

Classroom Problems: *What Can I Do Right Away?*
A Learning Supports Practice Series for Teachers*

Addressing Neighborhood Problems that Affect the School

We are having difficulty with older students bringing neighborhood "beefs" and vendettas to school. Tensions are escalating in my classroom.

This is a problem often associated with, but not limited to neighborhood gangs.

Ultimately, addressing the matter calls for systemic changes that produce the type of climate in the school and classroom that enhances a sense of community among students and with the staff. And, changes related to student interpersonal conflicts require engaging involved students in problem solving with the goal of becoming leaders for creating a positive school climate.

The following are ways for a teacher to begin addressing the problem.

- (1) Tap into the student grapevine to ensure early warnings about student conflicts and threats of retribution.
- (2) Ask the student support staff to establish a system for teachers, other staff, student, families to report early warnings.
- (3) Use one or more staff meetings to establish ways to respond to early warnings (e.g., prevention strategies).
- (4) In the classroom, create and facilitate a problem solving group consisting of those involved and others who will be accepted. Seek out support and guidance from other staff with conflict resolution and mediation skills (e.g., the school's psychologist, counselor, social worker, an assistant principal). Be sure to teach the group how to function appropriately. Such a group offers many teachable moments for enhancing social-emotional learning and a variety of other basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- (5) After the classroom group is functioning appropriately, they should consider establishing a comparable schoolwide group to focus not only on schoolwide problem solving, but on addressing neighborhood factors contributing to the problem. At this level, they can invite in community resources (e.g., youth recreation folks, local police, gang unit) to assist in identifying and working out a plan to reduce problems stemming from community conflicts.

In preparing the group to function, there are many resources to draw upon. For example, see discussions of model programs such as:

>*Peace Works* – <http://www.peaceeducation.com>

>*Productive Conflict Resolution Program: A Whole School Approach* –
<http://www.schoolmediationcenter.org>

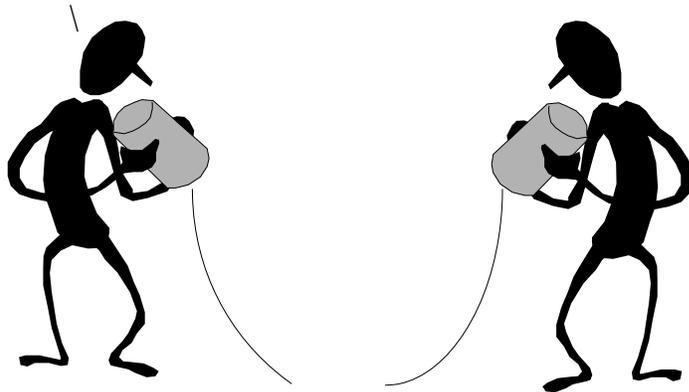
For other resource aids, see our Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds on:

>*Gangs* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3009_01.htm

>*Violence Prevention & Safe Schools* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2108_03.htm

>*School Climate* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm>

Did you hear: The meeting designed to solve the problem has been canceled due to a conflict.



***Classroom Problems: What Can I Do Right Away? A Learning Supports Practice Series for Teachers**

Often the best way to learn is by addressing a specific concern that needs an immediate response.

With this in mind, the Center is producing a series of resources focused on daily classroom dilemmas teachers experience and some initial ways to deal with such concerns. The emphasis is on engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning.

As a school moves to develop a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports, this series can help augment professional development by providing a stimulus for discussion by teachers and other staff.

What can I do right away?

To date, this learning supports practice series for teachers includes the following topics:

- > *Bullying* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/bullypn.pdf>
- > *Disengaged Students* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/disengpn.pdf>
- > *Fidgety Students* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fidgetypn.pdf>
- > *Homework Avoidance* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeworkpn.pdf>
- > *Students in Distress* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/distresspn.pdf>
- > *Minimizing Referrals out of the Classroom* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/referralspn.pdf>
- > *Addressing Neighborhood Problems that Affect the School* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/neighpn.pdf>

See the complete series and other resources for professional development at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>
(Click on Resources/Publications)

**Feel free to email similar concerns to the Center for discussion as part of
our weekly community of practice listserv. See**
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner.pdf>

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If you have comments, suggestions, examples you would like to share, please let us know.

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