Moving Forward

IN THIS ISSUE

Note: The Center has many resources schools can use in a variety of ways. They include brief Information Resources and Practice Notes, sets of continuing education modules, and much more. The following articles are examples, respectively, of an Information Resource and a Practice Notes document.

About Resilience and Schools

> *The concept of resilience has as its starting point the recognition that there is huge heterogeneity in people's responses to all manner of environmental adversities. Resilience is an inference based on evidence that some individuals have a better outcome than others who have experienced a comparable level of adversity; moreover, the negative experience may have either a sensitizing effect or a strengthening "steeling" effect in relation to the response to later stress or adversity.*
>
> Michael Rutter

A s described by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, resilience is a dynamic process that entails positive coping and successful developmental outcomes in spite of the presence of adverse conditions. It is not the absence of personal struggling with adverse conditions; it is the ability to cope with and make a positive recovery from such conditions. In the past, resilience was considered a personality trait. Currently, it is understood as a process any individual can attain, and it is seen as situational.

In reviewing the literature, Rutter stressed the importance of accounting for environmental mediation of risk and gene-environment interaction. He notes evidence that the genetic influences involve responsivity to all environments and not just bad ones and underscores turning point effects associated with experiences that increase opportunities and enhance coping. From this perspective, the school environment certainly is an especially formative one for students (and staff). Because success at school always requires effective coping and because ineffective coping contributes to a range of problems, enhancing coping and recovery are important school improvement considerations. At the same time, schools need to reduce barriers that interfere with learning and teaching.

Those who manifest effective coping and recovery behaviors are seen as resilient individuals. Such behavior reflects the individual's motivation, knowledge, and skills and can be facilitated by contextual supports. Such supports include

- promoting well-being
- preventing problems
- enhancing student and staff resiliency
- ensuring there is an effective system of interventions that
    >protect and buffer students and staff from adversity and
    >assist them in coping with and recovering from problems.

Unfortunately, these matters continue to be marginalized in school improvement policy and practice.

Factors Related to the Development of Resilience

Resilience may derive from factors both internal and external to a child:
1. Attributes of the Child (e.g., feelings of hope and meaningfulness of life)
2. Aspects of the Family (e.g., strong relationship with a caring, prosocial parent or parent-figure)
3. Characteristics of the Social Environments (e.g., opportunities to learn and experience mastery; opportunities to be mentored by a competent, caring adult)

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Protective Factors and Resilience for Students and School Staff

There is no magical resilience gene. When we think that kids just need willpower to overcome adversity, we miss opportunities to provide the relationships and build the skills that can actually strengthen resilience. - Jack Shonkoff

Protective factors are conditions that buffer against the impact of barriers (risk factors). Such conditions may prevent or counter risk producing conditions by promoting development of neighborhood, family, school, peer, and individual strengths, assets, corrective interventions, coping mechanisms, and special assistance and accommodations. The term resilience often is used to refer to an individual's ability to cope in ways that buffer.

While efforts to reduce risks and enhance protection can help minimize problems and promote resilience, a focus on promoting healthy development goes a step further by focusing on establishing systems that foster full development, well-being, and a value-based life. Safe, stable schools and neighborhoods that provide enriched opportunities to promote student development, learning, and a sense of community go well beyond just strengthening resilience.

Many protective buffers are outcomes of efforts to engender full development. Promoting healthy development is the other side of the coin to addressing barriers to learning and development. Done well, such interventions engender resilient behavior, individual assets, and healthy behavior in children and adolescents.

With respect to promoting full development, as often is stressed, being problem-free is not the same as being well-developed. Efforts to enhance protection and reduce risks can help minimize problems but are insufficient for promoting full development, well-being, and a value-based life. Those concerned with establishing systems for promoting healthy development recognize the need for direct efforts to promote development and empowerment, including the mobilization of individuals for self-pursuit. In many cases, interventions to create buffers and promote full development are identical, and the pay-off is the cultivation of developmental strengths and assets. However, promoting healthy development is not limited to countering risks and engendering protective factors. Efforts to promote full development represent ends which are valued in and of themselves and to which most of us aspire.

About Direct Efforts to Enhance Resilience at School

As schools focus more on whole child development, they are increasingly concerned with social and emotional development and the interfering nature of social and emotional problems. As part of these concerns, there is increasing interest in enhancing resilience.

Child Trends and their partners on the National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments stress the following as general strategies to build resilience in schools:

- Promote positive social connections between staff and students, among students, and between schools and home.
- Nurture positive qualities, such as empathy, optimism, or forgiveness, and give students a chance to use them.
- Notice and reinforce qualities that are key to resilience.
- Avoid focusing on failure or negative behaviors.
- Teach by example, which is an effective approach; train staff to develop the same qualities.
- Adopt restorative justice techniques to help schools by giving students a structured opportunity to work difficulties out by encouraging reflection and empathy.
- Foster feelings of competence and self-efficacy.
- Set high expectations for students; teach them to set realistic, achievable goals, and also how to reach out for help when needed.

With respect to recovery, they stress:

- Supportive relationships are key to recovery: Make sure students have time to talk with caring adults and have the opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions.
- Schools can provide supports to parents by sponsoring parent meetings.
- Stay flexible! Children's responses to a traumatic event will be varied not just in intensity, but also in recovery time; it is important for schools to avoid a one-size-fits-all response to recovery.
- After a traumatic event, students may feel nervous, anxious, or unsafe so try to reassure students that they are safe, and keep to familiar routines.
- School administrators can provide extra support to teachers, such as training, time to unwind and ways to connect with other teachers for support.

From: *Strategies that Build Resilience in Schools,* see Child Trends' synthesis at
>http://www.childtrends.org/what-can-schools-do-to-build-resilience-in-their-students/

Resilient children are children who remain competent despite exposure to misfortune or to stressful events. ... Characteristics of resilient children include:

- A sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, which allows the child to cope successfully with challenges
- An active stance toward an obstacle or difficulty
- The ability to see a difficulty as a problem that can be worked on, overcome, changed, endured, or resolved in some way
- Reasonable persistence, with an ability to know when "enough is enough"
- A capacity to develop a range of strategies and skills to bear on the problem, which can be used in a flexible way...

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
http://www.nwrel.org/pirc/hot9.html

It must be noted that, while programs for schools to build resilience are widely touted (e.g., Child Trends What Works database; the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning), findings from a meta-analysis of programs evaluated with a randomized control design suggest that such programs had only a small to moderate effect at improving resilience (Leppin, et al., 2014).

Enhancing Student Resilience to Cope and Recover with Depression and Anxiety at the College Level

By the time they reach college, many students feel unprepared for coping with the social and emotional challenges they experience (Martinez, 2013). So programs such as the Resilience Peer Network at UCLA are being designed to enhance availability of care to the students who have difficulty accessing timely treatment through the campus' existing treatment centers. The UCLA intervention is described as "self-guided internet based cognitive behavioral therapy." It is intended to bring "effective internet-delivered treatment to students with mild to moderate depression and anxiety. Trained undergraduate and graduate Resilience Peers provide individual and group therapy to students appropriately screened for this tier of treatment, under the close supervision of licensed professionals."

https://grandchallenges.ucla.edu/happenings/2016/01/18/resilience-peer-network/

Build a System of Supports

Besides improving student and staff coping and recovery, any school where large numbers of students manifest learning, behavior, and emotional problems needs to implement a continuum of interventions with content that covers the range of challenges encountered each day. The continuum must address barriers (reducing risks, enhancing buffers) and promote full development. Policy makers and researchers must move beyond the narrow set of empirically supported programs to a research and development agenda that unifies student and learning supports and develops a comprehensive and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. In doing so, they will enhance protective buffers (including reducing risks), promote healthy development, and strengthen student and staff resiliency (see Adelman & Taylor, 2006, 2010, 2017a,b, 2018).

Concluding Comments

Resilience refers to an individual's ability to cope with challenges and recover from adversity. There is growing realization that schools need to embed a focus on fostering resilience into efforts to facilitate social and emotional development and to begin this at the onset of schooling. Learning to cope effectively with challenges and being able to recover from adversity are as important as learning arithmetic. Failure to cope effectively contributes to a variety of mental health concerns and overwhelms the ability of efforts to support students (and staff).

At the same time, research clearly indicates that external factors (related to neighborhood, family, school, and/or peers) are primary challenges causing most learning, behavior, and emotional problems manifested at school. Schools must proactively improve how they address such challenges. With protective buffers in mind, a first step in focusing on resilience is to improve the way the school (a) promotes well-being and prevents problems, (b) responds as soon as problems arise, and (c) plays an appropriate role related to addressing severe and chronic problems. Over the long-run, the need is to transform student and learning supports by developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of interventions that address barriers to learning and teaching, enhance protective buffers, and promote social and emotional development. By doing so, schools can not only foster student and staff resilience, they can also reduce the number of students in need of special assistance.

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For more references and resources, see the Center document "Protective Factors/Resiliency" at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sampler/resiliency/resilien.pdf

and the Quick Find "Reslience/Protective Factors" http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/resilience.html

This Information Resource is online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resili.pdf.

For a complete list and links to our many brief Information Resource documents, go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/trainingpresentation.htm#fact

I see that bully stole your lunch again.

Well, this time he's in for a surprise,. unless he likes broccoli and tofu.

Nothing in life is more liberating than to fight for a cause larger than yourself, something that encompasses you but is not defined by your existence alone.
John McCain

Everybody wants respect. In their own way, three-year-olds would like respect, and acknowledgment, in their terms.
Aretha Franklin

Minimizing Referrals Out of the Classroom

Schools ask: *What more can be done in a classroom so that referrals are only necessary for the few students whose problems are relatively severe?*

All efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching build on the promotion of healthy development and personalized instruction. Then, to further reduce inappropriate referrals, schools need to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports.

One facet of such a system is establishing a full continuum of interventions (from prevention, to responding to the first signs of problems, to effective interventions for chronic problems). The continuum encompasses enhanced classroom efforts and schoolwide interventions and weaves together school and community efforts. An effective continuum helps:

Prevent problems – Rather than waiting to react to problems that can lead to out of class referrals, staff development focuses on helping teachers redesign classroom to enhance student engagement. Engagement is key to eliminating common problems (e.g., engaged students learn better and are less likely to misbehave). Authentic engagement involves strategies that avoid over-reliance on rewards and consequences and that promote intrinsic motivation for learning. Outside the classroom, preventing problems requires engaging activities and a range of effective supports (e.g., for transitions before and after school, for home involvement).

Reduce the need for referral by responding as soon as a problem arises – When problems can't be prevented, it is essential to have positive interventions that can respond as soon as feasible after problems appear. As a first step, the focus is on making personalized changes in the classroom to better account for the student's motivation and capabilities (e.g., appropriate accommodations, changes in schedules and activities to minimize the problems). Then, if necessary, it is time to add personalized special assistance in the classroom. Such strategies not only reduce the need for referral to specialized services, they counter suspensions and expulsions (see https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pits.22111).

Minimize referrals, which enables the referral system to function properly – After classroom efforts and other general school supports have been enhanced, considerably fewer students will need referrals for special out of class school and community-based interventions. This allows the school's referral system to counter disproportional referrals (see https://academic.oup.com/cs/article/39/4/248/4107279) and respond better to those who do need more than the classroom can offer.

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A note about referrals to alternative programs (including special education placements). In extreme cases, alternative program referrals are made. For these to produce positive outcomes, the program must account for the individual's motivation and capabilities and provide personalized assistance that enhances motivation and competence. (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/altschool.htm).

One caution about alternative programs involves the downside of grouping students who manifest deviant behavior. Research stresses that deviant behavior can be exacerbated when deviant youth are together in programs (http://www.srcd.org/documents/publications/SPR/spr20-1.pdf).

A second caution involves the tendency not to plan for reintegrating students (despite policies that stress students should be in regular school settings to the degree that these can be effective). It is essential to ensure a strong emphasis on (a) enhancing the students' intrinsic motivation for returning and succeeding in a regular school setting and (b) providing supports for transitioning them back from alternative programs. A successful transition includes specially designed welcoming and social supports for reentry. It also usually calls for some changes in the regular school program to accommodate the needs of the returning student (more academic support, a peer buddy, a one-to-one contact staff person, etc. (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm).

Four Immediate Steps to Take

(1) *Open the classroom door to bring extra hands into the classroom.* Invite in support staff, peer tutors, parent volunteers and volunteer from colleges, service clubs, senior centers, etc., to help provide additional student support and guidance.

(2) *Enhance engagement strategies.* In particular, consider additional ways to personalize instruction and learning – focusing on both academic and social-emotional learning and increasing enrichment opportunities.

(3) *Use Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies.* The aim is to use such strategies to personalize instruction and, if necessary, provide accommodations and special assistance to respond as soon as a problem appears.

(4) *Use referral as a last resort.* See Practice Notes on *Students in Distress* for immediate next steps to take when referral is necessary (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/distresspn.pdf).

The following Center resources provide detailed strategies related to the above:
>*Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning* (two modules
   for continuing education)
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2104&number=9958

>*RTI and Classroom & Schoolwide Learning Supports* (four modules
   for continuing education)
   http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2311&number=9897

For more about referral and related processes at schools, see:
>*School-Based Client Consultation, Referral, and Management of Care*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/consultation/consultation2003.pdf

Two free books are have been developed to bring all this together. See:

>*Improving School Improvement*
>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
Both can be accessed at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html .

The Relationship Between Student Behavior and Engagement
By Brian Stack
http://exclusive.multibriefs.com/content/the-relationship-between-student-behavior-and-engagement/education

"...Over the last 10 years as a school administrator, I have seen a dramatic decline in classroom disruptions and general student misbehavior that I believe is correlated to increased student engagement in school... My staff quickly discovered that the more we engaged in student-centered, project-based, and hands-on activities in the classroom, the more students would be engaged and less likely to act out. Additionally, we discovered that adding choice and voice options for students continued to reverse the trend of student disengagement.

We stopped offering students the choice to stay in class or leave when there was a behavior problem. We found other ways to support them when they were disengaged. Instead of asking teachers to send disruptive students out to receive supports, we brought the supports to the student in the classroom. We call these supports "push ins," and they were adults who didn't have teaching roles such as social workers, deans, and academic advisers. A new cycle was formed where students stayed in class and found ways to re-engage in their learning. The model shows promise and may serve as inspiration for other school leaders looking to change the culture at their school."

You aren't paying attention to me.
Are you having trouble hearing?   **I hear O.K.**
I'm having trouble listening!

***Addressing Classroom Problems:**
A Learning Supports Practice Series for Teachers

Teachers ask: *What can I do right away?*

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.

Among others, the Center's 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
>*Prereferral Interventions* –
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/prereferral.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 "Online Resources Catalogue")

**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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These Practice Notes are online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/referralspn.pdf.

About Center Resources

Finding what you need, when you need it!

Our online clearinghouse *Quick Finds* offer easy and free access to over 130 topics of relevance to improving schools, addressing barriers to learning and teaching, (re)engaging disconnected students, and more. Links are provided to Center resources and to resources from many other sources. Access at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm.

Our Online *Resource Catalogue* lists all Center resources (organized by format – Information Resources, Practice Notes, Policy Briefs, Guides, Continuing Ed, etc.). Access at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/resources.htm.

Some of our recent resources:

Books
>*Improving School Improvement*
>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
  Access both at: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Information Resources
>*About homeless youth* -- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeless.pdf
>*Teacher bias and its impact on teacher-student relationships: The example of favoritism* **–**
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/teacherbias.pdf
>*Sex education and mental health* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sexeduc.pdf
>*The importance of teacher intrinsic motivation* –
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/teachermot.pdf
>*About conducting crisis exercises and drills* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/drills.pdf

Quick Finds
>Help-seeking – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/helpseeking.html
>Immigrant Students and Mental Health – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/immigrantkids.htm

**We are always interested in updating and improving our resources.
Please share.**

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Want resources? Need technical assistance? Coaching?
Use our website: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu
or contact us – E-mail: Ltaylor@ucla.edu or Ph: (310) 825-3634
Not receiving our monthly electronic newsletter *(ENEWS)?*
Or our weekly *Community of Practice Interchange?*
Send requests to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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The Center for Mental Health in Schools operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA.

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  . . . and a host of students