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& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

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



October 17, 2016

Request from a Colleague

>Need strategies for increasing parent involvement in schools

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources for

>Supporting those in crisis and sharing lessons learned

FYI -- a few more comments from the field . . .

>on barriers and strategies to school community collaboration

**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 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.

Rquest from a Colleague: “I am trying to find strategies for increasing parental involvement in our school district, and my Assistant Superintendent wants me to do a staff development on this topic. I have been researching all of the findings re: obstacles to parent involvement. But I was wondering if you would have any suggestions for this professional development? I have been reading a lot about motivational interviewing of parents in schools, and was thinking of trying to incorporate this.”

Center Response: *Home involvement and engagement*: such a difficult and long-standing concern! The Center has many resources on the topic that can inform staff development (see below*). But first here are some points to consider.

- (1) One staff development session will do little to address the concern, especially if the focus is just on reiterating the message that parent/family involvement is important. An informative presentation can be a good kick off as long as it is followed by a series of personalized staff development activities (e.g., follow-up readings and group discussions leading up to widely shared formal recommendations for systemic school changes that are part of the strategic plan for school improvement).
- (2) To provide a perspective on possibilities that can facilitate discussion, use the Center’s self-study survey on *Home involvement, engagement, and re-engagement in schooling* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/homeinvolvementsurvey.pdf> and have the staff work in small groups to discuss what they have and what they think should be added.
- (3) Be certain that the staff development series includes discussion and recommendations that address school specific barriers to family/home engagement.
- (4) Be certain that school decision makers are involved in the staff development and that the discussions and recommendations clarify the type of leadership and ongoing capacity building that are necessary for making significant progress.
- (5) At some point, include a sample of parents in the discussion. Be sure to specifically invite and facilitate the participation of some who have not been involved at school. (This is an opportunity to try to address some of the barriers to coming to school, such as families with weekday work and child care responsibilities, but who might be able to attend a Saturday session.)
- (6) If there is interest in embedding home involvement and engagement as part of a move to transform student and learning supports, have the staff read the chapter in *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System* on “Home involvement, engagement, and re-engagement in schooling” – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch6home.pdf>.
- (7) After decisions are made about the recommendations, provide a report to the staff and families about the decisions.

***On Enhancing Family/Home Engagement**

For a range of resources from our Center and for links to many others, go to the Center’s online clearinghouse Quick Find on *Parent/Home Involvement in schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm>

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Invitation to listserv participants:

What are your views on enhancing family/home engagement?

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

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Set of Center Resources for >Supporting those in crisis and sharing lessons learned

Hurricane Matthew and the related floods are harsh reminders that crisis, emergency, disaster, catastrophe, tragedy, and trauma are words heard too frequently at schools. Almost every school has had a major crisis; every school is likely to have one. Besides natural disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, flooding, and earthquakes, students also experience violence and death related to shootings, the suicide of friends, gang activity, hostage-taking, and rape. Some students react with severe emotional responses -- fear, grief, post traumatic stress syndrome. Moreover, such experiences and other events that threaten their sense of worth and well-being can produce the type of intense personal turmoil that leads students to think about hurting themselves or others.

When specific locales are experiencing a crisis, the Center reaches out to colleagues in the impacted area to provide links to resources for getting through and for recovery. Click on the Crisis icon on our homepage for quick access to a variety of aids, resources and materials to use for crisis response and prevention. For example, of special relevance this past week were *Resources Related to Hurricane Response and its Aftermath* – see

- Resources for Responding to and Coping with Hurricane Related Events (a list of resources for students, mental health practitioners and school staff dealing with the hurricane's aftermath)
- Hurricane Resources from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Sesame Street Hurricane Toolkit
- Previous Information from the Center Related to the Response to Hurricane Katrina

Examples of Other Resources

From our Center:

- Crisis Response Checklist
- Psychological First Aid
- Major Facets of Crisis Response
- Responding to a Crisis: A Few General Principles
- The School's Role in Addressing Psychological Reactions to Loss
- Planning and Action for the MH Needs of Students and School Staff after a Major Disaster
- Hot Lines

From FEMA:

- School Emergency Plan
- Psychological First Aid for Teachers and Schools
- School and Workplace
- Community Preparedness Toolkit
- Student Evacuation (part of Community Preparedness Webinar Series)

From National Association of School Psychologists (NASP):

- Crisis Resources

Here's a message from a colleague who was preparing for last week's hurricane:

“As a native Floridian who grew up in the panhandle, I can't think of a year of my life there where we didn't have a hurricane. It can be devastating, regardless of how strong of a storm it appears to be on the news.

I also had the blessing of providing crisis response services post-hurricane to several communities in Florida... There is nothing that can truly prepare anyone for such a loss in your own community. As an outsider, I was dumbfounded at times to see such devastation; but when it was my hometown, I couldn't escape it. That is when the emotional toil can truly impact a person. I would hear it so often in children during those responses. The breakdown of their emotional and physical safety has such a profound impact on them. It's why we put so much emphasis on restoring those two areas of safety ASAP to prevent outcomes such as PTSD.

However, what I find frustrating is that survival of something like this can lead some to believe that because it has happened before and they made it out okay, that they don't have to take steps for safety and preparedness. I can imagine you all would see the same thing regarding an intense earthquake on your side of the county. It makes it more challenging for those in the emergency operations center to effectively utilize and activate resources. It also creates fear and worry for those family and friends who are not in the path that spend days on edge about their loved ones. I'm hoping that this is not what we see today and over the course of the weekend. However, as the first real hurricane since the age of social media, I imagine that the emotional responses and unnecessary traumatization will occur for many.”

FYI – a few more comments from the field . . .

>on barriers and strategies related to school community collaboration

In the 10/10/16 practitioner we featured the request:

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

We reached out to a few colleagues for their thoughts on the matter and shared first responses. And we noted that most of the responses focused on connecting schools to community *services*.

Here are a few other responses that provide additional thoughts:

- (1) “I started making a list of barriers [to school-community collaboration] I had encountered in over thirty years of service in public education. I was shocked at the size of that list! Rather than list them all here, I found the following summary [from Strom and Eyerman, 2008] that seemed to cover the topic well:
‘In our own research, we found four general barriers to interagency coordination:
 - **Communication.** Agencies tend to develop their own jargon based on their areas of focus and internal workings. The subsequent lack of a common language often impedes cross-agency communication.
 - **Leadership.** Coordinated planning and response require an ongoing commitment from agency leaders. Response can fail when a leader of a critical partner agency is unwilling to commit qualified staff and resources because he or she is unconvinced of the benefits to the agency.
 - **Cultural differences.** Although public safety and health officials share the common goal of saving lives, each agency develops its own cultural standards of behavior that reflect the educational and social backgrounds of its staff, organizational hierarchy, leadership style and core mission.”

- Legal and structural differences. Each agency has a unique internal hierarchy, different processes for working through the chain of command, legal limitations, and varying geographical and topical jurisdictions. These differences can discourage, delay or prohibit joint planning initiatives.’ [<http://www.nij.gov/journals/260/pages/interagency-coordination.aspx>]

These four points have great face validity with me. Over the years, I’ve served on various committees intended to foster better school/community agency functioning. Looking back with these barriers in mind, I now realize we weren’t so much creating a new way of working together as we were all trying to win over the others to our own way of doing business. Also, we were ignorant of the need for stake-holder buy-in. In all this planning, there was little to no input or participation from the intended recipients of the services. It was all about the agencies pushing their ‘benefits’ out into the neighborhood without first checking to see if the neighborhood actually needed/wanted them.... Why not do strategic planning by heavily involving the clients from the very start? Instead of assuming families need parent training to reduce child abuse, listening might reveal that families first need warm socks, and transportation to the food bank and the free medical clinic, which are hours away from each other by bus. Simply reducing the time it took could greatly relieve stress, provide more time to relax together as a family, and thus preventing exhaustion-based blow-ups.

In summary, I think the primary barriers to schools working with other community services agencies are the somewhat inflexible cultures and associated work habits of the institutions involved. I suspect these behaviors function as a protective barrier against perceived threats (lawsuits, excessive scope of service, sense of making order out of chaos, etc.) and thus are resistant to change over the short term. There are several well-known strategies that attempt to improve collaboration, but they tend to rely on a logical problem-solving process that can be done without the benefit of input and participation from the clients who are the intended recipients of the services....”

- (2) “... I think including the community in the decision making process would be a positive step. I have seen some strategies that seem productive: Community Collaborative meets quarterly. A presentation is done, for instance a Family Foster Agency provides description, how to access. Presents information about 'The Many Faces of Trauma' (for example). This is often achieved using media presentation or other, 'My story' type of production told from the point of view of the person in need. Representatives from district, social services, probation, public and private agencies of all type come together in a common dialogue. Contact information is exchanged. Relationships are formed.”
- (3) “Having a means to gain entry into the system due to the absence of a central contact was a common issue we faced until we started utilizing Learning Supports. From the school perspective, you don't want every community agency in your school if it is not addressing an identified need. Restructuring according to the framework was the best thing we did because it brought our community partners to the table and allowed us to share our priorities with them and look for opportunities to collaborate. Learning Support has been of course the best strategy for us. If a district cannot implement learning supports, I would still recommend establishing a ‘go to’ point-of-contact for community agencies to go through. In addition, mapping resources has been helpful. Not sure how that would look independent of using the Learning Supports framework.”
- (4) "... I believe that utilizing school psychologists who have both the education and expertise as liaisons in these partnerships would significantly reduce management barriers and increase productive collaboration."
- (5) "The barrier to schools working with community services is fundamentally the availability of community services. Simply stated, rural districts versus urban districts, small districts versus large districts, high-taxed based districts versus districts receiving little to no funding, high

SES districts versus low SES districts, etc. Many are not aware of the lack of community services many districts across the nation face. In addition, many struggle what are particular community services and how they align with the root causes of student barriers. ...

Community service organizations are not obligated to work with schools directly as they typically are designed to work with students one-to-one or with families in general through their own parameters. In addition, many times community service partners do not understand how to work with learning organizations as they typically see themselves as a separate service outside of the educational realm. Granted, metaphorically they may poke their heads in now and again but their parameters are set in their own practices and responsibilities.

It is the obligation of the adults in the learning organization or system is to first be proactive and reach out to advocate unification. The second is to provide meaningful alignment and purpose with their community service providers as it relates to the necessities within the learning organization. Last, is to foster the relations and continually and creatively grow service partnerships to meet the needs of the students and learning organization as a whole. Of course, each one of those overarching steps is a manuscript in itself but in the essence of time and space they serve their informational purpose."

- (6) "Our district has done a significant amount of work to leverage a large variety of community partners into our schools. We have an office of community and family partnerships that usually works with organizations and volunteers who want to share their time and services with our schools. Our Student Services department also oversees some social-emotional partnerships and our school-based mental health program.

First, I will speak to my personal experiences in this area when I served schools as a school psychologist and later a school counselor. Many organizations have a very specific focus that may not always align with schools. Until we developed processes where organizations and families met to develop a school support partnership contract, outside partners were providing to us what they wanted to provide or thought we needed, rather than looking to see if their services met the needs of our schools. In addition, some wanted more back from the school than was reasonable to give (a day of advertising, selling a product for them, a commitment to get other schools to do XYZ if we worked with them for free, etc).

While I had numerous partnerships, it was very time consuming to add the management of their needs and programs into a day of support the multitude of student needs in an understaffed school. Another challenge I experienced as a school-based staff member is that some schools received all of the offers for volunteers and others received none. Many districts aren't able to develop an office that helps to distribute and match schools with organizations based on needs and services, thereby creating challenges. I'm thankful that we have that support here in our district, but it wasn't always the case.

One that we faced here in our offices with mental health agencies (as well as other organizations that focus on 'helping' kids for a fee) is that many want to practice or provide services to our schools, but few want to go through the approved channels. Districts cannot accept the liability of private practitioners practicing in their buildings without approval or, in our district, a call for proposal/vetting process and then a very tightly written memorandum of understanding. Another common challenge is that many want to provide services that we already provide as a school district (psych education, short-term counseling/therapy, etc.), but few were asking what gaps we need filling. Duplication of services is simply not helping to address the many needs of our students. Thankfully, we've had the blessing of being able to develop processes to manage and vet many of these concerns. Once you do have the partnership, ensuring quality and consistency of providers, data collection and progress monitoring, and the follow through with agreements requires a large amount of district oversight."

*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 .

***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/>)