

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
(1/6/21)

Best wishes for the new year!!! (It's just gotta be better than 2020)

Contents

- > **A Superintendent's search for ways to address the strain on staff in her district**
- > **Why are students asked to pay for equipment?**
- > **About the nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education**
- > **Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

(Scroll down to read about the above and for hotlinks to resources)

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

This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

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

Helping a Colleague

>A superintendent's search for ways to address the strain on staff in her district

"Hello, as an administrator of a district, I see the strain of this year on our staff. The swing of emotions ranges from in tears to angry yelling to stagnant and cannot make a decision. I have tried through the holidays to provide a little pick me up for our staff. I knew that the holidays are a struggle anyway and then throw the difficult year of pivot with the changes of COVID and new learning is almost too much for our staff.

I would like to provide a pick me up for our staff to support them. Do you know of any grants that I could write that would provide about \$10,000. I would like to have different things like a yoga class on-site, walking club, bible study, craft club, and meditation group. With these groups, I would like to provide a professional instructor for them and then give them each a little something for their club. For example, I would like to provide a nice water bottle for the walking club and a yoga mat for the yoga group, and so forth. The last pick me up, I provided was a gift certificate to spend in any store they wanted in town, breakfast a few days, lunch other days, flowers for the school, and Christmas cookies to enjoy. A handwritten note was provided for the 320 employees with a pick-me-up card telling them how awesome each was. It did help with their outlook. I think that after the holiday break the groups for them to gather would be the next great step.

I am so worried about my staff and how I can support them through this most difficult year. I am reaching out and looking for anything that I can do that would be that support for them. If you can help point me in any direction that would be fantastic so I can support my staff and provide a little pick me up that may sustain them for a few months.

In appreciation for your work and understanding the needs of mental health for staff."

Center Comments: As discussed in the December issue of the Center's ENEWS, there are many facets to addressing staff mental health. See *Minimizing Stress Reactions and Preventing Student & Staff "Burnout"* (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dec2020.pdf>).

For this issue of the Community of Practice *Practitioner*, we shared the above request for ideas with a few colleagues to elicit some ideas about finding funds for such staff support activity. The

respondents were impressed with the superintendent's passion to help her staff, and they recognized that a lot depends on where the district is located. (*"It is especially tough for very small, rural districts to find extra funds."*)

Here is what was shared:

(1) Go Online to the site – *Go fund me*

https://www.gofundme.com/start/?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Fundraising_US_EN_EM&utm_content=Fund_For_Me_rebuild_q2_2018&utm_term=fund%20for%20me_e_c_ad&msclkid=56d27effd70f1605e4e5211281279de1

(2) Break up the request into smaller chunks and ask groups/organizations/businesses etc. to support a specific piece of the effort.

(3) Share the need (and the passion to do something) with all who might contribute, such as
(a) local organizations such as an optimist club, Lions or Elk Clubs, the American Legion, sportsman's club

"Find someone that belongs to the organization and talk to that person about representing the need to that group."

(b) power people in the community

(c) local businesses

"A key to getting them interested in supporting this effort is to explain what's in it for them. ... think of ways to publicize contributions. I know that Walmart will typically donate \$500 to such causes and may even be convinced to donate yoga mats or water bottles."

(d) *"If the school is in a county with a gaming license, check out options for funding from the casino(s)." In Iowa, "each county (except for those with gaming licenses) is allotted a certain amount of 'gambling proceeds' that they can grant to local projects."* So this is another type of office to contact.

(4) Contact private foundations in your state

(5) Contact people not typically thought of as potential donors

"In our state, banks are 'required' to donate a certain amount to the local community. I've also learned that people who run funeral homes typically like to be thought of as "family friendly" and will contribute if asked. I think they may be especially sensitive to the stresses of teachers and students since they've had to completely redo their business model over the past year."

(6) In Iowa, there is a county office "Endow Iowa" that could be contacted for ideas about other sources for funding (<http://www.iowacommunityfoundations.org/endow-iowa.aspx>)

(7) If all else fails, consider a loan from a local bank or credit union; then raise funds via parents and community stakeholders to repay the loan.

Listserv Participants: How are local districts/schools addressing the mental health needs of staff and preventing "burn-out"?

Send comments to Ltaylor@ucla.edu



A question from a college student:

>Why are students asked to pay for equipment?

Given the inequities in access to online instruction that have affected so many students across the world during the pandemic, the following, while dated, does underscore a poignant ongoing reality.

"After reading about Title 1 and programs meant to help economically disadvantaged students, ... I wanted to share a brief experience I had in high school, and I have a mixture-gripe/complaint question to follow it up.

When I was in high school (I'm older than most undergraduate students so this was nearly 20 years ago), I failed my math class at my public school because I could not afford the \$100 graphing calculator. I'm sure I'm not the only student who has had this happen to them. These students, like myself, basically have to stop taking math at that point.

I am curious why public schools can have such a costly requirement... I just don't understand how we have policies in place to help low income students but there's also hardware requirements in place that fundamentally disadvantage low income students."

Center Comments: We responded to her as follow:

As you are aware, the inequities among schools remains a serious problem. School resources in poor areas are always much less than those in well-to-do neighborhoods.

Currently, the most dramatic example, is that there are many homes not able to connect with online instruction.

Here's what LAUSD's website says:

"We are working with all schools to identify any students/households in need of devices and connectivity and identifying the most appropriate solutions. Contact your child's school to let them know your students is in need of a device. If you cannot reach the school, then contact the school's local district office to let them know." <https://achieve.lausd.net/itd>

(It is unclear how a household that isn't connected would even have access to this information.)

The following from the LAUSD website explores the matter of charging fees as follows:

"TO CHARGE OR NOT TO CHARGE-THAT IS THE QUESTION

Article IX, Section 5 of the California Constitution mandates a system of "free schools." Therefore, pupils enrolled in public schools are not required to pay any fees for their education, unless a charge is specifically authorized by law for a particular program or activity. This constitutional requirement is implemented through Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 350, which states: "A pupil enrolled in a school shall not be required to pay any fee, deposit, or other charge not specifically authorized by law. "SCHOOL SUPPLIES In the past year, there have been several complaints filed with the Educational Equity Compliance Office regarding educators requiring instructional materials from their students. Educators are prohibited from requiring course materials on their syllabi....

The California Department of Education (CDE) has prepared additional guidance on pupil fee issues, accessible here. If you have any questions regarding student fees in this area, please contact the Educational Equity Compliance Office ..."

<https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA0100043/Centricity/domain/171/operations/pd%20materials/Pupil%20Fee%20Quick%20Guide.pdf>

Clearly, there is much to do to address barriers to learning and teaching in ways that enhance equity of opportunity for all student to succeed at schools and beyond. Our Center keeps working on the problem, but the economic imbalance that permeates our society continues to be as much of a plague as COVID-19.

(For our Center's initiative for transforming schools, see

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html> .)

Here's Some Responses to the Student from the Field:

- (1) "A very good question and perhaps long overdue. As far as I know, there is no 'standard' across all states that public schools charge or not charge for school supplies, programs and/or extracurricular activities (e.g., uniforms or other clothing, instruments, security deposits, insurance or optional supplies). I was able to determine that some states have similar statues but don't know that they all do. If I were concerned about this issue in my own district, I would first review school board association website in my own state and possibly contact someone there to ask about the their guidance on this issue. They will know the law. (These associations typically provide standardized policies and practices for schools based on state law.) While this won't really change anything, it will educate this person on the issue. Then, I would go to the superintendent of my local district with that information and question the school's policies regarding fees. If I didn't get satisfaction at that point, I would bring the issue to the local Board of Education.

A free, public education is foundational to our democracy. Once again, this pandemic has shown a light on inequities and short-comings of our educational system. Blame isn't the issue, but making improvements and fixing what is broken is important."

- (2) "I should start with an explanation of how Title 1 works. The basic idea is simple. There should be a program to provide some money for schools to spend to help economically disadvantaged students. Then it gets complicated. How does one define "economically disadvantaged"? How do you decide how much money should go to those students? What kinds of activities would help those students? The USA is a big nation with very different economic and geographic situations-how do you adjust for those?

It all starts with a complex formula, with all kinds of variables, that determines who qualifies for assistance. School districts then determine how many formula-eligible students they have, and make decisions about what might be helpful to them. There are four different kinds of grants under which Title 1 will provide some funding to schools.

Exactly what schools can do with their Title I funds varies enormously. Several schools I worked at used the money to buy remedial reading teachers. Another one had a pre-K class. Sometimes part of an instructional assistant's work would be paid for with Title 1 funds. Some bought instructional materials and equipment.

Title I also had some requirements about what schools had do in their projects. Generally, there was a mandatory 'parent involvement' component, and schools were also required to keep data on student progress and write a report on the effectiveness of the Title 1 program at the end of the year.

I found this web page helpful:

<https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/a-look-at-how-title-i-funds-are-allocated-in-the-u-s>

It notes the average amount of money per formula-eligible child in the USA in 2015 was \$1,227. Because of the complexities in the formula, the amount ranged from \$984 in Idaho to \$2,590 in Vermont. So, you can imagine that even very wonderful Title 1 programs would not be able to take care of everything that economically disadvantaged students need.

Your situation is a good example of how difficult it is to reach everybody who needs assistance. If your school was in a rather rich neighborhood, then their Title I funds would be relatively small, and maybe no equipment at all was asked for in the grant-writing process. Or maybe the grant writer wrongly assumed that economically disadvantaged students would not be taking a rigorous math class that required an expensive calculator and so didn't even think to put it in the grant.

Part of the reason behind the required 'parent involvement' component is that it provides a way to engage parents in the planning, review, and improvement of Title 1 programs. If there are 'blind spots' or discriminatory practices in the Title 1 program, parents would be likely be the first people to spot them. By going to the Title 1 planning meetings, parents can point out these problem areas and push for needed changes. There are lots of reasons why attending these meetings could be impossible for parents, and standing up to school personnel can be very intimidating, but the door is open-however slightly-for parents to advocate for improvement.

Explaining ‘how it works’ is no excuse. I'm hoping that knowing a bit more about the mechanics helps you to understand how these things come to pass. People do get overlooked. Sometimes the help is not enough. Sometimes the instructional method doesn't work at all. Sometimes everything is wonderful. We have human beings making decisions, writing grants, buying instructional materials, implementing programs, and people do make mistakes. My personal wish is that schools would spend more time listening to the people they are trying to serve BEFORE they plan the programs and write the grants to get some money.

One bright spot: Portland (Oregon) public schools sent students home when COVID-19 forced lockdowns. They tried to keep in touch via Zoom meetings. But they also loaned out laptop computers and built vans with wifi hotspots in them. The vans would go to the neighborhoods and houseless camps where the students had no wifi! It's not 100% perfect, but I was pleased to see them planning ahead.

Thanks for raising valuable issues about school organization, funding, and equity! There is a lot still to be done in this area! ...”

- (3) “In high school I was able to use a TI-84 emulator on my computer or on my smartphone. It gave me practice for things like calculus and statistics. The emulator basically was a carbon copy of the 100 dollar graphing calculators that we were told to buy. That being said, I know that most teachers probably only allow an actual device during tests. In those situations, Ideally teachers would have spare calculators, or would allow students to borrow devices from each other. As for distance learning, I think using emulators isn't a bad idea. I used this when I was in high school and it worked great for me.”

And the student who asked the question responded:

“Thank you so much for your thorough response. There are really so many barriers to providing or improving equity in education. It's a bit staggering the scope and complexity of the problem. Thanks for providing additional insight. ...

I am grateful to be a small part of shedding light on a bigger issue. This topic has been an interesting study for me and all the information I've found and that which you've kindly shared with me has made me aware of just how complex and problematic the issue is.

I can expand a bit on the story, in case that is helpful

This was in Washington State. Throughout my schooling I was a free lunch recipient. I was a gifted student, especially in math. I attended Quest, a stand-alone school for gifted children within the same district but this program expired after sixth grade.

My math teacher was aware I could not afford the calculator. I did not have a stable place to live, would often sleep at my work, and sometimes had to sell my free lunch tickets for a dollar just to get to my job. I failed that math class and sort of gave up after that. I didn't think college was a possibility for me anyway.

Whether that extra bit is of any interest, I'm unsure. Thought I'd expand on it a bit just in case. Also, I'll be graduating summa cum laude and fully intend to get a PhD, so, I'm happy to say it all worked out in the end. Still very good at math, especially now that I afford that blasted calculator

I think a big part of the problem, and at least this was true for me, is that a lot of the parents of low-income children are not involved in their children's education or possibly their lives. I also think children and adolescents from low-income families are perhaps less skilled than others at advocating for themselves and more apt to just accept how things are. That's a difficult thing to address or resolve.

I hope to spend a lot more time formally studying early adversity and access to/equity in education. Thank you for opening my eyes to so much of this, I really appreciate it.”

#####

Is this topic being discussed in your locale?

How has the need for computers and online access impacted your students.
Do they have to pay to keep connected to online learning?

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

#####

Nominee for U. S. Department of Education, Secretary of Education

From: Education secretary nominee says he is "as American as apple pie and rice and beans"
https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-biden-transition-news-12-23-20/h_ce97fd27c580b9449d321140126a18a0

President-elect Joe Biden is formally introducing Connecticut Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona as his nominee for education secretary...

More about the nominee: Cardona was appointed Connecticut's commissioner of education by Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont in August 2019. He came to the role with two decades of experience as a public school educator from the city of Meriden, after beginning his career as an elementary school teacher and later serving for 10 years as a school principal. In 2013, Cardona became the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning.

Miguel Cardona spoke about his background after President-elect Joe Biden introduced him as education secretary nominee, using his story as a call to action for equality in the US education system.

"I, being bilingual and bicultural, am as American as apple pie and rice and beans," Cardona said....

"For me, education was the great equalizer. But for too many students, your ZIP code and your skin color remain the best predictor of the opportunities you'll have in your lifetime."

He compared education in America to a "wilted rose" in Spanish, saying it is "neglected, in need of care."

"We must be the master gardeners who cultivate it, who work every day to preserve its beauty and its purpose," he said. "Though we are beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel, we also know that this crisis is ongoing, that we will carry its impacts for years to come, and that the problems and inequities that have plagued our educational system since long before Covid will still be with us even after the virus is gone," he added.

Cardona said America needs to take this situation to "forge opportunity out of crisis" and "build something better than we've ever had before."

Listserve participants: *What would you ask/tell Dr. Cardona about the role the federal Department of Education should now play in supporting the schools in your state/community/district?*

Send your comments for sharing to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Grants for teachers <https://teach.com/what/teachers-change-lives/grants-for-teachers/>

Grants for educators <https://www.neafoundation.org/for-educators/>

K-12 education funders <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/grants-for-k-12-education>

Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID-19 Context and Beyond

<https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/restructuring-california-schools-address-barriers-learning-and-teaching-covid-19>

COVID's Intensifying Impact on Kids' Mental Health Prompts Experts to Create a Policy Guide for Parents, Policymakers

<https://wellbeingtrust.org/news/covids-intensifying-impact-on-kids-mental-health-prompts-experts-to-create-a-policy-guide-for-parents-policymakers/?s=03>

COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub <https://jack.org/covid>

Info About Kids – a resource for evidence-based information on children and families
www.infoaboutkids.org

Forum on Children's Well-being – from the National Academies
<http://sites.nationalacademies.org/dbasse/ccab/index.htm>

Relationships with Caring Adults and Social and Emotional Strengths Are Related to High School Academic Achievement

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/relationships-with-caring-adults-social-emotional-strengths-related-high-school-academic-achievement>

COVID-19 Racism and Mental Health in Chinese American Families

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/5/e2020021816_!!ODYTt7Uqo6LDP14!3WAe2sg7wMb37qZ3KQqSTyWZxLJLitkXtr8RfiHXEEI2_jjlSe5Q8DPaCh0mtIDb0VVbSezD3Gy\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/5/e2020021816_!!ODYTt7Uqo6LDP14!3WAe2sg7wMb37qZ3KQqSTyWZxLJLitkXtr8RfiHXEEI2_jjlSe5Q8DPaCh0mtIDb0VVbSezD3Gy$)

Children's Mental Health and the Life Course Model: Proceedings Virtual Workshop Series

https://www.nap.edu/catalog/25941/childrens-mental-health-and-the-life-course-model-a-virtual-workshop-series?utm_source=NASEM+News+and+Publications&utm_campaign=92661b0251-Final_Book_2020_12_18_25941&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_96101de015-92661b0251-111508970&goal=0_96101de015-92661b0251-111508970&mc_cid=92661b0251&mc_eid=c6078b349c

A Few Upcoming Webinars

1/12 – Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

1/14 – Facilitate Courageous Conversations in Anti-racist Organizations

1/21 – Basic Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act

1/27 – McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights

2/10 – Mental Health Awareness

2/10 – Transforming Your Leadership And Those You Lead

2/16 – Build a Positive School Culture via a Student Leadership Team

2/16 – Stakeholder and Family Engagement

2/23 – Beyond Equity - the Lens Through Which We Lead

2/23 – The Resiliency Journey

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.

<https://www.edutopia.org/how-learning-happens>

Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth

<https://preventioninstitute.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4bf5a36bd9f72789255d49a&id=17f472fea9&e=b6757fd9d7>

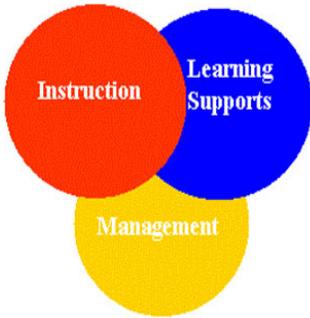
For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

School staff deserve a lot of credit.



Well, if we paid them more, they wouldn't need it!



For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

Here's some free books from the Center that stress ways to move forward:

- > *Improving School Improvement*
- > *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
- > *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

Access all three at – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Invitation to Listserv Participants:

Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.

Send to Ltaylor@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/>)