

(6/7/23) This continuing education resource is from the national  
**Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

**Featured**

>Colleague asks: *How to measure school mental health success?*

>About reducing teacher burnout

>Interchange about

**“Screening Students for Problems: Testing Often is Not Needed”**

>Links to other relevant resources

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**For discussion and interchange:**

>Colleague asks: *How to measure school mental health success?*

**Request from a colleague:**

“I have recently been promoted to director of mental health in my school district. I’m meeting with the superintendent next week to discuss how we measure success. As you know schools typically look at grades, attendance, and behavior. Mental health isn’t as easy to define in those data points. What are other ways to look at mental health success? I haven’t been able to identify areas that we can show that we are improving aside from individual goals. Do you have any ideas? As always Thank you for being a resource.”

**Center Comments:**

*This is a great opportunity to work with the Superintendent to expand understanding of mental health in schools.*

We suggest stressing that focusing *narrowly* on improving mental health probably isn’t the best way to go in the long-run. Our perspective is that mental health can meet student and school needs best by being embedded in the broader focus of (1) school improvements that are designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and (2) an accountability framework that is expanded to reflect that emphasis. See Chapter 20 “Moving to a Three Component School Improvement Accountability Framework” in *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*.

From this broad perspective, measures of school mental health effectiveness would not be separated from all the efforts to enhance student (and staff) well-being and improving schools. For example, the type of major accountability indicators might include increased attendance, reduced tardies, better behavior, less bullying and sexual harassment, increased family involvement with child and schooling, fewer referrals for specialized assistance, fewer referrals for special education, fewer pregnancies, fewer suspensions and dropouts. See

>*Expanding the Accountability Framework for Schools*

>*Rethinking School Evaluation and Accountability to Get Credit for All that is Being Done*

For more on evaluation and accountability, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find on

>*Evaluation of Programs Addressing Barriers to Learning; Accountability*

For more on broadening the focus on mental health in schools, see

>*Schools and Mental Health: A Position Statement*

>*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports*

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

**Listserv participants:**

*Anything to share about what to tell a superintendent about how to embed MH in Schools?*

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>About reducing teacher burnout**

From: *Teacher stress and burnout: The role of psychological work resources and implications for practitioners*

“... stress and burnout among teachers and other practitioners is recognized as a widespread concern due to the adverse effects on students, schools, and communities. ...

Numerous preventative and proactive strategies can be easily implemented to support teachers who may be susceptible to burnout, either due to age, tenure, or other factors. For example, school leaders could employ evidence-based coaching or mentoring programs, provide adjusted service requirements (e.g., fewer committees), utilize frequent check-ins and feedback loops to identify teacher needs, and create schedules and plans that promote predictability and structure for teachers, including those who are younger or less tenured....

School practitioners who work closely with teachers should assist teachers to perceive their work situation as more manageable, meaningful, and comprehensible. To provide these opportunities, practitioners in schools must build strong relationships with teachers and have open and regular communication...”

Anyone who works in schools knows about burnout. Staggering workloads and endless hassles are the name of the game. The many frustrations, large and small, affect staff (and student) morale and mental health. As with so many problems, if ignored, burnout takes a severe toll.

As with so many problems, it is easiest to view burnout as a personal condition. And, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long-run to address the matter. The problem is multifaceted and complex. The solution requires reculturing schools in ways that minimize the undermining and maximize the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. This involves policies and practices that ensure a daily focus on (1) promoting staff and student well-being and (2) addressing barriers to teaching and learning. *School discussions about reducing staff (and student) burnout need to include how to advance such policies and practices.*

For more, see

- >*Burnout*
- >*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*
- >*Teachers Can't Do it Alone!*
- >*Turning Big Classes into Smaller Units*
- >*Volunteers as an Invaluable Resource*

**For more discussion and interchange:**

**>About Screening Students for Problems**

We received this from a colleague in response to our 5/11/23 email “*Screening Students for Problems: Testing Often is Not Needed*”

“...We have implemented screening over the past decade and have found that it has allowed for us to find a significant percentage of students beyond our as usual parent/teacher/student referral approaches. Our first large scale test of change yielded a 63% increase in the number of students identified as qualifying for services to address moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression...”

**Center response:** First and foremost, we begin with the reality that, inevitably, the benefits of screening and designating a student as having problems are accompanied by some negative effects

on the student. Of course, that doesn't mean we shouldn't identify problems as soon as we can. For a better picture of our concerns, see Chapter 6. "Labeling, Screening, and Over-pathologizing" in *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change* .

Regarding finding more than the usual parent/teacher/student referrals with a screening test – Our point is that an increase would happen if a direct invitation offering assistance were sent out to parents/teachers/students. The difficulty unfortunately is that for many schools essential assistance is not available. And too often schools do too little to offset the negative effects of being identified and when screening is use for concerns such as threat assessments, too little attention is paid to the problem of false positives.

### **To which our colleague responded:**

*"I agree that pathologizing is something that I think occurs if we consider screening as an attempt at diagnosing, but when we destigmatize the discussion of mental health screening on a universal scale and make screening an attempt at understanding emerging concerns in an attempt at prevention, this sets the stage for individuals to consider that all individuals struggle with mental health problems on some scale and that it is important to be open and honest about the prevalence of these concerns. I don't necessarily see acknowledgment of a real concern as a negative impact, rather it could serve to reduce stigma and promote awareness/inclusion/validation of their experiences. I completely agree with the sentiment about directly engaging in offering care to students. Our stance has been, please don't screen if you do not intend on moving on these actionable data. Follow up and an offer of services is a requisite part of the larger screening program, which has been a driving component of our system since the beginning. I appreciate this dialogue...how does this resonate with you?"*

**Center reply:** Our intent in highlighting various matters related to MH in schools and student/learning supports is to raise awareness and encourage discussion across the country about major concerns (issues and problems). With specific respect to screening (as with all interventions at schools), there are pros and cons, costs and benefits. What we hope is that the discussions we stimulate will lead to efforts to make certain the benefits of a practice truly outweigh the costs (to students, families, schools, etc.).

Currently, there is renewed emphasis on identifying kids problems. However, we are not seeing a concomitant concern about efforts to avoid overpathologizing (e.g., MHTTC's current series on screening).

Our emphasis is on fully embedding a broad focus on MH in schools. We want it done with full appreciation of the nature and scope of mental health and with the understanding that school system changes that rethink student/learning supports can reduce the frequency with which students have learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Schools with many youngsters not doing well need to consider their role in causing the problems. We know that many kids are not particularly happy at school and that is not surprising given how many schools need improvements in order to successfully engage students in classroom learning and reengage disconnected students. The symptoms of many students may be reduced by first engaging them at schools and, as necessary, providing special assistance in the classroom. Then, if this is insufficient, referring for specialized assistance. See Chapter 13. "Bringing Learning Supports into Classrooms" in *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change* .

We all want things to be better for kids and a balanced approach seems necessary.

For more, see

- >[\*Screening Mental Health Problems in Schools\*](#)
- >[\*Thinking Cautiously About Screening for Major Depressive Disorder in Adolescents\*](#)
- >[\*Countering the Over-pathologizing of Students' Feelings & Behavior: A Growing Concern Related to MH in Schools\*](#)

And for more, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find on [\*Assessment and screening\*](#)

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

**Differentiated staffing in the classroom**

**Therapist factors and their impact on therapeutic alliance and outcomes in child and adolescent mental health**

**How are whole-school mental health programs evaluated?**

**Psychological distress among young people who are couchsurfing: an exploratory analysis of correlated factors**

**From a child who IS a problem to a child who HAS a problem: fixed period school exclusions and mental health outcomes from routine outcome monitoring among children and young people attending school counseling**

**Socially active volunteering students: The case of student councils**

**School Hardening Can Harm Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development**

**How to Help Kids Learn to Fail**

**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>

6/7 Supported education services

6/7 Holistic well being and mental health

6/8 Getting to the root of the problem

6/8 Effective psychotherapy

6/13 The Role of Special Educators in School Safety

6/14 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights

6/20 De-escalation of volatile behavior

6/20 Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness

6/22 Students with anxiety

6/22 Tech is everywhere but is it making schools better

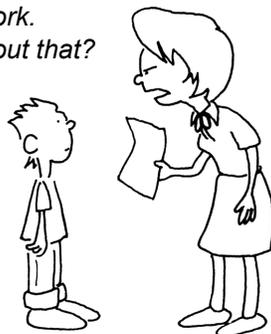
6/23 Youth mental health

6/26 Stages of change

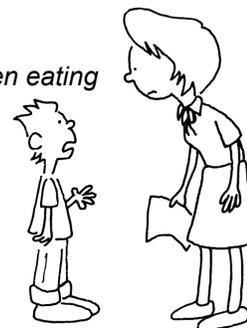
6/26 Peer support

6/28 Peer support

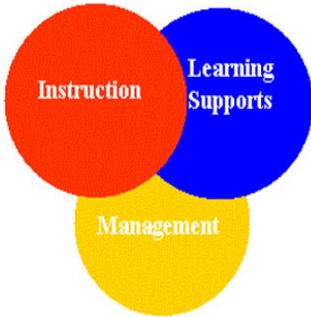
*Your mom said that she never saw this report  
I sent her about your work.  
What do you know about that?*



*Gee, I guess the dog has been eating  
more than my homework.*



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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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### 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](mailto: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](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/>)**