

**School Practitioner Community of Practice**  
(A network for sharing & exchange)  
(4/13/22)

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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).*

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**For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

**For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>**

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**For discussion and interchange:**

**>A wellness agenda and enhancing a sense of community at school**

**Request from a colleague:**

"I am a school-based mental health therapist at a high school... I appreciate the resources you provide to the education community. I saw one of your recent articles about peer counseling programs, and I have noticed many wellness centers at high schools in surrounding areas are staffed through peer counselors. I wanted to ask whether you have specific resources about implementing a wellness center at the high school level using other strategies beyond peer support programs and how to effectively provide mental health supports utilizing a smaller infrastructure. Thank you in advance for your help."

**Center Comments:**

The move at schools away from just reacting when problems arise to promoting wellness and preventing problems is so welcome. However, as with many important ideas, how best to achieve the desired outcomes is complicated.

Besides Wellness Centers, the focus on wellness and well-being in schools takes many forms (e.g., health education classes, enhancing nutrition and physical education, nursing staff, school-based health centers, family center programs, efforts to enhance school/classroom climate, and more). From a psychological perspective, wellness is promoted by facilitating social and emotional development and strengthening a psychological sense of community among students, families, and school staff. We know folks have been inundated with discussions about social and emotional development, so perhaps a few words about sense of community as related to enhancing school climate are in order.

**What is a psychological sense of community?**

People can be together without feeling connected or feeling they belong or feeling responsible for

a collective vision or mission. At a school, a psychological sense of community exists when enough stakeholders are committed to each other and to the school's goals and values, and they exert effort to pursue the goals and maintain relationships with each other. A perception of community is shaped by daily experiences and probably is best engendered when a person feels s/he is welcome, supported, nurtured, respected, liked, connected to others in reciprocal relationships, and a valued and competent member who is contributing to the collective identity, destiny, and vision.

Practically speaking, a conscientious effort by enough stakeholders associated with a school seems necessary for a sense of community to develop and be maintained. Such effort must ensure there are mechanisms that provide support, promote feelings of self-determination, and foster positive *working* relationships.

A perceived sense of community seems to require that a critical mass of participants not only are committed to a collective vision, but also are committed to working together in supportive and efficacious ways. There is an obvious relationship between maintaining a sense of community and sustaining morale and minimizing burn out.

In addition to a general focus on enhancing a psychological sense of community, promoting well-being at schools includes an emphasis on enhancing resilience and protective factors, increasing stakeholder empowerment and collaborative governance, pursuing culturally responsive pedagogy, and ensuring social justice and equity of opportunity.

In our work, we view concepts such as wellness and sense of community as perceived qualities that emerge in a somewhat fluid state from the complex transactions of many environmental factors (e.g., physical, material, organizational, operational, and social variables). At schools, such concepts reflect the influence of the institution's culture, which is a stable quality emerging from underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions. And, of course, such concepts and the institutional culture are shaped by surrounding political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

McMillan & Chavis (1986) define a sense of community as a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through commitment to be together. Their research emphasizes 4 elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

- (1) Membership – includes five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system.
- (2) Influence – works both ways: members need to feel that they have some influence in the group, and some influence by the group on its members is needed for group cohesion.
- (3) Integration and fulfillment of needs – Members feel rewarded in some way for their participation in the community.
- (4) Shared emotional connection – The "definitive element for true community", it includes shared history and shared participation (or at least identification with the history).

<https://www.scirp.org/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=2080505>

With specific respect to addressing barriers to learning to enhance school climate, we stress the importance enhancing student/learning supports and embedding mental health concerns. See

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

Access at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

## A Couple of Studies on Sense of Community and Schools

>Democratic School Climate and Sense of Community in School  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1007/s10464-005-8629-8>

“...The study demonstrates significant variation in school sense of community at the student, class, and school levels and the important role played by democratic school practices, such as student participation in making rules and organizing events, freedom of expression, and the perceived fairness of rules and teachers, in determining this variable.”

>School Sense of Community, Teacher Support, and Students' School Safety Perceptions  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajcp.12174>

“...The results of our study highlight the importance of school professionals working together to improve school climate. School psychologists can engage in prevention efforts, working with teachers and students to change the school and classroom environments to positively engage students... Teachers play a critical role in developing social cohesion within the school environment, by providing collaborative learning and social activities for students that can nurture their sense of belonging to the school community.... School administrators can provide support to teachers in developing a cohesive school climate where students and family are involved in the decisions that shape the school context....”

For more specific ways to promote wellness and a sense of community in schools, see our online clearinghouse Quick Finds on

(1) Wellness <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/wellness.htm>

(2) School Climate <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm>

Here are a few of the resources developed by our center that are included there:

- > About School and Classroom Climate  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolclassroomclimate.pdf>
- >About Promoting Youth Development in Schools  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/yd.pdf>
- >Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/welcome/welcome.pdf>
- > Improving Working Relationships Inside the Classroom  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/relations.pdf>
- >Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>
- >Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Problems at School  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/promotingmh.pdf>
- >Schools as Caring, Learning Communities  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/caring.pdf>

**Be a community of practice participant.**

**Share your experiences, views, comments**

Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>Youth have a role to play in improving school safety**

From:

*Building Youth Preparedness and School Safety Capacity by Integrating Educational Initiatives*  
[https://rems.ed.gov/docs/YouthPreparednessFactSheet\\_508C.pdf](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/YouthPreparednessFactSheet_508C.pdf)

“Youth make up a quarter of the population of the United States. Therefore, including youth in school safety, security, emergency management and preparedness is an essential part of engaging the entire community. Training and teaching youth to empower, educate, and build their resilience, strengthens the community’s capacity for preparedness in response to a variety of threats and hazards....

Schools and other educational settings provide an ideal environment to implement youth preparedness programs as part of its school preparedness activities since it simultaneously benefits the individual students as well as the whole school community....

Youth preparedness is a bridge to better connecting schools and their community partners.

These initiatives share common best practices and effective strategies, such as

- working with local and regional partners;
- identifying and addressing gaps in the community; and
- building from existing resources....

Promote activities that include youth, families, and the community. When multiple stakeholder groups are represented and present, relationships form, and bonds are made. Encourage activities that get stakeholders from different groups to interact and converse with each other. This may include orientations, professional development workshops for the whole school community, listening session for students and families, and more. Activities such as this will facilitate connections organically, setting the stage for future collaboration....

Collaborate and work with other professionals familiar with school climate activities such as school district safety staff, school psychologists, guidance counselors, and social workers to integrate prevention and preparedness into some of the programs, activities, and events they currently organize. One example of these, Student Assistance Programs, is a systematic team process used to mobilize school resources to remove barriers to learning...”

For more, see the Center Quick Finds:

>Youth Development <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/youthdev.htm>

>Resilience/Protective factors <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/resilience.html>

>Crisis prevention and response [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107_01.htm)

***I didn't get to do the homework because my computer was taken over in a ransomware attack.***



## **What's happening to maintain the education of Ukrainian students?**

From: *Keeping education going for Ukraine's children*

<https://genevasolutions.news/peace-humanitarian/keeping-education-going-for-ukraine-s-children>

“... some school-reopenings, distance-learning programs, and educational integration in refugee-hosting countries are keeping education going for thousands of children uprooted by the war.

...

Schools in thirteen of Ukraine's twenty-four oblasts have begun to re-open at the discretion of local authorities... The gradual reopening is a testament to the resilience of the country's education system... Many of the country's schools have been serving as shelters for displaced Ukrainians. Aid workers also use schools for distribution points and military personnel for their operations....

The Ukrainian government is working closely with international partners through the Global Education Cluster to keep education going as the war drags on. Headquartered in Geneva, the Cluster is the education arm of the UN's emergency humanitarian response, led by UNICEF and Save the Children. Its mission is to avoid educational gaps, prevent fragmentation, and ensure education is delivered safely during crises.

Ukraine's strong education response to Covid-19 has given the country a solid distance-learning infrastructure. Unusual for humanitarian crises, this means that distance-learning tools developed during the pandemic have limited the need for physical learning spaces in refugee and internal displacement camps. The country has several private service providers for distance-learning and the Ukrainian school system is continuing online....

Ukrainian TV channels are working with the government to develop educational TV programs for five to eleven year-olds, called Learning without Borders. The programs will focus on a separate subject each day.

Another education project deployed in Ukraine is UNICEF and Microsoft's Learning Passport. The passport brings together a range of educational courses and is accessible online, through mobile phones, and offline too, making it possible for children to continue learning where there is damage to IT infrastructure.

There is interactive content for different ages, including parents and educators. The scheme is live in so-called "blue dot centers" – safe havens for migrating children and families – across Europe....

Ensuring access to education during crises is not only crucial for learning – it is also a way to mitigate trauma and make children feel safe. Both Ukraine's Learning Passport and the wider Education Cluster prioritize psychosocial and mental health support. Exposure to war increases anxiety, and the classroom – real or virtual – can provide a safe space for children to express their fears. Life-saving messages are also core to the Cluster's efforts. The Cluster has been active in Ukraine since 2014, when conflict began in Donbass: a region densely littered with unexploded mines. Crisis-adjusted curricula teach children not to touch devices that could be military....”

## **>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

Implementation of school-based wellness centers

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pits.10104>

Schools as centers of wellness

[https://www.mhsoac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/schools\\_as\\_centers\\_of\\_wellness\\_final.pdf](https://www.mhsoac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/schools_as_centers_of_wellness_final.pdf)

Summer Learning Resources

<https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-learning/pages/default.aspx>

Blueprint for youth suicide prevention <https://www.aap.org/suicideprevention>

Career and technical education <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104544-highlights.pdf>

Talking to Kids About Ukraine: How Teachers Can Help Students  
<https://www.teachstarter.com/us/blog/talking-to-kids-about-ukraine-teachers-students/>

Resources in Response to the War on Ukraine  
<https://mailchi.mp/mi-aimh/ukrainian-russian-refugees-and-iecmmh-needs?e=e653e04848>

War on Ukraine: Resources to Support Children & Adolescents  
<https://mhccnetwork.org/centers/mhcc-network-coordinating-office/news/war-ukraine-resources-support-children-adolescents>

Our Nation’s Teachers Are Hustling to Survive: Nearly 1 in 5 American public school teachers work a second job outside of the classroom. Why is this their reality?  
<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-03-30-our-nation-s-teachers-are-hustling-to-survive>

Children’s Mental Health: Understanding an Ongoing Public Health Concern  
<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/understanding-public-health-concern.html>

Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes.htm?ACSTrackingID=DM79369&ACSTrackingLabel=April%202022%20CDC%20Healthy%20Schools%20Highlights&deliveryName=DM79369>

DSM Update Tweaks Criteria For Autism, Intellectual Disability  
<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2022/03/24/dsm-update-tweaks-criteria-autism-intellectual-disability/29770/>

Can Personalized Learning Be Scaled to Ease Teacher Burdens and Close Achievement Gaps?  
<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-03-28-can-personalized-learning-be-scaled-to-ease-teacher-burdens-and-close-achievement-gaps>

Moving toward Personalized Instruction and Special Assistance – (Part II in Improving School Improvement <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf>

Personalizing Classroom Instruction <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizing.pdf>

Enhancing Student/Learning Supports in Classrooms  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/classroomredes.pdf>

H.E.A.L. Together Toolkit <https://www.raceforward.org/heal-together/toolkit>

Using readiness to understand implementation challenges in school mental health research  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jcop.22818>

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

Transforming Policy Standards to Promote Equity and Developmental Success Among Latinx Children and Youth <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sop2.18>

Transforming Student/Learning Supports: What We’ve Learned so Far  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/spring2022.pdf>

Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707?1=null&queryId=N-EXPLORE-b70bdf32-5ef7-4207-a528-b3237cb09d08>

Seeking Common Ground: A Community Driven Agenda To Improve Public Education  
<https://brightbeamnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SEEKING-COMMON-GROUND-MAR-2022-2.pdf>

Gender-Affirming Care Is Trauma-Informed Care  
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/gender-affirming-care-is-trauma-informed-care>

National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center <https://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/>

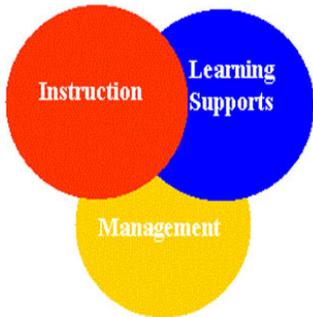
***How Right Now*** is a communications campaign designed to promote and strengthen the emotional well-being and resiliency of populations adversely affected by COVID-19–related stress, grief, and loss. Support for the campaign is provided by CDC and the CDC Foundation. <https://www.cdc.gov/howrightnow/>

## 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>

- 4/13 Student mental well being: flipping the script around student supports
- 4/15: Building the Movement through Policy and Advocacy
- 4/19 Closing the Implementation Gap
- 4/20 How are states developing a stronger teacher workforce
- 4/28 Basic Requirements of the McKinley-Vento Act
- 4/28 Youth mentoring research symposium
- 4/29 Too few or too many? Prevention over or under identification for special ed services
- 5/5 Cultivating leadership effectiveness and wellness
- 5/5 Collaborations to Build and Maintain Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems
- 5/10 Support challenging students
- 5/25 What promotes engagement

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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.

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### **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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

**For new sign-ups – email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto: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/> )**