

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
(10/7/20)

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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>

For discussion and interchange:

- >Strategies to link students to support during distance learning

We received this request from a colleague who supervises in a district behavioral health unit.
(See program description at the end of the request)

"This is probably the hardest time leading in my career. The work is coming slowly, but lots of uncertainty and being in middle leadership means both sides are making all kinds of decisions that impact all of us. Families don't want our services now and 6 months in and my staff have too much time on their hands. Lots of resistance to meet with kids and families. But some are making connections.

The best lessons I'm learning come from keeping in touch with employees and to up the connecting skills when you telework or are working at a distance with kids. I think you may be able to help. In the initial days, students were responsive. We continue to be able to reach students who are internalizers, but the externalizers are not interested in meeting virtually. We are also having attendance problems. The kids who were always having attendance problems, still are and now they are more resistant to check in. We even hand out computers with built in wifi access and still students are not showing up.

Here is another challenge we are hearing about..."feedback from both parents and teachers that there is a lot of pressure to hit academics and standards very hard right now - so much so that families are feeling quite pressured and kids are feeling upset, overwhelmed, anxious, and not successful." Our superintendent has pushed aim high rather than low during this time.

We are doing things like joining virtual classrooms, available for students any time. We do spend more time with parents now, which is good, but connecting with students is much more of a challenge. Lots of creative ways of connecting, but connection is not always happening with kids who are not 'connectors'

I would love to hear feedback from your network."

Program description: "We provide a continuum of behavioral health supports for students experiencing social, emotional, and/or behavioral difficulties that impair their ability to function in school. The program professionals include behavioral health specialists, clinical and school psychologists, and social workers. These professionals provide school-wide prevention, early intervention, and intensive services, which can be delivered via consultations and direct services."

The Center sent the request to a range of colleagues and here is some of what they suggested:

(1) **From a district superintendent:** “It is a challenging time for people in Behavioral Health right now. What I would suggest is for their staff to make connections other than virtual. Phone calls, handwritten notes, and socially distanced home visits are ways to support children and families now.

The push for academics can be a barrier to the social-emotional supports that are needed. I suggest that they offer to their school and district leadership the brain-based research on how to address trauma in order to promote learning.

Students and families are experiencing trauma in different ways and degrees. So, to improve academics, prioritize the social-emotional supports that improve learning outcomes. ...”

(2) **From a state department of education learning supports consultant:** “I am breaking it down to see if there might be ideas that haven't yet been tried.

> I am curious as to why families don't want the services. If staff have time on their hands, I would encourage this administrator to ask staff to phone families to discuss why families don't want the services. A list of questions could be used to learn what could be more helpful, greatest concerns, biggest challenges, etc. That information could go a long way to help the administrator and staff adjust their support to meet student and family needs more effectively.

> I don't understand what "checking in" involves but it sounds as if it might be up to students to initiate contact. I should be the other way around....and perhaps already is. Students need to develop a trusting relationship with an adult at school. It must be based on more than academics, and that takes time. This might even involve a face-to-face meeting or regular phone calls to get to know one another. Knowing that someone will be with the student walking them through tough times can go a long way to re-engaging them. But again, no silver bullets or quick fixes here.

> Regarding “Our superintendent has pushed aim high rather than low during this time.” I understand the intention for aiming high. If a superintendent doesn't stress high standards, what does that say about his/her leadership and the school district as a whole? By virtue of the fact that the superintendent is an experienced educator, I must assume that s/he understands how difficult it can be to engage students with behavioral problems. I would also hope that this leader understands the need for the staff to have flexibility in achieving standards with these particular students. Data could be helpful in demonstrating the need for this freedom and flexibility. For example, it sounds like more students were learning online six months ago than now. What is the difference in numbers? Can achievement or assignment completion then and now be measured? I believe that data, paired with a request to experiment with different learning strategies, could persuade him/her to allow staff to try different approaches.

Kids and families (and staff) don't need more pressure. I think standards must be well-defined and communicated to relieve some of this stress. "High" is a relative term. If standards and academic expectations are not well-articulated from the top, they need to come from those that work with this student population and understand their needs. Similar to an IEP, a plan needs to be developed to meet the needs of these students (not necessarily as individuals, but as a group). Staff need to monitor progress and adjust instruction as appropriate. This may mean grouping and regrouping students or pairing them with different staff members. Whatever it takes to show growth is what should be done.

Research tells us that long-term stressors impact student learning and can even affect brain development. Perhaps this lack of connection is a symptom of long-term stress. Bottom line - root causes need to be identified and dealt with before learning can take place.

Communication must be regular and consistent - even if it's only one-way at first.

Communication with students and families to develop appropriate expectations (that include student input) can show families that staff are not giving up and they truly care. I don't think staff can communicate enough and believe it will help re-engage students and their families.”

- (3) **From a school psychologist:** “This is a challenging need in many arenas. I relate to the concerns. The superintendent and Board of Trustees in our district have put a focus on wellness for our staff and students. The teachers are teaching but without the pressure that it would appear is happening in other areas. The Social Emotional Learning Provider Staff are working in part through virtual breakout rooms within the individual virtual classrooms. Individual instruction and whole class check ins are available as well. However, the SELS are general education supports and I think the question arise from the more intensive behavioral support services.

Make it as fun as possible. Focus on participation primarily and build in the goal work once the students are checking in. I think this population is some of the hardest to reach. I know of a few and the parents do not support the student's virtual access, think loud music playing, shouts and swearing in the background as students are working on-line. Attendance is required in our district and the chronically absent will be referred to School Attendance Review Board.

Perhaps a shift of service model will promote the externalizers to participate. Include more movement such as... yoga or dance. There is a growing body of movement related activities, webinars and strategies for pupil involvement from a variety of sources.... I have found that I must re-purpose myself to perform activities that were not typical for me prior to the pandemic. I am virtual only at present. I have participated in a number of webinars, presentations and technique seminars to learn various assessment options. I am re-working my forms and process. I am working to re-work access to services, pre-referral requirements and the referral process. I must admit though, I am meeting resistance as well.

I know that there are many teachers who would love to have access to behavior consult support either directly or maybe presentations at a virtual staff meeting or the like. While this may not be the intended purpose, the staff might focus on promoting participation on the one hand and sharing their expertise...”

- (4) **From a school social worker:** “Part of what I have talked with my colleagues about is modifying expectations for ourselves and modifying services we provide at this time. If we think about it, it makes sense that kids aren’t connecting and we have to accept that and get creative about other ways to help...and that doesn’t mean figuring out ways to make them connect, that means figuring out ways to change what we are doing while still being available. Maybe we start focusing more on checking in and basic needs. With my team of social workers, I led them in an activity in which we listed things that we have been doing and then I pulled out the list from Psychological First Aid and the lists pretty much matched up. Key points – brief, check ins, basic/immediate needs, respond or if initiate, do so non-intrusively. So we are doing texting/messaging on Teams with older kids, short appointments with younger kids scheduled with parents, working on meeting immediate needs as they surface, on-going contact.

Regarding spending more time with parents – I see that as very positive. We have to remind ourselves to re-think because we are so used to the norm of working with kids. But, we all know that one of the best predictors for our kids and how they manage in difficult times is how the adults in their lives are adapting and managing the difficult time. So, working with parents, and I would argue with teachers and administrators, staff in general, is an incredible way to impact kids.

Regarding the push for higher academic achievement – Since we are working with parents more and more, help them to advocate on behalf of their children. Also, we can write letters. Here in our state, some social workers from across the state, myself included, got together and wrote a letter about our opinions regarding the strong academic focus. It may not do much, but with NASW’s help, the letter got to school administration associations, superintendent associations, school board associations, state education agency, etc. Even if they don’t care too much about what is said in the letter, we 1) feel better for the effort and 2) know that they are informed about how we feel regarding students and academic expectations. I really believe that by helping the adults in their lives, continuing to encourage students in small, simple check ins, and being consistent in our presence when they are ready

to meet, we are being supportive...and those check ins might be helping with academics if they identify that as the space they need help in at that moment.

Finally, working on creating a peer support system is something I am extremely hopeful about. We are using Microsoft Teams in my district. Upperclassmen were encouraged to create clubs and invite younger students. Each club has an adult sponsor. The kids have taken off with this! Maybe we again modify expectations of our role as the helper to a new one. We are now coaching and supporting these amazing mentors who are connecting with kids in ways they are interested. Each Team has its own channel in Teams and can have meetings, virtual events, speakers, etc. As I said, I am hopeful.”

Invitation to Listserv Participants:

We hope you will share useful resources, experiences, and suggestions to help the wide range of colleagues who are part of this practitioner network.

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For discussion and interchange:

>Are schools meeting the mental health needs of general education students?

Another request from a colleague:

“I am looking at teacher self-efficacy in working with students with mental health needs. I am trying to focus on the general education population. ... I see this as a barrier that many of my educator colleagues get hung up on. We have limited resources for the Gen Ed students. While just this week we have had 4 risk assessments with gen ed students, I find it challenging to make this argument for more need. I am wondering if you know of any research in this area? If you can, point me in a direction that would help me make a case for supporting gen ed students. I was trying to find stats that indicated gen ed needs mental health supports but haven’t been able to find these either. Thank you for any help you can help with.”

Center Comments: Expanding the school’s role in supporting students, families, and school staff has been a long-standing issue. The matter is embedded in our concern about the school’s role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching (e.g., promoting healthy development, addressing common learning, behavior, and emotional problems, as well as referrals for intensive interventions for chronic and severe problems).

See our recent Center publication for our perspective on this:

>The Two Pandemics Call for Commitment to Embedding Mental Health Concerns in All Forms of Schooling <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/calltoaction.pdf>

Here is a brief excerpt:

A reporter asked us recently: Are you hopeful that the two pandemics will prove to be a game changer that forces innovations such as embedding mental health in school improvement?

Our answer: There will certainly be significant changes! We are cautiously optimistic that the increasing number of learning, behavior, and emotional problems will open policymakers up to transforming how schools address student and staff well-being as schools re-open and some students continue online. However, there are many old ideas to overcome. In most places, mental health in schools still gets defined mainly as mental illness and the tendency is to think in terms of case-oriented and clinical interventions. This provides services for only a relatively few of the many students experiencing behavior, learning, and emotional problems....

And, because resources are always so sparse, (and more so after COVID-19) providing so much for a few students tends to work against developing programs to prevent problems and promote social and emotional health. Given all this, leaders concerned with advancing mental health in school need to focus on much more than just increasing clinical services. That, of course, has long been the message conveyed by those who stress that concerns about mental health involve much more than the focus on mental illness. This view includes an emphasis on promoting youth development, wellness, social and emotional learning, and fostering the emergence of a caring, supportive, and nurturing climate throughout a school. ...

Staff and students need to feel positive about themselves and what they are doing if they are to

cope with challenges proactively and effectively. Every form of schooling needs to commit to fostering staff and student strengths and creating an atmosphere that encourages mutual support, caring, and sense of community. ...”

For more on this see

>*Countering the Over-pathologizing of Students’ Feelings & Behavior: A Growing Concern Related to MH in Schools*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/pathology.pdf>

>*Protective Factors (Resiliency)*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sampler/resiliency/resilien.pdf>

>**Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

Why are some kids thriving during remote learning?

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/why-are-some-kids-thriving-during-remote-learning>

Ways to Promote Children’s Resilience to the COVID-19 Pandemic

https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVIDProtectiveFactors_ChildTrends_April2020.pdf

Issues student face with remote learning

<https://www.middleweb.com/43696/6-issues-students-may-face-in-remote-learning/>

Supporting Students’ Mental Health During COVID

https://childmind.org/article/supporting-students-mental-health/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Supporting%20Students%E2%80%99%20Mental%20Health%20During%20COVID&utm_campaign=Public-Ed-Newsletter

COVID-19 Trends Among School-Aged Children - United States, March 1- September 19, 2020

(from CDC) https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6939e2.htm?s_cid=mm6939e2_w

Guidelines on mental health promotive and preventive interventions for adolescents (from WHO)

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/guidelines-on-mental-health-promotive-and-preventive-interventions-for-adolescents>

Making Service Delivery Relevant for Latino Families during COVID-19 through Responsive Adaptation

<https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/making-service-delivery-relevant-for-latino-families-during-covid-19-through-responsive-adaptation/>

States and districts should exercise caution before using school climate survey data to compare schools

<https://www.childtrends.org/blog/states-and-districts-should-exercise-caution-before-using-school-climate-survey-data-to-compare-schools>

The Radical Imagination of Black Educators: Past and Future Directions for the Education Justice Movement

<https://default.salsalabs.org/T41c88b70-88e2-48a9-a615-75e5786a7815/7e252ddc-0858-4c5a-a891-1787f6bf7fda>

Rethinking Business as Usual. Are We Even Starting in the Right Place?

<https://www.capitasocial.org/capita-ideas/2020/9/9/rethinking-business-as-usual-are-we-even-starting-in-the-right-place>

Understanding the Impacts of Natural Disasters on Children

https://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/resources/FINAL_SRCDCEB-NaturalDisasters_0.pdf

Addressing Teacher Shortages with Differentiated Staffing Models

<https://www.air.org/resource/addressing-teacher-shortages-differentiated-staffing-models>

Education Research During a Pandemic

<https://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/MWGYUI4NRGX5KBGZN9VV/full>

Bias in the Air: A Nationwide Exploration of Teachers’ Implicit Racial Attitudes, Aggregate Bias, and Student Outcomes <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0013189X20937240>

Clinical Trials on the Effects of Bullying

<https://policylab.us/resources/clinical-trials-on-the-effects-of-bullying/>

Unequal education: Pandemic widens race, class gaps in U.S. schools

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-pennsylvania-educ/unequal-education-pandemic-widens-race-class-gaps-in-u-s-schools-idUSKBN26K1WE>

Across the United States, the disparities between poor and affluent districts are growing as school boards face increased costs from the pandemic - including technology for remote learning and safety measures such as cleaning - at a time of declining tax revenues. Students in urban school districts, including York, are also more likely to see in-person learning halted because of higher levels of coronavirus spread in more densely populated areas. For example, most white students in Pennsylvania were able to opt for in-person learning, while their Hispanic and Black peers were more likely to attend schools in districts offering only remote instruction, according to a study by Penn State University researchers.

A Few Upcoming Webinars

- >10/14 *Bold Action for Challenging Times: Intensify Your Leadership!*
 - >10/14 *Using a Data-Based Problem-Solving Process to Address Chronic Absenteeism and Attendance Challenges*
 - >10/15 *Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness*
 - > 10/15 *The New Normal: LGBTQ+ Youth Living Through COVID-19*
 - >10/20 *Understanding Doubled up*
 - > 10/22 *Navigating the Ins and Outs of Community Resources*
 - >10/27 *Wait! Did I Sign up for This? Tips for Leading Your School Through COVID-19*
 - >10/28 *The Role of Principal Supervisors Amidst a Pandemic*
 - >10/29 *Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness*
- For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to *Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

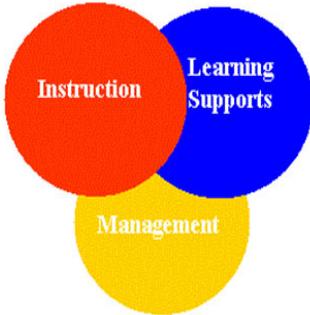
If you missed the recent quarterly ejournal from the Center, see:

- >Assisting Kids with Online Instruction
- >Talking with Kids When Assisting with Learning
 - >To Push or Not To Push
 - >Common Tips from the Internet

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

For information about the

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



Also online are three related free books

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

*All can be accessed at no cost at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.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.***

DEAR READER:

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.

For those who are employed by state and local education agencies and schools, we know you are busy. It would be great to share what actions you are taking to address immediate concerns and how you are anticipating the problems that will arise as schools reopen.

***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/>)***