

This resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA
(8/10/22)

Featured:

- >**What role do situational and relationship factors play in youngsters' emotional problems?**
- >**Does a "hardened campus" discourage parent engagement?**
- >**Welcoming and student/family support starts at the front office**

Plus:

Links to other resources

For discussion and interchange:

>**What role do situational and relationship factors play in youngsters' emotional problems?**

Clearly, as the new school year gets underway, concerns about students' mental health, anxiety, alienation, suicide ideation, etc. can't be ignored. In addressing such concerns, school staff must be prepared to help all youngsters who are manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. At the same time, staff must take steps to avoid *overpathologizing* vestiges of the circumstances and events we all have experienced over the last couple of years and from which most will recover with natural supports and resilience.

Unfortunately, the tendency to overdiagnose seems inevitable given the current special funding for what is widely declared as a mental health crisis caused by the pandemic. However, the real crisis surrounding mental health concerns stems from *long-standing failures* to (1) provide effective services for those with severe and chronic mental health problems and (2) promote positive mental health, prevent problems, and respond quickly when problems are first observed.

The renewed attention to youth mental health provides schools with the opportunity to fully embed mental health into their agenda for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. In doing so, they do face a difficult balancing act. They must both address the immediate needs of students and initiate long-range, substantive systemic improvements to prevent and minimize problems. That is, they need to do more than increase access to counseling and therapy. Plans must also focus on countering the conditions that produce so much student frustration, apathy, alienation, anger, and hopelessness. Accomplishing this calls for equitably increasing opportunities and supports that can enhance the quality of youngsters' relationships, living conditions, and expectations for a positive future.

Here are a couple of items that can be used to broaden the discussion about addressing problems:

...consider the American penchant for ignoring the structural causes of problems. We prefer the simplicity and satisfaction of holding individuals responsible for whatever happens: crime, poverty, school failure, what have you. Thus, even when one high school crisis is followed by another, we concentrate on the particular people involved – their values, their character, their personal failings – rather than asking whether something about the system in which these students find themselves might also need to be addressed. Alfie Kohn

"...In 2019, males accounted for nearly 80% of the suicide deaths in the U.S.... Males who die by suicide are less likely to have known mental health conditions than females; therefore, it is important to identify prevention points outside of mental health systems....

Relationship problems were a common circumstance and were significantly more prevalent among adolescents, young adults, and middle-aged adults without known mental health conditions... Family problems were the most common type for adolescents...

These findings underscore the importance of improving environmental and social conditions to decrease suicide risk such as mitigating the effects of acute situational stressors that could contribute to emotionally reactive or impulsive suicides, particularly when substance misuse and

access to highly lethal means are present. This highlights the potential benefits of a range of strategies to create protective environments, provide support during stressful transitions, and enhance coping and problem-solving skills across the lifespan...”

[https://www.ajponline.org/article/S0749-3797\(22\)00153-2/fulltext](https://www.ajponline.org/article/S0749-3797(22)00153-2/fulltext)

Below are cited three free resources we have developed to provide online in-depth aids to guide planning for improving how schools can meet immediate needs and build a better system for countering the conditions that produce so much frustration, apathy, alienation, anger, and hopelessness.

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

all three can be accessed at

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

For resources on specific problems, see the topical menu of Quick Finds at

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

For example, see the Quick Finds on:

- > *Suicide prevention* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3002_02.htm
- > *Anxiety and Stress* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/anxiety.htm>
- > *Child Trauma* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/ptsd.htm>
- > *Child Abuse and Neglect* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3007_01.htm
- > *Bullying* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/bully.htm>
- > *Attendance* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/attendance.html>
- > *Student and Family Assistance* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2304_02.htm
- > *Supports for Transitions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm
- > *Case/Care Management* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/casemanagement.htm>

For discussion and interchange:

>Does a “hardened campus” discourage parent engagement?

Request from a colleague:

“A few years ago I worked at a Title I school that had been plagued with low family engagement. The new principal implemented multiple modalities to improve this, including developing a creativity room at the school, multiple family days on campus (Father-son barbecue, mother-daughter dance), offered parenting classes on site, etc. Within three years the family engagement on campus had really turned around, and we saw improvement in all areas.

Then, another campus in our district had an incident with a someone who walked onto campus before school frightened a young child and left campus before being caught. A lawsuit ensued and the courts expected the schools to make changes to prevent a future situation. And then all the schools got new gates, cameras, and completely closed campuses. My principal and I were heartbroken. What could be done, now, to increase engagement, if parents coming onto campus was verboten? Now only the already engaged parents, who have high-level posts in the PTA, can ever be on campus, and then only related directly to their top duties. What are best practices for this on a closed campus?”

How is this topic being addressed in your locale?

Below are a few perspectives on this concern. (Send your response to ltaylor@ucla.edu)

From: *School Safety, Morale, and Filling Shortages: NEA President Dishes on What’s Next For Teachers*
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/school-safety-morale-and-filling-shortages-nea-president-dishes-on-whats-next-for-teachers/2022/07>

We’re hardening their schools. How in the world is that creating an environment that’s conducive to teaching and learning and having fun and playing instruments and doing science projects?... It is the community – the educators, the students themselves, the parents, the mental health professionals – coming together to talk about, how do we keep these schools safe? NEA President Becky Pringle

Here's some responses from colleagues:

- (1) "This is a sad situation yet one many schools find themselves in these days. These are some suggestions.
Send out more positive communication via Twitter, Facebook, web-site, and other social media.
Create a brand for the communication, such as "Tiger Parent Page".
Increase the frequency of parent surveys- short surveys questions to get feedback from families & parents. (can be posted on social media & web-sites.)
For elementary school, have students write a letter to, or draw a picture for parents each month telling them about what they are learning and how learning can be extended at home.
If approved, consider having some events at neighborhood parks and/or in conjunction with Park & Rec, YMCAs, or Boys and Girls Clubs.
Of course, the thing to avoid is giving up."
- (2) "First, find out what your target audience wants/needs, their personal roadblocks (financial/emotional/cultural/safety), and who they look to for guidance and leadership (religious figure/athletic coach/activist). Then you can start to get creative about ways to continue family engagement off-campus.
To my way of thinking, the exact opposite of this is a bunch of lawyers deciding what is best for the families and school staff from their seats of authority without consulting anybody else, thus creating a solution that looks good on paper but has plenty of negative effects on the community. I certainly wouldn't want to go to a school that looked like a high security prison.
One thing that comes to mind is to have events in public parks. Maybe some nearby ballroom, sports arena, warehouse could donate some open hours – it's open & secure and has all the facilities you might need for a larger crowd. ...
Portland, Oregon, does a summer "Free-for-All" to get meals to people and build community with movies and concerts, etc. Perhaps this could trigger some ideas.
<https://www.portland.gov/parks/arts-culture/sffa>
But always start with the guests that you want to show up at the event. And know your guests well enough that you can anticipate what you have to do to make them comfortable and want to attend.
While these are long-term ideas, the parents & staff probably need something right now! All that chain-link fence makes a great pop-up gallery wall for child and adult art telling the families that they are missed and the staff can't wait to figure out a better way. (Or any theme that makes sense.) Or maybe make greeting cards as an art project to go home with the kids to let families that the togetherness they once had is greatly valued and staff is trying to figure out ways to get those good feelings back again. You could also do a swap meet outside the fence. Hang up some clothes. Get donations of all kinds of items for grab-bags, coupons for free pizza slices. If busking is allowed there, you could have regular after school concerts. Tables to sign up to volunteer for planning what to do next, set up ride sharing. Take full advantage of the public space just beyond the Wall the schools were required to build. <https://stamps.umich.edu/news/the-wishing-fence>
When the government isn't providing, it's time to build mutual aid networks."
<https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/how-to-create-mutual-aid-network>
- (3) "I know a school that is similar, and they were able to carry on and build activities for family one of which was building a family center on campus and including pre-school that allowed for morning coffee. Health service partnerships were also added allowing for more interaction. It takes time but it's possible. The school partnered with a university to become a "trauma-informed school" which allowed for parent education to allay fears and support hope and resilience."
- (4) "Not only is this a practical issue, but a philosophical one. No opportunities for students to be recognized in front of their parents, no chances for parents to better understand what and how their children are doing in school, zero opportunity for teachers to understand the challenges these families face, etc. There are no easy answers, but two thoughts come to mind....
While it's not nearly as easy to do, parent/child events could be planned off campus (BBQs, dance parties, recognitions) in local community centers, parks or churches. Similarly, there may be

community groups interested in working with the school to offer parenting classes, informational meetings, etc. Forget the "fortress" that is school. Education takes place everywhere, everyday. The best options are never easy but parent engagement can happen if the staff forget about the school building as the hub of all activity. ...

What does the staff in this building believe about their mission and their role as educators? What are they willing to do to prepare their students for success? This staff has seen for themselves the difference parent engagement can make. How will they rise above these imposed conditions? The best answers for how to take action will come from staff discussions - from those dedicated to the success of their students.

School safety, specifically around gun violence, is a complex issue and one that I fear will be with us for some time to come."

For more on parent/family engagement, see our online clearinghouse quick find topic page at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm>

Quick links to some of the Center resources that can be found there are:

- > *Home Involvement, Engagement, and Re-engagement in Schooling in Transforming Student and Learning Supports*
- > *Self-study Survey: Home Involvement, Engagement, and Re-engagement in Schooling*
- > *Policy & Practice Report: Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning: A Collaborative Process*
- > *Connecting Schools, Families, and Communities*
- > *Parent and Home Involvement in Schools*

Welcoming and Student/Family Support Starts at the Front Office

From: *Welcoming Parents to Their Child's School: Practices Supporting Students With Diverse Needs and Backgrounds* <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0013124517747682>

"...The attitudes, behavior, and actions of school staff, teachers, and principals are important aspects of a welcoming school environment. First encounters during registration, responding to needs and questions, appropriate information, and emotion from all staff members matter.

... While some parents described their interactions with front-office staff positively, an equal number described situations in which they were treated poorly or ignored all together.

"Front office employees are the first contacts to the school community. When I have entered the front office to pick up my children or drop off paper work the front office staff have appeared short in patience and little in kindness."

"I have entered the school office several times where I have never been acknowledged. Today, for example, I came in to volunteer neither secretary even looked up. I signed in, got my sticker, and walked into the school to go to my child's classroom. There was not one word said to me. Many other parents have brought up the issue with the front office, and their lack of friendliness and respect to parents. I fully understand their job must be difficult; but they are the front line and head representatives of your school, and there is a major deficiency there that needs to be addressed."

For ideas on how to use volunteers to support the front office staff in providing a welcoming environment, see

- > *Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/welcome/welcome.pdf>

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

3 State Policy Levers to Support Teacher Mental Health

https://ednote.ecs.org/3-state-policy-levers-to-support-teacher-mental-health/?utm_source=ECS+Subscribers&utm_campaign=cdf3677b86-ED_CLIPS_08_01_2022&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1a2b00b930-cdf3677b86-53599575

Maine resilience building network <https://maineresilience.org/Mattering>

Proactive approaches to supporting children with disabilities

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/guide-positive-proactive-approaches-to-supporting-children-with-disabilities.pdf>

Implementing 988 and Future Priorities

https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/22.07.13_988_Launch_and_future_priorities.pdf

How to Help Parents Talk to Their Children About Mental Health

https://www.childrenshospitals.org/news/childrens-hospitals-today/2022/06/how-to-help-parents-talk-to-their-children-about-mental-health?utm_campaign=Creating-Health&utm_source=Salesforce-MC&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=July-2022

How to Talk to Kids About Sex and Consent

https://childmind.org/article/how-talk-kids-sex-consent-boundaries/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub_ed_nl_2022-07-26&utm_content=how-talk-kids-sex-consent-boundaries

44 Children's Books About Mental Health

https://childmind.org/article/best-childrens-books-about-mental-health/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub_ed_nl_2022-07-26&utm_content=best-childrens-books-about-mental-health

State of the Superintendent — High Job Satisfaction and a Projected Normal Turnover Rate

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA956-12.html

Shyness, Unsociability, and Social Avoidance During Early Adolescence: Associations With Peer Relationships and Aggression <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/02724316221088750>

Student Population Has Significantly Diversified, but Many Schools Remain Divided Along Racial, Ethnic, and Economic Lines <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-104737>

A longitudinal study of school climate: Reciprocal effects with student engagement and burnout

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pits.22691>

World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>

Early data on ‘high-dosage’ tutoring shows schools are sometimes finding it tough to deliver even low doses

<https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-early-data-on-high-dosage-tutoring-shows-schools-are-sometimes-finding-it-tough-to-deliver-even-low-doses/>

Talking about Youth Probation, Diversion and Restorative Justice

<https://assets.aecf.org/m/blogdoc/aecf-talkingyouthprobation-2022.pdf>

A Reimagined Vision for Black Child and Family Well-being From National and Local Leaders

<https://www.childtrends.org/blog/a-reimagined-vision-for-black-child-and-family-well-being-from-national-and-local-leaders>

Responding to Intolerance: Leadership for a Multiracial Democracy

<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/responding-to-intolerance-leadership-for-a-multiracial-democracy>

Sociodemographic Disparities in Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Overdiagnosis and Overtreatment During Elementary School

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00222194221099675>

Unmasking School Discipline Disparities in California: What the 2019-2020 Data Can Tell Us about Problems and Progress

<https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/summary-reports/unmasking-school-discipline-disparities-in-california>

Feelings of Belonging May Indicate Students’ Risk of Depression

https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/observer/obsonline/2022-july-student-belonging-depression.html?utm_source=APS+Emails&utm_campaign=47d89b012d-PSU_07222022_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d2c7283f04-47d89b012d-62625175

Dueling Diagnoses – Concerns about overlapping symptoms, complex disorders lend momentum to diagnostic models that could supplement – or even supplant – the DSM.

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/dueling-diagnoses>

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>

- 8/11 Addressing the Impact of Youth Mental Health in Minority Communities
- 8/16 The Role of School Mental Health Professionals in Supporting School Safety Efforts
- 8/16 IDEA: The big picture
- 8/18 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness
- 8/23 IEP: Access to a free appropriate education
- 8/25 A Discussion About Inclusion for Kids with Special Needs
- 8/30 Special Education: Parent Action, Accountability, and Resolving Differences
- 8/30 Critical conversations: prepares students for heart-to-heart conversations with parents, peers
- 8/30 Understanding Doubled Up
- 8/31 Growing Voters In and Out of the Classroom: A Role for K-12 Schools
- 9/21 Legal and Ethical Considerations: Suicidal Risk & Informational Gathering
- 9/27 Emotionally Connect, Partner, and Respond

Why are you feeling so bad?

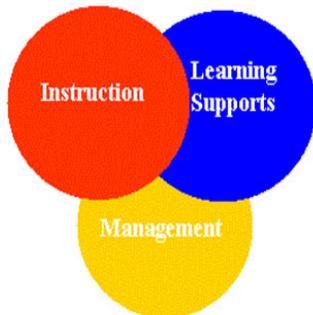


Given the sad state of affairs around here, I'm surprised everyone isn't feeling depressed.

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/>)