From the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

So Many Emails about Student Mental Health

Folks certainly are concerned. Every day, we are inundated with emails about the matter. (And, of course, we send some out.)

But, inevitably, when there is so much focus on one problem, there is some backlash.

This week we received an article entitled: ***Is 'Crisis' Thinking About Youth Mental Health Doing More Harm Than Good?***

> "Crisis. Fatalistic. Overwhelming. – That's how some experts say the current national conversation about youth mental health is framed — and counter to its goal, that lens is hurting the ability to find solutions that help adolescents better weather mental health struggles."
> https://www.edsurge.com/news/2024-09-06-is-crisis-thinking-about-youth-mental-health-doing-more-harm-than-good

The article makes some good points.

From our perspective, the crisis thinking has narrowed thinking about mental health in schools to calls for "building a comprehensive school mental health system."

We caution that efforts along this line of thinking can expect responses such as the following we received from a school board member:

> "What about the growing amount of data supporting the funding for school counselors and behavioral health, which has, in fact, produced no fruits? In fact, it has increased mental instability, lowered grades and increased discipline needs in the classroom. Our role as board members is to put education first! Perhaps the statement to remember is 'the government is not your mother' nor do we want it to be."

The reality is that schools are not in the mental health business; their mission and accountabilities revolve around educating the young.

Most school personnel are aware that some student problems can't be ignored. But, given the increasing number of students manifesting emotional, behavioral, and learning problems and sparse budgets (and politics), the responses generated are too limited in focus and approach.

Those concerned with student well-being need to offer a broad approach that details a feasible role schools can play with their community in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students and families. Such an approach needs to redeploy resources in ways that *unify* existing student and learning supports and develop them into a *comprehensive and equitable system* designed for *all* students in a school.

To this end, it is essential to reframe and broaden calls for mental health in schools. See:

> *>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*
> https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mh20a.pdf

> *>Embedding Mental Health into a Learning Supports Component:*
> *An Essential Step for the Field to Take Now*
> https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/embeddingmh.pdf