

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
(11/10/21)

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(Scroll down to read about the above and for hotlinks to resources)

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:

- >Masks at schools are natural opportunities to promote social and emotional development & mental health

From: *Masks Are Changing How Kids Interact*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/10/how-schools-can-help-kids-make-friends-through-masks/620356/>

“Some kids are struggling to recognize each other through masks—but schools and parents can teach them other skills to compensate.... Some psychologists and educators worry that such impairment in facial processing can lead to a spate of challenges with socialization and communication. Kids may find reading people’s emotions through masks particularly difficult. And for children who are meeting new classmates for the first time while masked, recognition difficulties can slow down the getting-to-know-you process and, in the long run, hinder the development of trust. ...

The good news is that teachers and parents can help kids work through any social and emotional obstacles that masks present. ... Teachers can approach these challenges intentionally in their classroom setups too. A kindergarten and first-grade teacher uses assigned seating so that kids can associate their classmates with consistent spots in the room. She also put up photos of the students not wearing their masks for everyone to refer back to. She encourages her students to talk about their feelings directly, because they’re hard to read in masks. She uses book characters and short videos to talk about facial expressions, and exercises to encourage the kids to learn about one another.”

For more, see *Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>

Also see the Center’s Quick Find on *Social and Emotional Development and Social Skills*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2102_05.htm

Listserv Participants: How are you working with students to enhance social and interpersonal development when students are masked? Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For discussion and interchange:

A colleague asks about:

Promoting collaboration between management and “teacher” unions to enhance school improvement

“I was especially interested in the report you sent today about New Directions for School Improvement Policy. I am the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and part of the leadership team that is writing the plan for our Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund III allocation. I have been trying to advocate for exactly what your report discusses: system-wide restructuring to accommodate enhanced and thorough teacher training, dedicated time for professional development, and additional personnel to help manage the progress monitoring process. My team keeps telling me that those issues are “negotiable” items (in other words, determined by the union), and so we can’t include that kind of whole-system change as part of our plan.

I’d love some ideas about how to address this. My concern is that we will use our ESSR III money for short-term projects (additional tutors, Saturday school) without really addressing the systemic and underlying issues.

Do you have any thoughts about how to make these changes when the district does not have the ability to control the bell schedules, the creation of advisory periods, or other infrastructure necessities?.

I’m actually on the negotiations team, and I have brought up some of these issues, but so far our lead negotiator has not included these items. It’s a little maddening because it’s hard to be responsive to the needs of our students when we can’t fix the system. We end up with a lot of piecemeal ideas but no real strategy, and then the teachers lose faith in our plans because they aren’t sustainable. It’s very frustrating! We are a high-school only district, I don’t know if that makes a difference, but systems are complicated by multiple bell schedules and also a LOT of history. Any insight you could give would be most appreciated”

What follows is our response and comments we elicited from colleagues across the country.

Center Comments: It is a simple truth that there is no way for schools to play their role in addressing barriers to student learning and enhancing healthy development if a critical mass of stakeholders do not work together towards a shared vision. There are policies to advocate for, decisions to make, problems to solve, and interventions to plan, implement, and evaluate.

The description of who makes key decisions reflects the complications of working to improve schools. Contract negotiations are critical.

Working with the lead negotiator is, as indicated, a first focus in demonstrating the importance of “system-wide restructuring to accommodate enhanced and thorough teacher training, dedicated time for professional development, and additional personnel to help manage the progress monitoring process.”

In our efforts to better understand the challenges of system change, over the years we have focused on the research on dissemination and diffusion. The excerpt below might provide some useful steps in working with the lead negotiator.

From: *Dissemination Focused on Diffusion: Some Guidelines*

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

Diffusion of innovation research offers some help in thinking about what all of us might consider in developing dissemination and diffusion strategies that connect more effectively with our audiences. Extrapolating from the work of E.M Rogers and Greenlaugh and colleagues, strategies should be designed to enhance perceptions of:

- (1) *Benefits*. This includes delineating what is to be gained from using the resource and following the recommendations (e.g., how the resource meets an organization’s needs). With respect to new information or innovations, Rogers emphasizes the concept of relative advantage. The degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supercedes. The greater the degree of perceived relative advantage, the more rapid its rate of adoption.

- (2) *Compatibility (fit, match)*. This refers to the degree to which a resource is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters. Rogers states that the more compatible it is, the more rapidly it will be adopted.
- (3) *Usability*. The language and design of the resource should maximize the likelihood that it can be readily understood by the intended audience. The content should highlight ways it can be used, including how it might be integrated into existing activity and leverage available resources. Rogers emphasizes the concept of trialability. This is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis. An innovation that is triable represents less uncertainty as it is possible to learn by doing.
- (4) *Evidence of impact*. Clearly, references should be included to data, opportunities to observe demonstrations, or any other ways to convey the potential impact of using a resource and acting on recommendations.

With regard to working with union partners, we were very lucky in working with a school where the school liaison to our work on student/learning support was a teacher who was the school union chapter chair. Her ability to share the plans with teachers made a big difference in creating a sense of trust in the work. When we had the opportunity to work at the district level, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support created a leadership team with the directors of all the support services and she also included the teacher union representative of the student support services. We met at the union headquarters for some of our meetings.

Additional relevant research for working with the union representatives to endorse your focus on enhanced teacher professional development:

From: *Union–Management Partnerships, Teacher Collaboration, and Student Performance* <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0019793916660508>

“...within some districts and schools, union leaders and school administrators have found an alternate path to reform, not rooted in market solutions or in test-based teacher accountability policies but instead centered on building strong relationships that facilitate collaboration among educators and educational improvement for students....”

Our observations and interviews across numerous school districts revealed that school-level partnerships often create structures/institutions that facilitate denser and more productive collaboration among site professionals. For example, we observed that in schools with strong labor–management partnerships, teachers and administrators often organized joint committees to solve problems and make decisions important to the functioning of the school. Further, principals and union building representatives met weekly on collaborative leadership teams to discuss substantive school issues, to solve problems, and to engage in site-based decision making, including textbook adoption, school schedules, and the hiring process for each school...”

From: *Teachers Unions and Management Partnerships: How Working Together Improves Student Achievement* <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED561086>

“...This report explores the impact of school-level, union-management, institutional partnerships on teacher collaboration and student performance. Moreover, it offers strong evidence for this alternative direction to the policy debate on public school reform by analyzing the role of union-management relations in educational quality. This latest study finds that: (1) Formal partnerships help improve student performance; (2) Partnerships lead to more extensive communication between teachers; (3) More extensive communication improves student performance; and (4) Partnership leads to more frequent and informal communication between union representatives and principals. This report targets school-level union-management partnerships as potential catalysts for professional collaboration in public schools. Furthermore, this research sheds light on the impact that school-level union-management partnerships and teacher collaboration can have on student performance.”

Comments from the Field:

1.”Each district's Collective Bargaining Agreement is uniquely written to address local needs so items like professional development and additional supports may need to be negotiated. That

said, you may want to include labor partners in the development of the plan and have discussions about systemic needs. When labor partners are involved and truly understand the needs, it is easier to reach consensus about the importance and value of services and supports like bell schedule changes, advisory periods, and other changes that can have a significant impact on students.”

2. “Ah, yes. The real world of schools. I’ve fought that worthy battle many times and it is a tough one. One piece of advice I received but was never well enough socially connected to try is this strategy:
 - > If the Board isn’t listening to you, figure out who the Board ordinarily listens to. Get those people on your side, and have THEM carry your message to the board for you. They will get a fair hearing on the matter, will probably have some leverage to exert, and possibly could help in many unexpected ways
 - > Same for the union and their members. There will be teachers who would LOVE to be a part of your change program, but they may be in the minority. You need to find them and see if they would be willing to work with you. You also need to learn what are the objections of the union leaders and their members. I’m guessing there isn’t enough trust (due to past experiences) to give up hard-fought for protections in favor of something untried. Adjust your plans so the union members don’t wind up in an overall weaker position.
 - > Since the beginnings of time, educators have been subjected to “the latest new thing” that they MUST switch to NOW only to find out it’s a lot of extra work and the old ways actually produced better results. You will need to deal with these realistic fears. Perhaps one way to do this would be to reduce class sizes so that teachers would have more time to learn about and implement the new ways. If you simply give another task to people who already have too much on their plates, you will meet a lot of resistance.
 - > Would also help to find your community leaders and recruit them. Especially the communities that you don’t very often see at school board meetings.
When the Board has a number of “their equals” advocating for your projects, plus a large number of union people and influential citizens from the community tugging on their elbows, then you make your pitch to the board. If you succeed, then the Board can call a public meeting, have a quick vote, and then absorb resounding adulation from the audience and the press!
Or something like that. Scenarios will vary depending on local conditions.
Which reminds me, schools I have visited lately have become large multi-cultural hubs. My granddaughter’s school heard 17 different languages each day. Couple this with studies out there that show different cultures tend to teach children how to remember critical information in different ways and you probably also have a need to research those learning differences and incorporate them into your pedagogy. With a little bit of luck, some of those new methods will mesh nicely with your plan for ESSR funds.
Wishing you all the best with this critically important project of yours!”

3. “If system-wide restructuring is not feasible, working toward that level of change is still possible. This person is a difficult and often frustrating position and needs to approach change in “small-bites”.

One strategy to challenging the status quo is to insist on the use of data and research to make change. For example, what data and research support the use of Saturday school? What has history taught us about attendance when/if we used this strategy before? Will students come? Have students who participated in the past improved their learning and performance? Are we committed to spending money on strategies that work or strategies that are easy to implement? And what goals do we have for supporting these students? In other words, will student progress be tracked and how long are we willing to implement Saturday school to adequately address the problem we have? And, what happens when the money runs out and goals have not yet been reached? Reasonable questions to ask prior to spending the money

and effort to implement this strategy. Curriculum and Instruction is organized into scope and sequence of content and regularly tested to ensure that students receive the best content using the best available strategies. Why wouldn't we do the same in an ESSR III plan? Think about how the proposed strategies will be aligned with the existing curriculum and instruction practices. Is this a "catch-up on what was missed" strategy or an experience that can accelerate learning? How will student progress be measured? How will changes/adaptations be made? How will the strategy be monitored for effectiveness? Etc.

Perhaps this ESSR III cannot initiate the systems change effort that is needed, but by asking these types of questions and pushing for quality strategies, I would hope that planners will begin to see that there are no quick or easy fixes. Then the door opens a bit wider to start conversations about how to align and coordinate what already exists. That may be a "negotiable" issue since it involves job descriptions, but at that point, the need to change may become more obvious and folks may be open to discussions.

I believe that educators are dedicated and ethical people who want what's best for students. They just need a mirror held up to their educational system to show them that the most successful options require thoughtful planning, reliance on research and data, and a lot of hard work. Anything less is not worthy of our students."

Is this topic being discussed in your locale?

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

About Moving Forward with a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports

Our website is designed to help with immediate needs and with moving efforts forward.

For example, these matters are discussed in some detail in several recent books:

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

All three are available at this time as free resources at

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

And as aides, we have been building a *System Change Toolkit*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

We also offer technical assistance and coaching for those who are leading the way for system transformation <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coach.pdf>

And for information about the research and lessons learned from the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, see

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

How to Do Virtual Parent-Teacher Conferences

<https://www.albert.io/blog/virtual-parent-teacher-conferences/>

2021 Building a grad nation

<https://www.americaspromise.org/report/2021-building-grad-nation-report>

While learning online, many students received a surprising pandemic respite from cyberbullying

<https://hechingerreport.org/while-learning-online-many-students-received-a-surprising-pandemic-respite-from-cyberbullying/>

School Connectedness Tip Sheets

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school_connectedness.htm

Helping Young Children Understand Emotions When Wearing Masks

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Wearing-Masks_Tipsheet.pdf

Pathways to Student Motivation: A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents of Autonomous and Controlled Motivations <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.3102/00346543211042426>

Colorado launches website to connect kids to free mental health sessions

<https://co.chalkbeat.org/2021/10/27/22749878/colorado-free-mental-health-therapy-session-teens-youth-h-i-matter>

Teens and Anger <https://childmind.org/article/teens-and-anger/>

Immigrant & Refugee Youth: A Guidebook on leadership development

https://iel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Guidebook-Final_accessible-version.pdf

A Few Upcoming Webinars

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

11/10 Using evidence for promoting equity for children and youth

11/11 An overview of bullying prevention

11/16 Supporting your child's mental health needs at school

11/16 Using Stakeholder Surveys to Increase Family Engagement

11/18 Introduction to youth hate crimes

11/20 Supporting SEL Through the Library

11/22 MH Impacts of Surviving COVID-19: Implications for School Mental Health Systems Leaders and Providers

12/7 Compassionate School Practices: Alleviating Stress and Furthering Well-Being

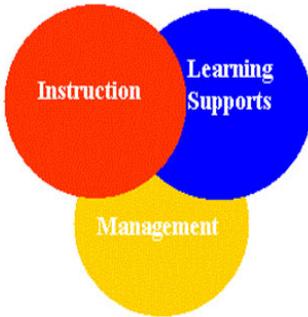
12/15 Empowering assistant principals to lead learning communities

12/16 Preventing youth hate crimes in schools and communities

Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth

<https://preventioninstitute.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4bf5a36bd9f72789255d49a&id=17f472fe99&e=b6757fd9d7>





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/>)