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& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



January 18, 2016

Do school's need to address poverty in order to improve learning?

- **Comments from a colleague**
- **Center Response**
- **Colleague's Follow-up**
- **Invitation to listserv participants**

Featured set of center resources:

>Addressing poverty: Schools and communities working together

Note: The *Promise Neighborhoods* initiative is emphasized in the ESEA reauthorization

**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.

Do school's need to address poverty in order to improve learning?

Comments from a Colleague: “One of the most important debates we're having in education today is between those who think poverty must be addressed in order to improve learning and those who think we can improve learning even if our efforts to fix poverty continue to fall short...(as they have.) I am in the latter category, which is not to say that I think fixing poverty is a waste of time and money. I support every effort to address poverty, but the poverty problem has been used as an excuse to avoid accountability in education and you can have accountability even in schools that serve low-income kids. In fact, it is more important than ever. Many reform opponents insist we just direct our energy to fixing poverty even as they demand resources for schools. We have to do both -- but even if we fall short in addressing the poverty battle, we have to improve education. We may never be able to get single moms of low-income kids to be better mothers and read to their kids and make sure they do their homework and don't watch TV, but we should at least be able to make sure that for the six hours they are in school it is as productive as possible and that means we have to help schools and teachers get better and hold them accountable.”

Center response: Given that schools have an important role to play in reducing poverty, that role must involve more than the fragmented and marginalized approaches generally advocated for schools.

Dealing with multiple, interrelated concerns, such as poverty, child development, education, violence, crime, safety, housing, and employment requires multiple and interrelated solutions. Just adding a few additional services and programs to schools is not a solution. Indeed, what is generally advocated is just a recipe for perpetuating the current marginalized and fragmented set of efforts that have been demonstrated to have only a limited impact. Interrelated solutions require wide based collaboration. In particular, schools, homes, and communities need to work together strategically in pursuing shared goals related to the general well-being of the young and society. A particular focus is needed on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

That is, for schools to play a potent role in reducing poverty, they first need to rework how they address student and school factors contributing to so many students not doing well. Then, after identifying critical gaps in the student and learning support system, they can outreach to a wide range of community and home stakeholders to weave in available external sources of economic and social capital.

For all this to happen requires fundamental systemic changes. Such changes will not occur on a large scale without expanding school improvement policy and practices from a two-to a three-component framework and strategic development of a sophisticated operational infrastructure for school, home, and community collaboration (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf> and <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>)

The emphasis in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* on greater subgroup accountability, adding “nonacademic” accountability indicators, and how resources are distributed provides opportunities for states and districts to move in this direction. Of particular relevance to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students, the reauthorization replaces what has been described as a maze of programs with a “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant” that provides states and districts with flexibility in how students and families are assisted.

It is time to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching, re-engage disconnected students, and outreach to disaffected parents. And it is past time to stop

pretending that teachers can do it alone. As the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* stresses: **Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.***

For more, see <http://educationpost.org/how-will-every-student-succeed/>

Colleague's follow-up: "It seems to me that what you are saying is that -- in most places today -- every day classroom teaching and learning is distinct from efforts to address out-of-school factors like poverty -- but that ESSA allows states and districts to address them together.

I don't argue with the basic idea of holistically addressing problems but I don't really understand how it will happen. Does this mean that the teacher is somehow partnering with the school psychologist or social worker in ways that they aren't today -- and why aren't they doing that today and how does the new law facilitate that kind of collaboration?

Is it because -- with block grants -- school districts can take money that was spent on some little program they didn't really need and now they can spend it on programs they do really need?

And is it because the new accountability system will now reflect non-academic indicators? What are examples of that? School climate? What does that mean? How do you measure that? Student surveys?

And what's stopping schools from addressing problems holistically today?

Invitation to listserv participants: Where do you stand on this? What have you found to be the best ways to address the impact of poverty on students in your school/district/state? Your voice needs to be heard. Send comments to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured set of center resources

>Addressing poverty: Schools and communities working together

See the Center's hot topic discussion

>*What is a school's role in addressing the impact of poverty?*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic/hottopic\(poverty\).htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic/hottopic(poverty).htm)

Also see the Quick Find on

>*Children and Poverty*

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1102_01.htm

For a guide to engaging school, family, and community collaboration, see

>*Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement*

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/44_guide_7_fostering_school_family_and_community_involvement.pdf

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Note: The *Promise Neighborhoods* initiative is emphasized in the ESEA reauthorization

Do you know about the *Promise Neighborhoods*' Programs? See <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>

Excerpt: “The vision of the program is that all children and youth growing up in Promise Neighborhoods have access to great schools and strong systems of family and community support that will prepare them to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career. The purpose of Promise Neighborhoods is to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities, and to transform those communities by—

- (1) Identifying and increasing the capacity of eligible entities that are focused on achieving results for children and youth throughout an entire neighborhood;
- (2) Building a complete continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center;
- (3) Integrating programs and breaking down agency “silos” so that solutions are implemented effectively and efficiently across agencies;
- (4) Developing the local infrastructure of systems and resources needed to sustain and scale up proven, effective solutions across the broader region beyond the initial neighborhood; and
- (5) Learning about the overall impact of the Promise Neighborhoods program and about the relationship between particular strategies in Promise Neighborhoods and student outcomes, including through a rigorous evaluation of the program.”

For more information on the Promise Neighborhoods program and to obtain access to tools and resources, see

- >*Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium* – <http://promiseneighborhoods.org/>
- >*Promise Neighborhoods Institute* – <http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org/>
- >*Resources* – <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/resources.html>

*For information about the *2015 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/>)