

(4/19/23) This resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

- >Using lessons learned from the MH crisis to strengthen prevention
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For discussion and interchange:

- >Using lessons learned from the MH crisis to strengthen prevention

From: *Sociodemographic and mental health characteristics of children who use mental health care for specific reasons*

Behavioral problems were most often mentioned as a reason for care use, and this type of care was significantly more often used by boys than girls. Prevention strategies could target boys who are susceptible to developing behavioral problems. For example, providing preventive parenting or teacher support programs might prevent more severe problems and unfavorable development.

As concerns increase about behavior problems, discipline practices are being revisited and referrals for mental health multiply. While it is evident that schools must do more to address behavior problems, it is essential not to overstate, overidentify, and overpathologize the state of affairs. We all need to be sure that well-meaning efforts to help do not collude with matters such as inappropriate labeling, stigmatization, and self-fulfilling prophecies.

Use of words such as *it's a crisis*, *it's alarming* certainly call attention to a situation that warrants system changes at schools. But schools also have to emphasize the fact that so many students not only are coping, but are thriving. We need to learn from these youngsters and create conditions that enhance development of resilience and prevent behavior problems. This includes building on and enhancing the strengths, assets, and special gifts that can be found in students. It encompasses drawing on what is known about intrinsic motivation to enhance feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to significant others and minimize threats to such feelings. And it involves attending to the many natural opportunities for promoting social and emotional learning (e.g., enhanced understanding of self and others, increased sense of responsibility for self and others).

Related to all this, a recent article entitled *Beyond Psychotherapy and Medication: Wellness, Well-being and Fun Interventions Should be Part of Robust Systems of Care for Youth and Young Adults* stresses the potential of interventions other than psychotherapy and medication to provide substantial benefits for youngsters. The researchers state:

In particular, interventions that directly promote wellness and well-being include a range of activities that are likely to be attractive to young people, and that are unlikely to be perceived as stigmatizing or to have negative side effects. What is more, these kinds of interventions do not need to be delivered by mental health providers, so making them available will not put additional demands on the already overstretched workforce. A promising approach called "social prescribing" is being tried in the United Kingdom, with primary care health workers giving young people prescriptions to participate in activities including surfing, roller skating, gardening and dance, with the aim of improving mental and physical health, wellbeing and social connectedness.

For a bit more on this, see

- >[Prevention and Schools](#)
- >[Can After-School Programs Help Children Recover From the Pandemic?](#)

For discussion and interchange:

>School enjoyment contributes to positive learning and behavior

Let the main object . . . be as follows: To seek and to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners learn more; by which schools may be the scene of less noise, aversion, and useless labor, but of more leisure, enjoyment, and solid progress. Comenius (1632)

Related to focusing on prevention are efforts to enhance positive attitudes about what is being taught at school and an emphasis on promoting positive mental health.

Here's an excerpt from: *The Association Between and Development of School Enjoyment and General Knowledge*

“...Enjoyment of learning and school is related to students' curiosity and love of learning in both teacher-led and individual tasks.... School enjoyment is a type of positive affect related to interest, curiosity, and learning, and is defined as positive feelings about participation in school....

Positive affect for learning, such as school enjoyment, can lead to an “upward spiral” of broadened cognition that further supports future positive affect. Fortunately, young children begin school with high levels of enjoyment toward school....

School enjoyment related to other important motivational factors and learning orientations, including growth mindset, perceived academic competence, peer social skills, and task orientation. ... Young children are naturally curious about their world and enjoy learning, but this can decline with schooling. Children perceive a disconnect between school and being curious by late elementary school, reporting lower relevance and enjoyment of learning related to curiosity....

The potential to promote enjoyment to support students' general knowledge learning could have important benefits. Recent work suggests that student-driven methods of learning in early education, such as play-based methods, are effective in supporting motivation and learning. Specifically, young children learn from guided play because their curiosities and interest drive the learning taking place, and future research should explore the benefits of promoting school enjoyment in early education with these methods....”

From: *Early Adverse Childhood Experiences and Positive Functioning during Adolescence*

“...The field of positive psychology is dedicated to understanding the flourishing and optimal operation of individuals, groups, and institutions. Within the field of positive psychology, there has been an increased focus on positive functioning, with its emphasis on well-being as positive psychological functioning has been identified as an important factor in helping one reach optimal physical and mental health. The Positive Adolescent Functioning Measure of Adolescent Wellbeing is a self-report questionnaire evaluating Engagement (focus and interest in tasks), Perseverance (complete goals despite challenges), Optimism (view events and future in positive light; negative events are temporary), Connectedness (feels loved and supports others), and Happiness (contentment and positive feelings)....

Youth who are able to trust others, regulate their emotions, and engage in forward thinking behavior are able to alter their trajectory towards better health outcomes.... Improved pro-social behavior, such as positive functioning and forward-thinking tendencies, has been shown to be a protective factor for low income youth...”

For more, see

>Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School

>School Engagement, Disengagement, Learning Supports, & School Climate

About Children in Ukraine

From: *War in Ukraine one year on*

"...I'm here with a team of journalists to find out how children are doing.... Lots of children in Ukraine miss going to school. Either ongoing fighting or school buildings being destroyed means online lessons only, and for others, even that's impossible - there is no school of any sort.

I catch up with children who have just returned to the classroom in the city of Zhytomyr. My camera operator picks up his camera and starts to record the children listening to their teacher. Seconds later, the lesson is interrupted by a strange noise. It's an air raid siren, a sound that's hard to describe and something I've never experienced before. The loud warning rings out across the city and other parts of Ukraine to let the population know that an air raid is expected.

We begin to follow the children into the school basement where we stay for two hours. I ask one of the boys how he feels. "I feel a bit scared and also a bit worried for my relatives and myself and for all my friends," he says.

Underground, lessons continue and children dance and play games. Teachers try to distract them from their worries - this is something they're used to now. ...

The war leaves little opportunity for children to have a normal childhood and do all the things they enjoy. I visited a group that has been set up to help them relax. It's a place they can talk, play and create. Problems are put to one side, for a few hours at least, with a little help from Bise, a very energetic dog.

Sofia has been coming to these after-school groups and tells me: "Children will remember this war forever, some of them will have to take counseling for a long time, solving their problems.

"I think it shouldn't have happened to the children."

I leave Ukraine after more than a week traveling around, talking to children and I'm overwhelmed by their honesty and what they've endured. I've also seen communities come together. They are protecting each other.

Nobody knows what the long-term impact on children will be - and nobody knows when this war is going to end. But what is clear is that the children I've met, despite everything, have hope and a determination to carry on."

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

[Association between School Contexts and the Development of Subjective Well-Being during Adolescence](#)

[Evidence Based Update on Psychosocial Treatments for Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents](#)

[Surviving the strain of youth organizing](#)

[A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Cyberbullying Prevention Programs' Impact on Cyber-Bystander Behavior](#)

[The Effects of a School-based Resilience Intervention for Youth with Socioemotional Difficulties](#)

[Treating Anxiety in Kids by Working With Parents](#)

Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm LGBTQI+ Youth

Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness in America

What Students Are Saying About the C.D.C. Report on Teen Sadness

Using Trauma-Responsive, LGBTQ+ Affirming Care to Connect Young People to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

Key Concepts to Guide Professionals Working with LGBTQ+ Youth

Maryland Law Offers Lessons on Restricting Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion

Teenage Dating Abuse Training for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel Training Toolkit

VetoViolence – CDC Website

A Few Upcoming Webinars

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

- 4/19 Recruitment and retention strategies for principals
- 4/20 Youth ambassadors to improve health literacy
- 4/20 Successful mentoring
- 4/20 Effective communication with the IEP team
- 4/20 Youth ambassadors to improve health literacy
- 4/25 Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility
- 4/25 Advancing school leadership
- 4/26 Building campus relationships from the inside out
- 4/27 Resolving disputes through the special education process

To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what's going on** to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- **For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**
- **Looking for information?** (We usually can help.)
- **Have a suggestion for improving our efforts?** (We welcome your feedback.)

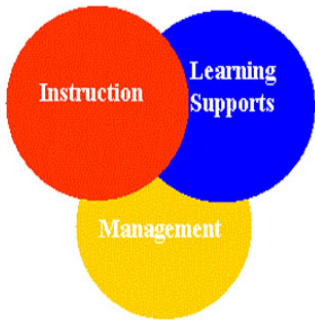
We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

How come your not at school?



**My teacher gave me time off
for bad behavior**



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.

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/>)