
Mental Health in Schools: Much More than Part of the System of Care Delivery System

In a recent article entitled *Schools as a Vital Component of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health System*, Sharon Hoover and Jeff Bostic describe the schools as “an essential component of the system of child and adolescent care” and offer recommendations “to advance this vital care delivery system.” (Published Online:3 Nov 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201900575>)

Clearly, schools have an important role to play in addressing mental health concerns, but conceptualizing that role *mainly as a component of the mental health care delivery system* contributes to the marginalization and fragmentation of efforts to address the wide-range of factors interfering with school learning and teaching.

Given the relatively small pool of resources available to schools and the range of students in need, *system (re)building* is essential so that the sparse resources available can be deployed in more potent ways.

(1) Schools that have adopted some form of MTSS can build on that model by reframing each level of intervention into an integrated set of subsystems that braid school and community resources at each level.

(2) At the same time, it is important to organize interventions cohesively into a circumscribed set of well-designed and delimited domains that encompass a school's efforts to reengage disconnected students and provide student and learning supports each day in the classroom and schoolwide.

The focus of such system (re)building is on

>unifying the district’s student/learning supports
and then

>weaving into the unified system whatever resources the community and those at home can add.

It is into this type of system that the many ways that mental health promotion, prevention, and response can most comprehensively be embedded.

We urge all who want to embed mental health in schools to consider the discussions in the following brief documents:

Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools

*Embedding Mental Health into a Learning Supports Component:
An Essential Step for the Field to Take Now*

For an in-depth discussion of the opportunity to advance mental health in schools during the current crisis and beyond, see our new, free book:

Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

And look at our new policy brief prepared at the request of PACE:

*Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching
in the COVID 19 Context and Beyond*

https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/restructuring-california-schools-address-barriers-learning-and-teaching-covid-19?utm_source=PACE+All&utm_campaign=61b8aabde4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_11_17_07_36_COPY_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9f1af6b121-61b8aabde4-522725185%20The%20content,%20of%20course,%20is%20applicable%20to%20other%20states

Maximizing the benefits of mental health in schools requires an ambitious agenda for transforming student/learning supports. The goal is to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students (not just establishing another component of the system of child and adolescent care). Achieving such a goal is vital to enhancing equity of opportunity for all students at school and beyond.

Best wishes, be well, and happy holidays,
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