

(9/20/23) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

>Teachers Can't and Shouldn't be Expected to Do it Alone

>Can the Arts be Used to Enhance Students' Empathy and Compassion?

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

For discussion and interchange:

>Teachers Can't and Shouldn't be Expected to Do it Alone

Teachers are encountering increasing numbers of students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, and they need better supports to address the factors interfering with their efforts to teach these youngsters. This certainly is the case for new teachers, especially many of those being recruited in response to the teacher shortage.

It is patently unfair and unreasonable to believe that countering factors interfering with learning and teaching at school can be done by teachers alone. School districts hire a range of student/learning support professionals (counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, etc.), and more than ever, these stakeholders have a critical role to play. Unfortunately, as budgets tighten, needed student/learning staff will not be hired. Indeed, layoffs are inevitable.

Schools need to go beyond tinkering with what already is in place and build on efforts such as MTSS and full service community schools to *transform* existing student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching that brings supports into the classroom.

From: *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

Recently heard:

In some schools, it seems that teachers and students enter their classrooms ready to do battle. And at the end of the class, whoever is able to walk out "alive" is the winner.

This, of course, is a gross exaggeration. . . . Isn't it?

For a long time, teachers have gone into their classrooms and figuratively and often literally have shut their doors behind them. As a result, for better and worse, they and their students have been on their own. On the positive side, the closed door limits outside inappropriate monitoring and meddling. The downside is that, in too many instances, teachers are deprived of essential supports and opportunities to learn from and have the support of colleagues. Too often, negative classroom dynamics and the isolation from colleagues leads to feelings of alienation and "burn out." And students are cut off from a variety of resources and experiences that are essential to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

From: *Alone in the Classroom: Why Teachers Are Too Isolated*

In his classic 1975 book, *Schoolteacher*, Dan Lortie described teacher isolation as one of the main structural impediments to improved instruction and student learning in American public schools. Lortie argued that since at least the 19th century teachers have worked behind closed doors, rarely if ever collaborating with colleagues on improving teaching practice or examining student work. "Each teacher," Lortie wrote, "... spent his teaching day isolated from other adults; the initial pattern of school distribution represented a series of 'cells' which were construed as self-sufficient."

This situation continues to the present day. A recent study by Scholastic and the Gates Foundation found that teachers spend only about 3 percent of their teaching day collaborating with colleagues. The majority of American teachers plan, teach, and examine their practice alone.

In other countries ... where students outperform those in the U.S. in international tests ..., collaboration among teachers is an essential aspect of instructional improvement. The problem is not that American teachers resist collaboration. Scholastic and the Gates Foundation found that nearly 90 percent of U.S. teachers believe that providing time to collaborate with colleagues is crucial to retaining good teachers.

So what would it take structurally to enable teachers to work collaboratively for improved learning outcomes? Answering this question demands changes in some longstanding American public school structures."

Working with Teachers on Mental Health Concerns

From: *Teachers' Acceptance of a... Schoolwide Mental Health Consultation Program*

"Whether the task involves helping teachers deal with challenging students or helping leaders establish schoolwide codes of behavior, [as consultants] we assume a posture of gentle curiosity when trying to understand the origins and functions of each individual's behaviors. This perspective recognizes, for example, that sad, anxious, off-task, or aggressive behaviors carry different meanings across students, and even within students across different situations. Similarly, teachers' responses to unwanted child behaviors carry different meanings across teachers based on their own values, personal history, and teaching philosophy. ...

Teachers' satisfaction with a mental health program, also referred to as program acceptability or perceived utility, generally predicts the extent to which they implement it as designed. This satisfaction is the product of multiple factors. First, teachers are more apt to 'buy into' programs whose underlying model is compatible with their own values, practices, and norms, as well as those of the school. They are more motivated to implement programs that are perceived as filling a need and having a high likelihood of success. Teachers may also view new programs as more credible when existing users reflect the culture of the school and the families served. Proposed programs may further gain credibility in urban schools if they address the burdens that economic deprivation and racism place on students...."

For various reasons, there are increasing calls for “opening the classroom door” to enhance collegial collaboration, consultation, mentoring, and enable use of a variety of expert assistance, volunteers, family members, and the community-at-large. Changes that bring student/learning supports into classrooms are especially important for preventing commonplace learning, behavior, and emotional problems and for responding early-after-the-onset of a problem. Moreover, such fundamental changes in the culture of schools and classrooms are seen as routes to enhancing a caring climate, a sense of community, and overall teaching effectiveness.

Want to learn more? See

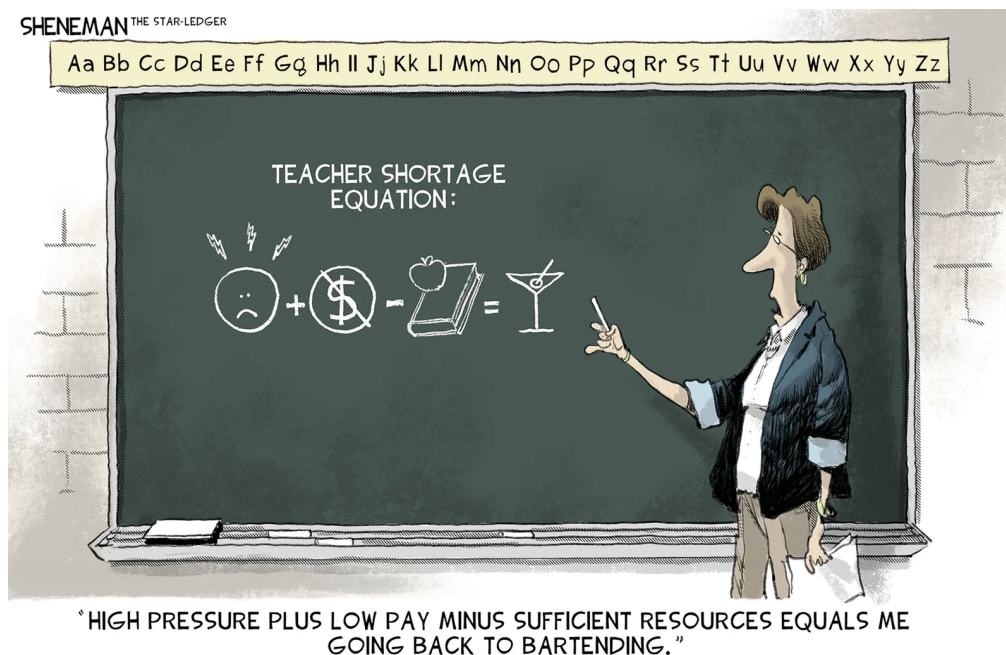
>Opening the Classroom Door

>Enhancing Student/Learning Supports in Classrooms

>Involving Teachers in Collaborative Efforts to Better Address Barriers to Student Learning

>Improving School Improvement

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



For discussion and interchange:

>Can the Arts be Used to Enhance Students' Empathy and Compassion?

As teachers increase their focus on facilitating social and emotional development, a key concern is facilitating caring for others. Literature obviously can play a role in this, and so can the arts. As with the use of arts in psychotherapy, research on the arts to facilitate social emotional development is sparse. (See *About Art Therapy and Schools.*)

From: ***Creating Compassion: Using Art for Empathy Learning with Urban Youth***

“...Empathy plays a role in children’s psychosocial adjustment and serves as a fundamental prerequisite in prosocial behavior and interpersonal cooperation. Empathy makes way for understanding and connecting with others as well as for developing self-compassion, a trait that has been shown to defend against anxiety; has been linked to increased psychological well-being in adolescents and adults; and protects against negative psychological health outcomes....

Researchers have identified connections between young children’s emotional awareness and their relational skills, which in turn offer children additional benefits, such as increased classroom adjustment.... Previous studies in schools have shown that empathy serves as a strong protective factor against aggressive behavior in youth [and] ... can also lessen the effects of existing risk factors, such as peer deviance. These findings are especially meaningful for ... children from low-income households, for whom psychosocial protective factors tend to erode over time....

Empathy training has also been used to teach children to be accepting of difference, and has been found to enhance the effects of prejudice-reduction programs for children. ... Using creativity to scaffold empathy development allows children to become more aware of ways to impact the lives of others and engage in perspective taking. Art activities that incorporate hands-on and group-based interactive approaches allow children to learn from their peers through creative expression, facilitate prosocial behaviors, and support identity formation and appreciation of cultural differences....

Arts-based empathy programs are promising in that they offer opportunities ... to facilitate empathy development in young children in ways that are both hands-on and low-cost. The low-cost nature of arts-based empathy-focused programs is likely to be attractive to school and after-school programs that may otherwise be limited by finances, time, and other constraining factors....

Arts-based empathy instruction has the potential to help young children develop important interpersonal skills early in life, while also exposing them to art, empowering them to engage in the creative process, and fostering emotional connections to their art and their peers. The act of creating art and sharing it with others represents a powerful opportunity for the development of self-concept in children and serves as a source of pride. Participation in the arts has been found to enhance self-esteem and social skills among children from low-income backgrounds. ...”

From: ***Developing Empathy Through Design Thinking in Elementary Art Education***

“...incorporating design thinking in upper elementary art education helps students develop what are known as the Four Cs: collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. As an instructional strategy, design thinking focuses on empathy first and provides a structure for students to work through real-world, complex problems in small groups.

Including empathy within art education promotes a classroom culture that is respectful and understanding of others, with students becoming advocates of justice, equity, and inclusion. As society continues to struggle with bullying, physical violence, and social unrest, teaching empathy has the potential to change how students relate to each other in the classroom, and, ultimately, in the world at large....”

For more on this see our Center Quick Finds:

>Social and Emotional Development and Social Skills

>Diversity, Disparities, and Promoting Equity

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Arts and achievement in at risk youth

Supporting teacher well being

Building Student Resilience Toolkit

New insights into risk and enhancing resiliency

Learning From Youth: Using Positive Outcomes to Evaluate Summer Youth Employment Programs

Relations between youths' community violence exposure and their physical aggression: The protective role of adults

School support for homeless families and students

School Climate Improvement Resource Package

Addressing Attendance Problems

School-based mental health literacy interventions to promote help-seeking

Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Highlights Efforts to Support K-12 Education as Students go Back-to-School

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>

9/20 Strategies for Schools to Enhance Relationships with Families

9/20 Collaboration across school systems

9/21 Student motivation and engagement

9/21 Being stress wise at school

9/22 Expanding teacher impact

9/26 All about stress

9/26 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights

9/26 How special education works

9/27 Schoolwide wellness

9/27 Working Towards Positive Educational Outcomes Mental Health and Special Education

9/27 Improve engagement and attendance

9/27 Part two: bullying and discriminatory harassment differences

10/3 Special education eligibility and the IEP

10/4 Why leaders should be curious about their students

10/4 Strategies for Educators and School-Based Staff

10/10 Understanding Doubled Up

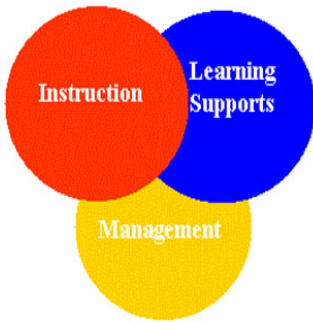
10/18 Strategies for Student and Teacher Support Teams

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 your views about the topics shared and about 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



For information about the
National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports
 go to <https://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 <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on Facebook (access from the Center’s home page <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)