
First Concern for Students' Mental Health is a Safe and Supportive School

From the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

A recent EdSurge article discussed data from a December 2023 Action for Healthy Kids' survey of about 1,000 parents with children in K-12 schools. The focus was on:

What do parents want from schools when it comes to support for their children's mental health?

The answer: the responses mainly indicated that they wanted their youngsters to feel safe and supported at school and to have a sense of belonging. Concerns were expressed about kids experiencing racism at school and being too stressed by pressure to do well on tests.

“Nearly 70 percent of parents say their child has ‘at least one adult at school that they trust or talk to.’ Another 88 percent of parents said a welcoming classroom environment would help their child in particular feel safe and supported. Nearly the same percentage wanted teachers to try their best to create positive relationships between students.”

The Action for Healthy Kids' survey reflects our emphasis on the need for embedding mental health concerns into a broad framework of student/learning supports. We frame six domains of student/learning supports that cross over the various ways the continuum of interventions are framed (e.g., MTSS). See Part IV. “Six Domains for Classroom and Schoolwide Student/Learning Supports” in *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change* <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mh20a.pdf>

Schools committed to the success of all children must be redesigned so that teachers, student support staff, and others at the school can help students as early as is feasible when they become aware of a behavior, emotional, learning, and/or physical problem. Such a redesign can minimize the impact of such problems and appropriately stem the tide of referrals for out-of-class specialized assistance (e.g., mental health services) and special education.

Best wishes and be well,

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