Student and Learning Supports:  
Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System –  
[https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student -and learning -supports -  
9781516512782.html](https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html)**

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***If you missed the following, you can access them and more from the Center's homepage –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>***

**>The quarterly ejournal for Spring 2018.**

**Contents:**

- >Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools**
- >Improving School Climate Starts with Understanding that it's an Emerging Quality**
- >Hot Topics & Hot Issues**

**>The May *ENEWS*' discussion of: *End-of-the-Year Celebrations at All Levels:  
Hope, Congratulations, Safe Exuberance***

**>The new free book: *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom & Schoolwide***

**>Also online is the recent report: *ESSA and Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching:  
Is there Movement toward Transforming Student/Learning Supports?*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/2018%20report.pdf>**

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

**For new sign-ups – email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto: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/> )**