

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
(5/12/21)

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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:

>More about outreaching to those who have not returned and also addressing chronic absenteeism

“Across the country, about 41% of parents said they want their child to participate only in distance learning under the current Covid-19 conditions, while 35% prefer fully in-person instruction and 21% would like a hybrid model that combines both in-person school with online classes, according to a nationally representative survey of parents...”

<https://edsources.org/2021/california-parents-continue-to-disagree-on-return-to-school-as-covid-19-cases-decline/650181>

Other reports from school districts indicate that only about 35% of elementary school children are returning to campuses as they reopen. Among middle schoolers, the number of expected returns drops to 25%, and among high school students it plummets to 16%.

Clearly, there is much to do to reengage students and their families at school. Many schools currently are paying particular attention to

- (1) finding all those previously enrolled students who have not returned and
- (2) pursuing new approaches to addressing the long-standing problem of chronic absenteeism.

This is the time for discussing and sharing how these matters are handled in your locale.

We hope the following will stimulate discussion and sharing and will generate responses that we can share in this Community of Practice School Practitioner.

We look forward to hearing from you. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

About Outreach to Those who Haven't Returned

What school staff know is that the fear about returning is real; there also is anger, frustration, and suspicion (some of this has roots in prepandemic experiences). And there is concern about whether in-school learning will be any better than it is online.

Outreach is complicated by factors such as family economic status, work schedules, immigrant status, ethnic and racial considerations, single parent families, number of youngsters in the home, homes where English is not spoken, extended families, military families, families where a parent is in prison, foster homes, and homeless families and youngsters. In addition, some caretakers have disabilities, and some are dysfunctional.

Home situations also differ in caretaker attitudes about school. Such attitudes often reflect personal past experiences as well as current encounters and how well their youngsters are doing at school. (Remember, some have more than one youngster who is not doing well.)

In general, as with students, parents and other caretakers vary in their personal motivation and ability to participate. And as with many students who are not doing well at school, (re)establishing productive working relationships with some caretakers involves addressing individual psychosocial and educational barriers and doing so in a personalized way.

In a recent posting, we stressed that an important resource in outreaching to reengage students and families are the students and families who have returned. (See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/4-26-21.pdf>.)

And, recently a member of this listserv shared the following:

“...The schools who engage families have had better results with returning to learn that those who do not. What I have observed is that there are schools who lead in partnerships with family and community and there are schools who are led by Admin and Faculty. The latter tends to be a closed system that is not inclusive and perpetuates fear and unfortunately problems with opening ensue. The former has been an inspiration for staff, families, community partnerships etc.

The Pandemic has been a litmus test to show how connected or disconnected schools are from their communities. My work has been to assist in developing systems of working together through MTSS as a logic model for problem solving with partners, parents, students and families around issues of academics, virtual learning challenges, attendance, and mental health supports as well as community partnerships.

It is not an easy task, but it tends to be a smoother transition when schools have a logic model to follow for solving problems together because it validates the natural supports prevalent in a school community. Families understand school better and teachers and admin understand our student and family needs.

We are still navigating this pandemic and it looks like virtual options may be offered to our students in the future that may be for better or for worse. We really need collaboration models and systems to problem solve issues we have never faced before... it is an opportunity to come together!”

For more about the above, see

>*Home Involvement, Engagement, and Re-engagement in Schooling* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/ch6home.pdf>

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

Also see the following Quick Finds

>*Collaboration - School, Community, Interagency* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201_01.htm

>*Parent/Home Involvement and Engagement in Schools* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm>

About Absenteeism: Beyond Reporting and Beyond Another Special Initiative

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) states are required to report chronic absenteeism rates for schools, and school districts are allowed to spend federal dollars on training to reduce absenteeism. Since all schools take attendance, an immediate focus has been on establishing systems for reporting chronic absenteeism (including truancy).

Establishing a reporting system is relatively easy. Significantly reducing chronic absenteeism has and will continue to be difficult.

In 2016, the federal government decided to create a national Every Student, Every Day initiative to “address and eliminate chronic absenteeism”
<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-white-house-launches-new-national-effort-and-ad-council-campaign-eliminate-chronic-absenteeism-and-drive-student-success>

The special initiative did focus attention on the problem, and, clearly, the stated commitment, motivation, and aims were wonderful. The reality, however, is that effectively dealing with the problem of chronic absenteeism over the long-run requires a fundamental rethinking of policies and practices.

A review of past policies indicates a primary emphasis on mandating attendance and spelling out increasingly harsh punishments for unexcused absences. Such practices fail to take into account the range of underlying causes of attendance problems and the range of prevention, early intervention, and ongoing support that might more effectively address the problems. If, as often is said, school attendance is both a right and a responsibility, society must play a greater role in addressing barriers that are abridging their rights and enhance their motivation and capability to meet their responsibilities.

Given the variety of factors that play a role in school attendance problems, policies and practices must avoid lumping all youngsters together. A particular danger arises when the problem is truancy. Some truancy is reactive and some is proactive, and the underlying motivation for not coming to school can vary considerably in both cases. For example, there are some students who experience school as not right for them and, therefore, see school not as a right or a responsibility but as an infringement on their self-determination. From a psychological perspective, the problem becomes motivational (e.g., avoidance motivation, reactance). Therefore, addressing the problem requires strategies that are more psychologically sophisticated than the prevailing ones used by most schools and the society in general.

From the perspective of our Center’s research and development, policy and practice must now evolve to enable schools, families, and communities to work together in developing approaches that reflect the complexity of attendance problems. The complexity demands moving to more comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated solutions. Focusing only on “What’s wrong with that kid!” often is tantamount to blaming the victim and contributes to policies and practices that are not making significant inroads. School attendance problems provide another indication of the need to move forward in new directions for student support. The need is for a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system that directly addresses barriers to learning, reengages disconnected students in classroom instruction, and reengages disconnected families with schools.

To highlight the topic and provide a tool for discussion by school policy makers and practitioners, we refer folks to the following Center brief that (1) provides some background and overview of issues related to school attendance problems and (2) discusses new directions for policy and practice.

> *School Attendance Problems: Are Current Policies & Practices Going in the Right Direction?*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/school%20attendance%20problems.pdf>

For more, see the Center’s Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds provide easy access to a variety of resources relevant to intervening to enhance school attendance. Start with the Quick Finds on

> *Attendance* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/attendance.html>
> *Motivation* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

We look forward to hearing from you. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

I found out you were truant from school today.



***I wasn't being truant,
I was just practicing social distancing.***

For discussion and interchange:

>Opportunities for summer learning

Many districts are exploring options for supporting student learning during the summer. Some want to focus on enrichment, some on remediation, some on transitioning back to in-person learning. The following provides some considerations for planning:

From: *Summer school programs are set to grow. Here are 6 tips for making them successful.*
<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/3/30/22359131/summer-school-covid-stimulus-lessons-best-practices-strategies-research>

“...Schools across the country are now making plans to expand summer school. The moment seems right: More and more school buildings are open, as school staff get vaccinated. Schools are flush with federal cash, some of which is earmarked for addressing learning loss. And families are enthusiastic. A recent poll found that three quarters of parents want to see more summer programming this year.

Research also suggests that summer school can lead to small but real gains in student learning — probably large enough to make a dent in learning gaps that have opened up due to COVID. Still, simply offering summer school is one thing; creating an effective program is another. Research offers some lessons about how to make summer programs more likely to succeed. Here are six.

1. Students have to show up to learn, so find ways to encourage attendance — and avoid drudgery. In the wake of this pandemic year, districts are largely looking to voluntary programs. That leaves districts to convince students and families that signing up for and regularly attending summer school is worth it.

To do this, many districts say their goal is to make summer school engaging, and not solely focused on reading and math instruction.

Schools might consider a broad set of activities, from music, art, and dance classes to college visits and field trips to attend live theater or art museums.

Research has found that each offers tangible benefits to students that go beyond test scores, including increasing their connection to school and boosting their likelihood of taking advanced courses.

2. Actively recruit families and remove potential obstacles. If schools want to target specific groups of students — like those who are behind or who learned remotely this school year — they should actively reach out to those families, rather than assuming their kids will show up.

Schools should also be cognizant of parents' COVID-related concerns and provide clear, accurate information about safety precautions they are taking and the low COVID risk to their children of attending.

3. Make summer school appealing for teachers, too. Some districts have already decided to up their usual pay for working during the summer. Programs are likely to need more teachers, and teachers may need more enticement than usual to work during summer break after a year of heightened stress.

Schools should also try to design summer programs that are appealing to teachers. That could mean small class sizes, a pre-planned curriculum, and the opportunity to work half days or to teach just one subject consistently.

4. Think twice before going with an online summer school. Because of lingering COVID concerns among some families, schools might be tempted to offer remote summer programming. But schools shouldn't expect significant academic benefits from doing so.

One (pre-COVID) study found that students did not make any clear learning gains from a fully online summer math program. Meanwhile, schools have seen the challenges of remote instruction up close this school year, and the difficulties are likely to be magnified over the summer.

5. Consider how summer school programs can lead into next school year. One district has an unusual program that is envisioned as not simply "summer school" but an early start to the school year. Research found that this benefitted students in early grades, boosting their literacy skills while providing a smoother transition into the next year.

Use the summer as an opportunity to build relationships between students and school staff.

6. Have realistic expectations. How much can schools really expect from summer programs?

On a basic level, summer instruction is an extension of schooling. In a typical year, research shows that students make steady academic progress over the course of the school year, and then flatline or backslide during the summer (at least as measured on tests). In that sense, offering summer school is a common-sense way to keep students learning.

Specific studies of summer school programs, generally back that up. Academic gains from these programs weren't trivial, but they weren't huge either. They're more or less what you might expect from several extra weeks of school. And that might pale in comparison to the missed learning that students suffered during the pandemic.

And of course, there may be benefits to summer programs that extend beyond academics — like re-engaging students in school, helping them reconnect with their friends, and giving exhausted parents a break.

Still, school officials should have realistic expectations for summer school and consider it one of multiple catch-up strategies...."

Listserv Participants: What are local school/community plans for students this summer? What would you want for your own children? Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu .

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse
<https://bestpracticesclearinghouse.ed.gov/>

Guidance for Operating Youth and Summer Camps During COVID-19
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html>

National Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative to Help Students Most Impacted by the Pandemic
<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-launches-national-summer-learning-enrichment-collaborative-help-students-most-impacted-pandemic>

"...The Collaborative brings together state and local leaders working alongside key stakeholders to design evidence-based summer programs that address the lost instructional, social, and extracurricular time students have experienced as a result of the pandemic, especially underserved students and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19...."

Implementation Science and Complex School Changes
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/implemreport.pdf>

Schools use art to help kids through trauma
<https://hechingerreport.org/schools-use-art-to-help-kids-through-trauma/>

What Can We Learn from COVID-Era Instruction?

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/may21/vol78/num08/What_Can_We_Learn_from_COVID-Era_Instruction%C2%A2.aspx

Little to No Increase in Association Between Adolescents' Mental Health Problems and Digital Technology Engagement, Study Says

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/2021-may-digital-technology-engagement.html>

A Few Upcoming Webinars

5/12 How to Achieve Educational Equity

5/12 Equity, Recovery, & Resilience

5/13 Why YOUR Wellness Matters: The Intersections of Leaders' Mental Health, Systems Change, and Equity

5/13 The Role of Preventionists in Accelerating Health Equity and Communities of Wellbeing

5/13 Understanding Doubled up

5/14 Student led professional development

5/18 Pursuing Equitable Outcomes: Exploring the Intersection of Race and Disability in K-12

5/18 OJJDP FY21 Comprehensive Youth Violence Prevention and Reduction Programs Solicitation Webinar

5/19 Post-Pandemic Possibilities

5/25 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

5/26 Engaged: Using Summer to Connect with Students and Families

5/26 Rebound: Rebuilding Agency, Accelerating Learning Recovery, Rethinking Schools

5/26 Leveraging Science to Inform Policies that Strengthen Learning and Health in a Post-COVID-19 World

5/27 School as Client: Mental Health Services for Diverse Population in the School Culture

6/7 Family Inclusion Webinar: The Family Experience

6/16 Diversity and Difference

6/16 What will we keep, transform and let go in the next school year?

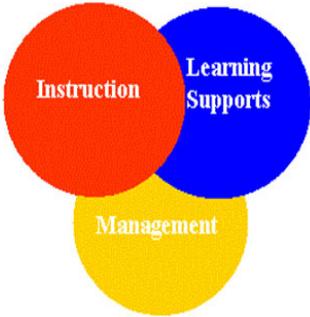
Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth

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

For links to the above webinars and for more webinars, go to the our Center's Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

Nelson Mandela



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.

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/>)