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**School Practitioner  
Listserv**

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



**For School Related Hurricane Aftermath  
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<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisisresp.htm>  
WE WILL HAVE MORE ON THIS NEXT WEEK.**

**October 10, 2016**

**Special Edition: *Schools and Communities Working Together to Better  
Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching***

**Inquiry from the Field**

**>What are the barriers to and strategies for  
school-community collaboration to enhance  
equity of opportunity?**

- **Center Comments**
- **Comments from Colleagues in the Field**

**Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives**

**Featured Set of Center Resources for**

**>Promoting school-community collaboration**

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**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](mailto: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 is being sent to and forwarded by over 114,000 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.**

## Inquiry from the Field:

### >What are the barriers to and strategies for school-community collaboration to enhance equity of opportunity?

**Center Comments:** Interest in school-community collaboration is growing at an exponential rate. This reflects the fact that schools and the communities in which they reside are dealing with multiple, interrelated concerns – poverty, child development, literacy, mental and physical health, violence, crime, safety, substance abuse, housing, employment. For schools to be more effective, equitable, and caring places, they must take steps to engage and collaborate with a wide range of community stakeholders. A potent approach requires multifaceted and collaborative efforts. The goal is to maximize mutual benefits, including addressing factors interfering with and enhancing youth and community development.

#### **Barriers & Strategies**

From our perspective:

- >The barriers to effective and comprehensive school-community collaboration include
- (1) *marginalization* of this as a focus in school improvement policy and practice,
  - (2) *ad hoc and piecemeal approaches* that increase intervention fragmentation,
  - (3) *contrasting missions*, perspectives, practices, and accountabilities of schools and many community agencies (e.g., schools have a primary mandate and are accountable for the *academic progress* of *all* students and are usually eager to have additional support that fits these demands; agencies such as those concerned with mental illness primarily focus on a small subset of a school's students and emphasize supports and outcomes for a relatively few students),
  - (4) *counterproductive competition* between school and community professionals (e.g., when schools co-locate community professionals on campus, school and district-based student support staff such as psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, dropout/graduation support staff, special educators, etc. often find themselves working with the same students and families as community providers with little shared planning or ongoing communication and also having reduced access to sparse resources -- budget, space, time),
  - (5) *too little attention to developing an effective operational infrastructure* for the essential systemic changes and the daily work involved.
- >A *strategic effort* to changing all this involves
- embedding the focus into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching
  - ensuring the system is a primary component of school improvement
  - establishing an effective operational infrastructure for a school-community collaborative and ensuring an agenda that emphasizes outreach to a broad range of community resources, weaving resources together, and filling critical system gaps.

#### **Some Background**

With roots in the 1960's human service integration movement, the last few decades have seen many initiatives to connect community services to schools to better meet the needs of children and their families. These have generated terms such as school-linked services, integrated services, one-stop shopping, wraparound services, seamless service delivery, coordinated school health, co-location of services, integrated student supports, full-service schools, community schools, systems of care, and more. A temporary connection often is established in the wake of a crisis or to address a particular problem. At some schools, regular efforts are made to co-locate a few service agencies on a school campus.

For community agencies, connection with schools is seen as providing better access to families and their children, promoting greater engagement, and enhancing opportunities for having an impact on hard-to-reach clients. Moreover, the hope is that integrated interventions will increase the pool of resources for student and learning supports and address disparities. For school policy makers, connecting school-home-community is seen as an essential facet of promoting the well-being of children and youth and enhancing equity of opportunity for them to succeed at school and beyond.

Policy and related funding initiatives mostly support efforts to link community social services and physical and mental health services to schools. After school programs also involve community providers. In addition, some schools recruit volunteers and solicit other forms of resource contributions, as well as encouraging positive votes for school-related ballot measures. The downside of such well-meaning efforts is that they tend to narrow thinking about the role and functions of school-community collaboration and about transforming how schools provide student and learning supports. As a result, school and community collaboration has a highly limited focus in most schools.

This is unfortunate given the wide range of community entities whose missions overlap that of schools and who would be invaluable resources. These include county and municipal agencies and bodies, mutual support/self-help groups, service clubs and philanthropic organizations, community based organizations, youth groups, faith institutions, legal assistance groups, ethnic associations, artists and cultural institutions, businesses/corporations/unions, media, family members, local residents, senior citizens groups, and more. School-community collaboratives, especially in neighborhoods where poverty reigns, need to connect with the full range of existing resources.

### ***Build an Effective Operational Infrastructure for a School-Community Collaborative***

While limited and often informal linkages are relatively simple to make, establishing a comprehensive, long-term formal collaborative infrastructure is not easy. Development of an effective *operational infrastructure* requires formal and institutionalized systemic changes to enable sharing of a wide spectrum of responsibilities and resources and to ensure well defined working relationships. For a prototype operational infrastructure, see

>*Community Outreach and Collaborative Engagement* –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch7comm.pdf>

### ***Keep a Comprehensive Vision***

In the long-run, school-community connections must be driven by a comprehensive vision about the shared role schools, communities, and families can play in strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods. Such a vision encompasses safe schools and neighborhoods; whole child development, health, and learning; personal, family, and economic well-being; and more. And this vision needs to be fully embedded into school improvement policy and practices.

**C**omments from Colleagues in the Field: We reached out to a few colleagues for their thoughts on the matter. Here are first responses. Note that most focus on connecting schools to community *services*. (We will share more responses in the next community of practice listserv.)

- (1) “This is a very good question. From my experience, the barriers to working with community groups/services are:
  - Services are provided that are program driven rather than focused on addressing a particular barrier (challenge) the school has identified. For example, Group A has a program with a curriculum that is scripted and available to deliver. However, school needs something to support their challenge of addressing lack of motivation.
  - Schools have so many programs brought to their doorstep, with the attached responsibility of liaisons, planning, etc., that they cannot manage and support the programs.
  - Community agencies often have competing funding streams and are resistant to working together.

The Learning Supports framework focuses both the school and community on the root causes of under performance and aligns their efforts. The solutions we found in using the Learning Supports framework was to: use the three components to identify ... why we were not performing at the level we wanted, root causes ( i.e., poverty, attendance, lack of motivation), and where we needed to focus our learning supports for that school year. Then, we met with our community and presented our challenges and asked them: What can your agency/group do to help us address this challenge? The groups got more focused, aligned, and we reduced redundant services. In our district, we did this most notably with teen pregnancy prevention and early literacy. However, each year there may be an added focus that is determined by the data sources.”

- (2) “This is a big one. The best strategy in my opinion is having a helping professional, like a social worker, on campuses to create partnerships in the community .... [This colleague noted various barriers such as program fit, trust, time and space limitations, coordination, documentation, referral problems, confidentiality.]
- (3) “While there’s never one single answer to these types of questions ... in my experience there were typically two hurdles to overcome in working with community services. The first was resources. Usually community services run on soft money that is targeted to do specific things. Often, they don’t have money to do “other” things that the might benefit students in ways that schools believe are most beneficial. For example, a human service may have money to work with high-risk families but many of the families the school would like to serve do not qualify for these services.

The simple (long-term) answer involves data since community agencies need to justify their activities to funders. With data, the hope is that agencies can find funding to provide the most appropriate services to students. And I use the word “appropriate” since school staff may not be as well-versed as community agencies in the types of supports that could be most beneficial. For example, school staff may not view substance abuse prevention programming in upper elementary to be a need, when it could have long-term outcomes that impact the problems there are experiencing. Schools need to educate themselves about the quality and types of supports that will get them the biggest bang for their buck (or the agency’s buck). Complex issues never have simple answers.

A second hurdle that I’ve encountered is parent, school staff and community perception. Think about the community service that may not have access to youth and families and is allocated space in the school building. Relocating services to the school doesn’t work. They need to be integrated into a comprehensive system of supports. This also doesn’t work if there are no data to support this need. ‘Convenience’ is not enough to garner support from the community and allay the fears of parents who thing the school is nosing into their family business. School staff may also view this service as an ‘inconvenience’ for them and their students. Once again, having data to show the need for services and for these services to be located on school grounds is needed. ... I would first build a relationship with those groups and organizations that hold the greatest potential for partnership (whether or not they have the services that are needed). I would work with those groups to review data (from the school as well as the agencies) to identify existing needs as well as existing services and programs already available. From there, the group could figure out what else needs to be done, always collecting data to ensure their efforts are making a difference. We wrote a few ‘data workbooks’ that were based on three guiding questions: What? (defining the problem with data) So what? (what will happen if we don’t intervene and prioritizing needs) And Now what? (what already exists to address the problem and what more is needed). ... Maybe these questions could help guide a school/community discussion aimed at building partnerships.”

- (4) “I think in order to be effective for schools to work with community services you have to have someone who has dedicated time to talk with the community service agencies. Building relationship with community service agencies takes time. It also requires that the dedicated school person understands the needs of the school district in order to best

work with the community service agency. Some community service agencies are very specific about how they want to assist schools and what they would like to do. Sometime what the community service agency wants to do may not mesh well with the school district or might cause problems, so having a dedicated person to help mitigate this issue is always helpful. We have a number of churches that would like to support our school based programs but sometime the support looks like it could potentially have a religious undertone and this may cause some populations to feel offended. When working with community service groups it is important to be clear that services can not be conditional. ... Having an open dialogue about realistic expectations on both sides is also important.

I think it is also important for schools to be open to different community service agencies. Sometimes schools can be their own worst barrier because they might have had problems in the past with a particular community service agency and due to concerns may isolate rather than collaborate. Schools can sometimes hesitate to work with community service agencies for fear that they have to create legal documents to collaborate. I think it is important to create a general MOU about expectations and have this MOU approved through a Board so that all parties - the school and the community agency - can be seen as have a legitimate partnership. I do think it is important that if any programs are designed or services are provided that a designated school person is always involved especially if volunteers from the community service agency are coming in contact with families or students of the school.”

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### Invitation to listserv participants:

*What are your views on school-community collaboration?*

*What is needed to expand such collaboration beyond a limited focus on connecting schools with community services?*

**Share lessons learned. Comments. Recommendations.  
And let us know what's happening locally?**

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

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## Featured Set of Center Resources for

### >Promoting school-community collaboration

Several Center online clearinghouse Quick Finds are relevant. See, for example:

- >Collaboration – School, Community, Interagency; community schools – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201_01.htm)
- >Business support for schools – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/businesssupport.htm>
- >Community outreach – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/commoutreach.htm>
- >Mapping schools and community resources – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2312\\_06.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2312_06.htm)

Here are some examples of Center discussions related to school-community collaboration:

- >Community Outreach and Collaborative Engagement – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch7comm.pdf>
- >Working Collaboratively: From School-Based Teams to School-Community Connections – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/worktogether/worktogether.pdf>

- > *Schools, Families, and Community Working Together: Building an Effective Collaborative* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/buildingeffectivecollab.pdf>
- > *School-Community Partnerships: A Guide* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/guides/schoolcomm.pdf>
- > *Agencies Addressing Problems of Children and Youth: Pursuing a Continuum of Interventions and Working with Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/agenciesschools.pdf>

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\*For information about the

***National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports,***

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

And note that our new book detailing the prototypes and related resources is now in press.

For a preview, contact [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu) .

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***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](mailto: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/> )