



**School Practitioner
Listserv**



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

November 16, 2015

Talking to Kids About the Paris Attacks

Request from a Colleague:

>Assisting teachers to make inclusion more successful

>Center Response

>Request to listserv participants

>From the Field

Featured Center Resources:

**>Guides for supporting teachers in accommodating
a range of learners**

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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**

**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 2015 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.

Talking to Kids after a Tragedy such as Occurred in Paris

Here are few resources and thoughts:

(1) From: *Common Sense Media* – “It's hard to shield kids from the terrible and tragic news of the Paris attacks. Between TV and social media, they are likely to come across some aspect of the events. Here are some suggestions for talking to your kids about what they are seeing in the news.”

https://www.common sense media.org/blog/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids?utm_source=November+2015+-+Paris+Attacks&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=weekly

(2) See Resources at the *National Child Traumatic Stress Network* – <http://nctsn.org/> .

(3) See *Time Magazine online* –

<http://time.com/4112751/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-the-attacks-in-paris/>

See *Crisis Response Resources* from our Center –

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

Comments and exchange on the APA Division 53 website

>“I work in a small therapeutic high school with students predominantly anxious and depressed, many of whom have experienced histories of trauma. I am wondering about the pros and cons of addressing the tragedies in Paris with the students as a whole group versus being available for students on an individual basis in the counseling office. Tomorrow, I intend to talk to teachers and advisors about monitoring the students, providing support, and referring them to our counseling office. I was asked about also having a special community meeting with a moment of silence for the victims and their families but want to make sure we would not risk placing some students at risk for heightened anxiety. I appreciate any feedback.”

>“I think the school having a minute of silence in tribute to all affected is humane, relevant, and not unduly anxiety provoking. That could be done with students in their home room at the beginning of the day. Beyond that, the support you describe putting in place sounds sensible.”

Mary A. Fristad, Professor, The Ohio State University

>“I agree with Mary. Also, if you have a moment of silence in their home room at the beginning of the day, it gives teachers the opportunity to identify students who may become triggered by the event and refer them for individual counseling. If it only comes up less formally, within their peer groups, it will be more difficult to determine students' reactions and provide appropriate support.”

Amanda Zayde, Assistant Professor, Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Rquest: "One director of student services told me that part of what she thinks gets in the way of serving student with identified disabilities in the general education classroom is 'just the fear of not knowing.' She believes that all of her teachers are highly capable instructors, but they don't want to do anything wrong. How can school leaders help their staff work through this fear? What advice do you have for practitioners for how they can reframe their fears and embrace change-not see it as an enemy but as a way to revitalize their practice and make their work with students more successful? How can school leaders help break down an us-and-them mentality to see children with disability as 'one of us' and not 'other'?"

Center Response: As with so many schooling problems, us-and-them is a system problem and won't be solved by addressing the matter on a one-to-one basis or offering another workshop. Working on ending "us-and-them" at schools is part of the process of school-wide re-culturing. Although workshops and presentations may be offered, what can be learned in this way is limited. The work being done on stigma reduction provides some suggestions for schools willing to work on the matter. See *Addressing Stigma as Part of Student Supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/stigma.pdf>

In general, concerns about inclusion and negative responses related to this approach are best addressed by providing an appropriate and effective system of supports for teachers, students, and families. Currently, teachers are left mostly to their own devices in dealing with students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems. A major escape valve in the past was for them to refer students out to special education. Now, with inclusion as policy and with minimal system changes that enable them to be successful, teachers are expected to handle the problems alone (for the most part). We keep stressing that "Teachers cannot do it alone!" (And should not be expected to do so.) Even the best teacher can't do the job alone and meet high standard outcomes. See *Improving Student Outcomes, Enhancing School Climate: Teachers Can't Do it Alone!* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/winter13.pdf>

Teachers need a system of supports in the classroom and school-wide to help when students are not responding effectively to instruction. Our analyses indicate that school improvement policy and practice must add a focus on developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of supports that *enables* teachers to teach and students to learn. For discussion and examples of where such a transformational system is being implemented, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/summer14.pdf>

The next decade must mark a turning point for how schools and communities address the many barriers to learning experienced by children and youth. Needed in particular are initiatives to transform how schools work to prevent and ameliorate these barriers which lead to so many students being designated as learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Such a transformation is essential to enhancing achievement for all, closing the achievement gap, countering us-and-them attitudes, reducing dropouts, and increasing the opportunity for schools to be valued as treasures in their neighborhood. An end product must be schools where everyone, staff, students, families, and community stakeholders, feels supported. To this end, schools, districts, and state departments around the country will have to reshape the functions of all school personnel and enhance capacity for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, including enabling successful inclusion. Accomplishing all this will require transforming policy and practice related to school improvement and personnel development.

Rquest to listserv participants: What are best practices for supporting inclusion? Are special education and student support staff being effectively integrated into classrooms? What examples can you share about co-teaching and inservice professional development focusing on including students with a wide range of needs into regular classrooms?

Send comments to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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From the Field: We shared the request above with some colleagues with expertise in this area. Here are a couple of responses:

(1) “I agree with the director. Many teachers are petrified of working with students with special needs because of all the lawsuits, parents, meetings, and red tape we’ve thrown at them for years. Add to that a feeling that they don’t have the skills or knowledge related to working with kids with disabilities. We’ve led them to this thinking for years with our pull-out and special classes and our highly formalized meetings with tons of paper and fear of due process.

A first step is to acknowledge this with an entire faculty. Let them know there is no magic fairy dust down in the resource room. Discuss how special educators are indeed masters of pedagogy and adaptation, but not of all the different content areas - that’s where the general educator comes in! They don’t need to be able to know it all and do it all - what they DO need to be able to do is collaborate, communicate, ask questions, and have a willingness to differentiate for different learners. (In fact, I feel so strongly about this that my colleague Sally Spencer and I wrote a book called ‘Collaborate, communicate & differentiate!’ with Corwin Press. We use it here at CSUN in our classes for general educators and beginning special educators.)

Once they realize they don’t have to be experts, it helps alleviate the fear. It helps them see that they indeed do have many of the skills needed to work with students with special needs, as well as the paraprofessionals, parents, and other educators who support them. Administrators can also use their own faculty to identify techniques they already have within their own wheelhouse that work well with all students. Embracing co-teaching so teachers aren’t all alone in their classes is another powerful strategy (and again I wrote about this in ‘Leading the Coteaching Dance: Leadership strategies to enhance team outcomes’ with the Council for Exceptional Children). Sometimes having another educator in the room - one whose expertise is working with students with disabilities - will also help teachers see that ‘it’s not so frightening or even different!’ I hope this helps!”

(2) “... I wish I could spend more time with the writer to hear the details.... Some colleague thinks fear is at the root of the problem, but we don’t know how that opinion came to light. ... It’s good to have an hypothesis, and ‘fear of not knowing’ is as good a place to start as any. But let’s first make sure that is really the case. Most teachers are highly capable instructors. They make thousands of critical decisions every day. Besides their advanced skills and supervised experience, they also donate many hours of work on evenings and weekends to make sure their students do well. If a professional educator’s first response to including a special education service in a general education classroom is ‘I don’t know enough’ or ‘I don’t want to be wrong,’ then as a school leader, I would take those comments very seriously. That’s great feedback and it suggests major underlying problems that will not be corrected by simply telling people to reframe their attitudes. But it doesn’t sound like fear to me it sounds like a lack of trust.

When your colleague hears, ‘That Sp. Ed. student doesn’t belong in my class!’, s/he thinks the educator is afraid of not knowing and/or has an us/them mentality. But place that comment within the context of an over-extended school system. What if it really means ‘I’m already tracking 7 behavior programs in my class of 35. What makes you think I can successfully track 8?’ Or, ‘I know nothing about autism. Shouldn’t this student be with somebody who knows a LOT about autism?’

It could be a polite way to tell a supervisor ‘With all due respect, I’m not sure you fully understand my situation. I don’t trust the system to make a good decision about whether I could implement with integrity all those special education services in my crowded classroom.’ It could also represent a massive misunderstanding about the goals for the general education component of the IEP. I’ve known general education staff to jump to the conclusion that they are required to bring the student with disabilities up to grade level in all areas when in fact, practice in just a few social skills was the intent. In either case, reframing would only miss the point by suggesting a little attitude shift will fix everything. Capacity-building only works where there is at least a little remaining flexibility. Most educators already have a completely ‘full plate’ and would need

the administrator to take something off that plate before adding more.

It may help to remember that Special Education is a service, not a place. The team that writes the Individual Educational Program should have enough data at hand to determine what needs to be taught, who will teach it, how progress will be measured, and where is the best place for that instruction to occur. It's not supposed to be an either/or, general ed or Sp.Ed. decision. The options for service delivery location are limited only by the IEP team's imagination. Just be sure the people who will implement the plan are part of the IEP writing team and feel free to speak their minds during the planning process.

To summarize: no teacher wants to fail with a student. Hesitation to take on additional tasks is not necessarily a symptom of 'fear' or an 'us/them' mentality. I invite you to consider that at least some of what appears to be resistance could be a plea for more support, e.g. 'That student doesn't belong in my class UNLESS these other essential components can be added to the plan to make it work.' Place your focus on understanding what general education classrooms need to accomplish IEP goals. Then provide those elements in abundance. Prior planning is a great way to reduce fear, and would be a good place to start."

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Featured set of center resources:

>Guides for supporting teachers in accommodating a range of learners

For more specific on supporting both the teachers and students in inclusive classrooms, see our quick find topic page on IDEA/accommodation/inclusion

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/idea.htm>

You will see links to resources from a range of organizations. Links to our Center resources on that page include:

- > *Preparing All Education Personnel to Address Barriers to Learning & Teaching* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/preparingall.pdf>
- > *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning* (cont. ed. modules) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf>
 - >> Module I provides a big picture framework for understanding barriers to learning and how school reforms need to expand in order to effectively address such barriers.
 - >> Module II focuses on classroom practices to engage and re-engage students in classroom learning.
 - >> Module III explores the roles teachers need to play in ensuring their school develops a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning.

Also see the Center Quick Find entitled:

- > *Classroom based learning supports* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm>

There you will find links to a range of additional resources including these from the Center:

- > *Enhancing Classroom Teachers' Capacity to Successfully Engage All Students ...* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/enhanceteachers.pdf>
- > *Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning* (cont. ed. modules) – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf>

Personalized learning is placed within the context of other conditions that must be improved in classrooms and school wide to address factors interfering with student learning and performance.

**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/>)

*For information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student
and Learning Supports*, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

***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.***
