

School Practitioner Community of Practice

(A network for sharing & exchange)

July 10, 2019

Topics for discussion

- >**Working relationship problems: A constant concern at all levels of schooling**
- >**Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools**

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

Note: Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other Center resources including

- >Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
- >Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
- >Training and job opportunities
- >Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

Topic for Discussion –

>**Working relationship problems: A constant concern at all levels of schooling**

We frequently receive requests for resources about improving working relationships. We hear about conflicts between school board members and superintendents, superintendents and principals, principals and teachers and other staff, schools and parents, community stakeholders and school personnel.

Below are some relevant resources. We start with excerpts from a few articles that offer advice from those in the field.

Excerpt from: *School Leadership Teaming* (about building positive relationships between superintendents and principals) https://www.naesp.org/node/2044/resources/1/NAESP_Reprint_Policy.pdf

...Superintendents must forge solid relationships with their principals that begin by getting to know each on a personal level. It also includes recognizing principals' unique talents, remaining open to their differing viewpoints, and incorporating team members' diverse ideas into a collective vision for

the future. Likewise, principals must build healthy relationships with their superintendent. This involves knowing and understanding their leader's interpersonal style, administrative approach, core beliefs, and mission....

The suggestions that follow will help principals and superintendents overcome barriers and create a powerful, enduring partnership.

Adhere to professional standards. Administrative team performance is strengthened when guided by professional standards...

Create workplace norms. Developing a code of ethics and collaboration (CEC) should be the first step for leadership teams wanting to improve team relationships..... The administrators in my school district developed a CEC that spells out expectations for interpersonal relationships, climate, professionalism, communications, conflict management, governance and decision-making, and team effectiveness. The CEC guides our everyday interactions and gives us criteria against which we evaluate team success.

Set team goals. Ideally, a school leadership team is composed of highly competent, dedicated, and ambitious individuals. But this could be a problem if administrators work in isolation....

Engage in collective professional development. Administrators can become more proficient through individual pursuits such as reading professional journals or completing coursework. As important as this kind of learning is, however, it does not build a strong administrative team. Strong teams grow from collective learning. This richer kind of learning comes when principals and superintendents participate in professional development activities together. Shared professional development precipitates a collective understanding that enriches team knowledge, skills, and effectiveness....

Excerpt from: *Dealing with Conflicts in School: Advice from a Principal* (about helping teachers get along) <https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/dealing-teacher-conflicts-school-advice-former-principal1710.html>

... I've learned some techniques that other principals and school administrators can use when confronting conflict between teachers, including:

Focus on the problem, not on the personalities. You're looking for a solution, not for a culprit.

Be courteous, but don't sugarcoat the problem. Describe the effect it's having on others, especially students.

Keep your conversations or decisions strictly confidential. You cannot control what others say, but nothing should come from you.

Rather than impose a resolution, look to the participants to come up with one together. This is their problem to resolve, and you are simply a mediator.

Make it clear that you expect improvement and will monitor progress.

When you're in an administrative role, it's your duty to help resolve conflicts between teachers. These situations can escalate to the point that they affect students and their education, which is not what we want as educators. As long as you have the right rapport with your teachers, you can ensure any conflict is dealt with in a timely and thorough manner.

Excerpt from: *How to deal with a principal who just doesn't "get it"*
<https://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/truth-for-teachers-podcast/deal-principal-just-doesnt-get/>

"This ... is for the teachers who aren't fortunate to work with those wonderful principals who are visionaries, those who "get it" and make them feel supported and valued. Here's how to cope:

1. *Acknowledge that your principal "gets" things that you don't.* No matter how oblivious or out of touch your principal seems, she or he has insight into the big picture of running the school that you cannot possibly have. She or he has insider knowledge of things you simply don't know.... So start with the assumption that your administrators have reasons for deciding things the way they do. ... you always want to try to get to a place of empathy where you can appreciate unique viewpoints, and realize that other people's choices do make sense within the context of their separate reality. Once you get to that place, it's not nearly as irritating to deal with people who see the world differently than you do. You're able to have a genuine understanding of their position.
2. *Stop complaining and start creating change.* ... Complaining makes you feel like your situation is hopeless because not only are you upset, but everyone around you also sees there is a huge problem and is upset. You can work yourself into a frenzy together, and as each new tale of injustice and frustration and ridiculousness is added to the collective story, the helplessness and

anger you feel builds with no healthy outlet for expression..... Someone who is discouraged does not need to hear more stories of discouragement. They need someone to empower them..You've got to move into problem-solving mode as soon as you possibly can. Your job is just too important for you to allow your focus and energy to be drained by complaining and replaying conflicts in your mind and anticipating problems.

If you want to get out of the pattern of mistreating one another, the person who wants to create change can start setting a new precedent and shift the dynamic through his or her own actions....

Excerpt from: *Twelve Cardinal Rules for Dealing with School Board Conflict*
<http://aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=15520>

...After 12 years as a school superintendent, I learned that conflict resolution must be a part of my administrative repertoire.... Starting off on the right foot is a key ingredient to a positive relationship.... However, even the best of intentions can run afoul. I have developed 12 cardinal rules of dealing with school board conflict.

** No. 1: Sometimes the horse dies.* Some board members will raise questions simply to stir the pot. At times, the problem resolves itself and other times it burns out. Do not jump in too quickly to resolve conflicts....

** No. 2: Don't always lead the charge.* Allow board members to confront issues with their peers....

** No. 3: Don't take on a board member's monkey.* Sometimes board members get themselves in trouble with staff or the public over their vote on controversial issues. When they do, do not try to settle the dispute with the other parties. If they feel strongly enough about an issue, let them defend it on their own....

** No. 4: Put them in conflict with the facts, not with you personally.* Create a mirror with the facts and let the reflection speak for itself. Otherwise, you make the issue too personal....

** No. 5: Allow a third party to draw the fire and serve as the lightning rod.* Many times superintendents and school board members recommend actions and vote on issues created by other entities. They may not agree with the actions, but they must follow the law or edict from these agencies. When appropriate, allow those agencies to take some heat off your board members, especially when they have no control over the issue....

No. 6: Use a strategic plan to keep all parties on the same page. When you work with your board to develop a strategic plan, it naturally focuses them on the governance function. As the plan considers various objectives, it quantifies issues related to budget and staffing that typically create conflict between school boards and the administrative staff....

** No. 7: When you have the chance to say "more" or "less," always say "less."* I received this advice from a very wise school attorney early in my career. Sometimes superintendents are guilty of wanting to share the wealth of their knowledge about an issue. They forget that board members, who usually have a life and responsibilities outside of their board membership, only want a little background and the bottom line....

No. 8: Develop a relationship with each board member. What you do for one, do for all. I keep a notebook of my calls and visits with board members to make certain I maintain this even-handedness. If you call one board member about an issue, call all of them. If you provide information at the request of one member, give copies to all of them....

** No. 9: Perception is stronger than truth.* What a board member thinks about an issue can be the truth, no matter how misinformed they are about the matter....Listen, listen, listen.... If you lose, lose with grace and dignity and do not hold a grudge.

** No. 10: Work with your board to funnel problems through the superintendent, not directly to other staff.* Although board members may perceive themselves as "regular folk" in one way, it never matches the perception of others in the field when they contact a principal or staff member directly. Few staff members welcome this direct contact. First, the individual is concerned about perceived disloyalty to the superintendent. A second concern, depending on the board member who has made the call, is how the information obtained may be used or misused. Encourage

board members to contact you with their questions....

** No. 11: Use the expertise of board members and seek their advice and counsel when appropriate. Avoid the perception that board member opinions do not count and their only role is to support your recommendations. That may have been true in the old days. However, the dynamics of these turbulent times require a different approach. Board members want to be a part of the action, not sideline cheerleaders. Some board members have special expertise in transportation systems, business organizations, the medical field, or volunteer organizations. Capitalize on that expertise. ...*

** No. 12: Counterbalance the political power of some board members by taking the high road. Politics is a reality of the superintendency. There is nothing wrong with understanding the political dynamics of the position or working to counterbalance the political power of some board members. The only option for the superintendent to play in the politics game is to be a person of substance, to be recognized as the educational leader in the community...."*

Here are a few resources from the Center that may be helpful:

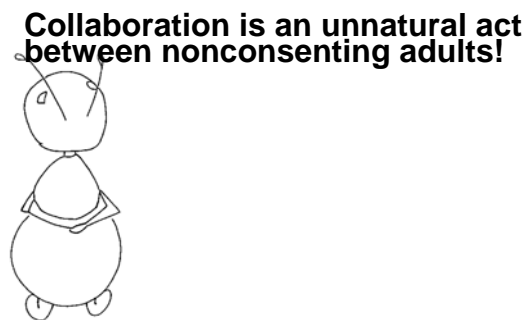
- > *Working Relationships* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/workrel.pdf>
- > *Creating a collaborative and caring classroom: Teachers can't do it alone. (In Chapter 2, "About School and Classroom Climate: Opening Doors")*
In the Center's recent book – *Improving School Improvement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf>
- > *Improving Working Relationships Inside the Classroom* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/relations.pdf>
- > *Working Collaboratively: From School-Based Teams to School-Community Connections* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/worktogether/worktogether.pdf>
- > *What Do Principals Say about Their Work? Implications for Addressing Barriers to Learning and School Improvement* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/principalsay.pdf>
- > *Schools, Families, and Community Working Together: Building an Effective Collaborative*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/buildingeffectivecollab.pdf>

For more resources, see the Center's Quick Find on *Collaboration* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1201_01.htm

Hopefully, some of what is offered above will be helpful as you anticipate a fresh start to a new year. If there are other concerns you anticipate related to working relationships, let us know. Ltaylor@ucla.edu



How do you define collaboration?



Topic for Discussion –

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

The widespread tendency is for the term mental health to be discussed primarily as concerned with mental *disorders* (illness) and for MH interventions to be discussed as *services* (e.g., counseling/therapy). As a result, many well-intentioned initiatives and policy reports limit discussion to expanding mental health services in schools.

This trend is having unfortunate consequences.

Bluntly stated, advocacy for more mental health services in schools often detracts from efforts to address the full range of mental health concerns confronting school staff, students, and their families. And, providing clinical services continues to be too narrow a focus for meeting the nature and scope of student-related problems manifested at schools each day.

Our analyses of school improvement policies and practices stress that a narrow agenda for MH in schools works against enhancing every student’s civil right to equity of opportunity for success at school and beyond. Our research stresses the following matters as key to advancing a broad approach to mental health in schools that is fully embedded in school improvement efforts.

The concept of mental health needs to be framed as going beyond psychopathology to encompass promoting healthy development (i.e., positive social and emotional development) and addressing psychosocial and educational problems.

In this context, schools have a role to play in ensuring there is a full continuum of interventions designed to (a) promote positive mental, (b) prevent learning, behavior, and emotional problems, (c) intervene as early as feasible when such problems arise, and (d) treat severe and chronic problems.

Those concerned with enhancing the role of mental health in schools must guide policy makers to a clear understanding of

- the many factors interfering with learning and teaching
- the large number of students who are experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems
- the fragmented and marginalized state of affairs related to the limited set of services, programs, and initiatives currently provided as student/learning supports
- the small proportion of students currently reached
- the counterproductive competition for sparse resources
- the importance of developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports

For more on this, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhinschools.pdf>

#####

What are your views about the above topics?

***Any questions and comments
about other relevant matters!!***

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

#####

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

Schools are rethinking classroom design to encourage collaboration, creativity – <https://hechingerreport.org/schools-are-rethinking-classroom-design-to-encourage-collaboration-creativity/>

Born to win: Schooled to lose – <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/schooled2lose/>

Leveling the playing field for rural students – <http://www.aasa.org/rural-report-17.aspx>

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Protective Factors With School Engagement
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/07/04/peds.2018-2945>

Foster Care: States with Approval to Extend Care Provide Independent Living Options for Youth up to Age 21 – <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/699219.pdf>

GAO Raises Major Concerns Over Restraint and Seclusion in Schools – <https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2019-06-18/gao-raises-major-concerns-over-restraint-and-seclusion-in-schools>

Suicide Prevention and Schools: Some Basic Information – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/suicideoutlined.pdf>

Better Ways to Prevent Suicide – <http://www.apamonitor-digital.org/apamonitor/20190708/MobilePagedReplica.action?pm=2&folio=38#pg41>

How Well Do State Legislatures Focus on Improving School Efforts to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching & Re-engage Disconnected Students?
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Legisanal.pdf>

Training School Leaders to Spend Wisely – <https://www.educationnext.org/equipping-school-leaders-spend-wisely-education-dollars/>

A Few Upcoming Webinars:

7/12/19 -- Implementing a whole child approach
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hoxYKVMvSHKIBWtbuDoCyA

7/16/19 -- *Nothing About Us Without Us: Authentic Youth Engagement in Public Health*
<https://www.apha.org/>

7/25/19 -- *Emerging Tech: What Are the Current Trends for Teens and Kids?*
<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/events>

7/29/19 -- *Promote Safety, Inclusion and Well-Being for LGBTQ Students*
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/webinar-series>

For other relevant webinars, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>



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 enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development, and enhancing 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 <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)***