School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
(6/22/22)

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

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We are seeking your input as we plan a national online summit focused on unifying student/learning supports with mental health concerns fully embedded.

Click on the URL for the brief article indicated below.

On p. 3 you will find the first set of input we are seeking.

Reversing the Fragmentation of Student/Learning Supports:
Are You Part of the Problem?
Will You be Part of the Solution?

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summer2022.pdf

Please feel free to share with other leaders.

We look forward to your input.

For discussion and interchange:

>What can school boards do to improve student/learning supports?

School boards are under extreme pressure from various sources. One set of increasing concerns revolves around improving how schools provide supports to address the growing numbers identified as manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

As a stimulus for discussion by and with school boards, our Center recently sent the following report to school board members and school stakeholders around the country.

>*How School Boards Can Pursue New Directions to Help Schools*
Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/boardrep2022.pdf

The report is seen as especially relevant as districts respond to what is being widely referenced as a "youth mental health crisis." (e.g., we are hearing: *Thank you for this. This is a critically important issue.* [As a board member,] *I am in favor of supporting placement of mental health professionals in every school ....*).

Certainly part of meeting the needs of all students involves addressing concerns about mental health. And such concerns undoubtably should be a high priority for society. However, students, parents, and school staff always are confronted with a range of learning and behavior, as well as emotional problems. (The numbers, of course, have increased due to the pandemic, social justice concerns, and recent school shootings.) So schools cannot limit their attention mainly to discussing mental health problems and services.

Given that the mission of schools is educating students, a major challenge is to improve the role they play in directly confronting the multifaceted and complex factors negatively affecting student and school functioning. Meeting the challenge requires rethinking how student/learning supports address a wide range of pervasive and complex barriers to learning and teaching.

With all this in mind, the report cited above stresses that boards need a standing committee focused broadly on improving student/learning supports in ways that can significantly reduce the opportunity and achievement gaps. Such a committee can help clarify what schools can and should do to embed concerns for mental health, safety at school, problem prevention, social and emotional development, school climate, etc. into the larger context of addressing barriers to learning/teaching. They can recommend policies that (1) coalesce student/learning supports into a unified component and (2) facilitate the component's development into a comprehensive and equitable system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. And they can explore how efforts at schools can be woven together with a wide range of community resources to enhance system development.

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.

## *Need Resources for System Improvement?*

As you might imagine, we are getting more and more requests for resources as schools rev up to better address mental health concerns. Some want resources to guide administrators; some want resources for teachers and student support staff.

> Note: All our resources emphasize the importance of embedding mental health into a transformed system for addressing a wide range of barriers to learning and teaching. This approach contrasts in important ways from those advocating for "Comprehensive School Mental Health" and the emphasis on providing a "training package for K-12 educators and school staff" focused only on supporting the mental health of students.

The following are a few examples of resources specifically designed to help districts and schools enhance their role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. (Many more resources related to preventing and ameliorating learning, behavior, and emotional problems are readily accessed at no cost through our website – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ .)

>A wide range of folks have found the policy brief we did at the request of PACE presents a useful picture of what needs to be done in most school and why. See
  Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID 19 Context and Beyond
  https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/pb_adelman_nov2020.pdf

>The Center's *System Change Toolkit* provides links to resources for improving student/learning support systems keyed to administrators, school boards, and legislators
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm

 See, for example : *Introducing the Idea of Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports to New Administrators or those Who May Be Ready to Move Forward* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/introtosups.pdf (includes links to various other introductory resources)

>Overviews and in-depth details of major ideas related to how to improve school efforts to prevent and ameliorate learning, behavior, and emotional problems are provided in three books:
  >*Improving School Improvement*
  >*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
  >*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*
     all freely accessed at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Need something else? Let us know; we may have it or might develop it.
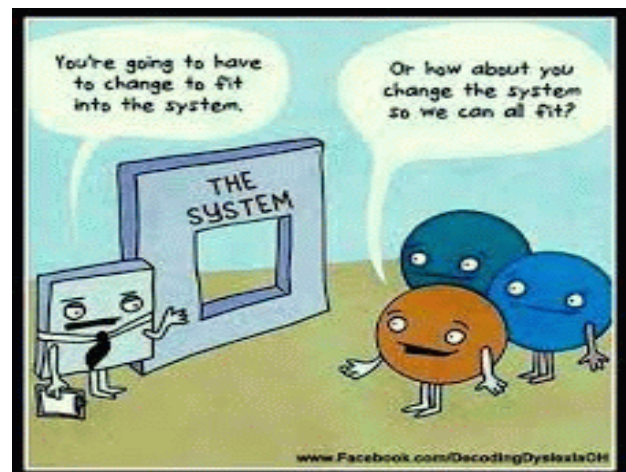
Comments from the Field:

>About Limiting the Focus at Schools to the "Youth Mental Health Crisis"

We asked a number of colleagues about this and here are a few comments we received:

>A planned approach begins with the entire student body. What currently exists in the classroom? In the building? In the community? How have policies been adjusted to support all students experiencing these challenges? What are existing school staff doing to support their students with these challenges? Adults in the school (whether they are teachers, support staff, cooks, custodian staff, etc.) don't need to be "therapists" to have a therapeutic relationship with a student. What supports are in place to help all kids feel that they belong at school and the school wants them there? Name these existing supports, look at the data to see how effective they are, and then decide what else should be added/changed. Focusing on all students helps prevent small problems from becoming bigger problems.

Next, there are a smaller group of students who need a bit more than the "basics" being provided for all students. Perhaps they've fallen behind academically, or have challenges that require something more. What programs or services already exist within the district? Are they working effectively? Are more services needed or is something different needed? Keep in mind that staff who run these programs and services can develop therapeutic relationships to support students to overcome challenges. Again, these staff may not be mental health professionals, but they can develop a positive relationship with students. Research shows that students with one positive adult relationship at school perform twice as well as students without that relationship.

And that leads us to students who need intensive supports.... But, if this is where you begin to address student needs, the needs will always be greater than the school's ability to address them.

>This is another one of those situations where Industrial Age thinking is not going to be very helpful in improving the mental health of thousands of students and teachers in one school district. We need Pandemic Era creative thinking to leverage what we have against the identified needs....

>It would be really great if schools would stop the heavy focus on the official curriculum, throttle back a bit, and work at building a therapeutic community that heals all [and] individual differences would be accommodated much better. ... Resource mapping would help us to discover who has the skills and where they are. A math teacher might be certified as an art therapist. We might have some natural helpers that just need guidance. Resource mapping can also help to reveal some strengths as well as deficiencies. In a way, we are all mental health providers, so we might as well get good at it.

>Reducing class sizes so that problems students bring in from the neighborhood wouldn't go unnoticed until there is a dramatic blow-up.

>Students & staff who get over-stimulated need some place to relax and be quiet should have those spaces available. ... Let's set up those quiet rooms now.

>Will some of the more serious needs of individual students be addressed? No doubt. Will there still be unmet needs? Absolutely. Hiring individual [MH] professionals will help, but this single solution cannot address the complex problems associated with mental health needs. A comprehensive, planned approach is needed.

For example, some students may be struggling with mental health issues and pressures as a result of the pandemic. Academic loss due to online learning, poverty due to loss of jobs/income, loss of health due to long Covid, loss of family members, etc. all come into play and are complex in nature. Similarly, they require complex approaches to address them that go well beyond the services a mental health professional can provide.

> *HOW IS THIS MATTER BEING ADDRESSED IN YOUR LOCALE?*
>
> *Please let us know so we can share the info widely.* Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

Students Persevere; Teachers Ask for Support

From: *This Year's High School Seniors Reflect on the Adversity They Faced and How They Persevered*

https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-06-06-this-year-s-high-school-seniors-reflect-on-the-adversity-they-faced-and-how-they-persevered

Geoff Heckman, school counselor, agrees that the class of 2022 has demonstrated an incredible ability to persevere in the face of the pandemic. "We really saw their resiliency in this time," he says. "Students have overcome a lot in the last couple of years and have really still been very successful, and have still stepped up and done the things that we've asked them to do. What I want people to understand is that in the face of adversity, they stepped up, and we need to give them credit for that. We owe a lot to the students," Heckman says. "And they are stronger than what we could ever imagine.

From: *Teachers' experiences with K-12 students' mental health*

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pits.22658

The consensus among teachers participating in recent study was that any training they received related to student mental health "needed to be specific to teachers and their work in the classroom. ... Participants described experiences of support relating to communication, shared resources, and collaboration between other professionals in their school or community. Participants described both feeling supported or needing an increase of support from school counselors, teachers, mental health counselors, school psychologist, or other community professionals. ... Participants endorsed an increase in interdisciplinary support with the school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors; however, these efforts coincided with school's efforts focused on managing negative or externalized behaviors as opposed to addressing student mental health.... Extending the support into the teachers' social and pedagogical practices promotes an environment that addresses student mental health without limiting the focus to individual students...."

> Principal Johnson beamed as she asked second grade teacher Ms. Lopez:
>
> *How did you get these low IQ students to do so well?*
>
> Lopez responded: *What do you mean low IQ?*
>
> *Well, didn't you see their IQ scores on the list I sent you last fall?*
>
> *Oh!* Lopez exclaimed, *I thought those were their locker numbers!*

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

2021 Annual Report to Congress from the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF)
https://www.thecommunityguide.org/content/2021-annual-report-congress

Pandemic Learning: Less Academic Progress Overall, Student and Teacher Strain, and Implications for the Future https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-105816

Covid challenges, bad student behavior push teachers to limit, out the door
https://edsource.org/2022/covid-challenges-bad-student-behavior-push-teachers-to-the-limit-and-out-the-door/673124

School psychology and mental health
https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/mental-health/school-psychology-and-mental-health

School Psychologists: Providing Mental Health Services to Improve the Lives and Learning of Children and Youth
https://www.wsasp.org/resources/Documents/Mental%20Health/School%20Psychologists%20Mental%20Health.pdf

School Social Workers' Role in Addressing Students' Mental Health Needs and Increasing Academic Achievement   https://www.sswaa.org/copy-of-about-school-social-work

The Evolution of the Role of U.S. School Nurses in Adolescent Mental Health at the Individual, Community, and Systems Level: An Integrative Review
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10598405211068120#_i17

Mental health since Covid survey https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/#tab-7

Service and Advocacy Organization Leaders Share Insights for an Applied Research Agenda on Black Children and Families
https://www.childtrends.org/publications/service-and-advocacy-organization-leaders-share-insights-for-an-applied-research-agenda-on-black-children-and-families

Creating a Curriculum with Black Girls in Mind
https://hechingerreport.org/creating-a-curriculum-with-black-girls-in-mind/

Cardona urges support for educators as rocky year comes to a close
https://www.chalkbeat.org/2022/6/9/23161659/cardona-teacher-pay-support-educators-speech

How to Support Kids Who Are Questioning
https://childmind.org/article/how-to-support-kids-who-are-questioning/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=publ_ed_nl_2022-06-14&utm_content=how-to-support-kids-who-are-questioning

Reducing Adverse Police Contact Would Heal Wounds for Children and Their Communities
https://www.childtrends.org/publications/reducing-adverse-police-contact-would-heal-wounds-for-children-and-their-communities

Rethinking claims of racial bias in special education
https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-rethinking-claims-of-racial-bias-in-special-education/

How to Support LGBTQ Children
https://childmind.org/article/how-to-support-lgbtq-children/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=publ_ed_nl_2022-06-14&utm_content=how-to-support-lgbtq-children

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

6/23 Modernizing Principal Support: The Road to More Connected Effective Leaders
6/28 Protect Our Youth Online
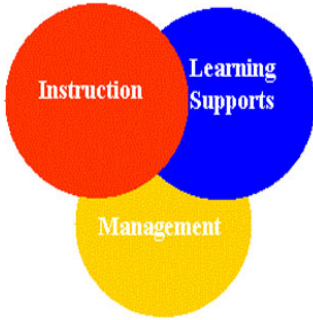6/30 Intersections of Secondary Traumatic Stress with Racism
6/30 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights
7/11 Youth and Families Experiencing Homelessness
7/14 McKinney-Vento 101: Basic Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act
7/21 Mentoring Through the Ages: Youth Perspectives

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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

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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

**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 a**t http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)