

Addressing Barriers

to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

Volume 8, Number 3
Summer, 2003

School improvement policies and plans designed to leave no child behind will fail if they leave student support staff behind.

New Directions: Where's it Happening?

Note: The *Summits Initiative: New Directions for Student Support* was introduced in October, 2002 with a National Summit. Regional Summits were held for eastern states in March and for midwestern states in May, 2003. Other Regionals will be held in the fall, 2003. Plans call for convening a summit for each state. For more info, see the various Summit documents and reports at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

Moving student support in new directions requires rethinking how best to address barriers to learning and teaching. It means revamping the way learning supports are used. A major purpose of the *Summits Initiative* is to stimulate such rethinking and to support widespread systemic changes leading to comprehensive, multifaceted approaches.

As part of the work, we are compiling information about pioneering and trailblazing examples that help clarify new directions. Relevant work is being carried out at schools, districts, and state levels. Such groundbreaking endeavors provide intriguing glimpses into the future of student support and offer invaluable lessons learned. Some already are well along the way; some are in the planning stage or are

taking first steps. A few have begun comprehensive innovations but have yet to generate the type of momentum necessary to produce full blown systemic change. We have compiled and put online descriptions of 12 locales; we look forward to adding many more examples in coming years. (See Center document – *Where's It Happening? New Directions for Student Support*.)

What we most want to document is ambitious and comprehensive “out-of-the-box” thinking. As noted on page 2, we group innovations into (1) places where broad-based systemic changes are underway, (2) places where an interesting innovation is or has been implemented, and (3) places developing strategic plans for broad-based systemic changes. Other examples will be added as they are identified and relevant descriptive materials are gathered.

Full scale efforts address four key problems that must be the focus of new directions thinking. First and foremost, these approaches revisit school improvement *policies* to expand them in ways that end marginalization of student supports. Second, they adopt *intervention frameworks* that encompass a comprehensive and multifaceted intervention continuum that guides development of a cohesive enabling/learning support component. Third, they reframe the *infrastructure* at school, complex, and district levels to ensure effective leadership, redefined roles and functions, and resource-oriented mechanisms. Fourth, they use strategic approaches to enable *systemic change and scale up* so that every school in a district has an effective component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

Hawai'i

Unlike other states, Hawai'i's education, health, and social service agencies are state controlled. This means that the State Department of Education has direct responsibility for all schools. In 1997, the Department decided to move in major new directions with respect to student support. They

Inside

- C *Need resources? technical assistance?*
See pages 3 and 4.
- C See pages 9-10: *Don't Forget About the Mental Health of School Staff*
- C On page 11: *Ideas into Practice – from the Practitioners' Listserv*
- C Page 12: *Parable of Two Friends and the Bear*

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Categorizing Pioneering & Trailblazing New Directions for Student Support

Group I: Places Where Broad-based Systemic Changes Are Underway

- C Hawai'i (at state, district, school levels)
- C Madison, WI (at district and school levels)
- C St. Paul, MN (at district and school levels)
- C Urban Learning Center Design (a comprehensive school reform model)

Group II: Places Where Some Form of Innovation is or has been Implemented

- C Los Angeles, CA (at district and complex levels)
- C Buffalo, NY (at district and school levels)
- C Detroit, MI (at district and school levels)
- C Somerset County, MD (at the school level)
- C Denver, CO (at the district level)
- C California (at the state level)
- C Washington (at the state level)

Group III: Places Developing Strategic Plans for Broad-based Systemic Changes

- C Albuquerque, NM (at the district level)
- C Columbus, OH (at the district level)
- C Columbia, SC (at the district level)
- C Dallas, TX (at the district level)

We highlight facets of Group I locales in this newsletter. More details on these and on the Group II and III locales are available on the Center website and in a hardcopy document.

called the new approach a *Comprehensive Student Support System* (CSSS).

CSSS is the Department's umbrella for ensuring a continuum of supports and services ensuring that students, families, teachers, principals, and staff have the support they need to enable student success. This is translated into the continuum necessary for all students to have an equal opportunity to attain the state's Content and Performance Standards. CSSS particularly stresses prevention and early intervention to meet the changing needs of students in ways that promote their success. The idea is to provide school-based supports in a timely and effective manner and thus to have fewer students in need of complex, intensive services. Differentiated classroom practices are conceived as the base for supporting each student. Beyond the classroom, the focus is on school wide and community programs and resources.

The stated goals for CSSS are to:

- (1) provide comprehensive, coordinated, integrated, and customized student supports that are accessible, timely, and strength-based

- (2) involve families, fellow students, educators, and community members as integral partners in the provision of a supportive, respectful learning environment

- (3) integrate the human and financial resources of appropriate public and private agencies to create caring communities at each school.

Interventions and delivery processes are designed to fit the severity, complexity, and frequency of each student's needs.

With respect to the four key problems that focus new directions thinking, Hawai'i has done the following:

I. Policy – The concept of a *Comprehensive Student Support System* (CSSS) has been adopted with the legislature's support. Establishment of such a component is the policy for all schools.

II. Intervention Framework – Interventions are conceived as a seamless continuum for addressing barriers that impede learning and teaching. The

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Center News



***NEW RESOURCES

>**Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support** (Introductory Packet). Research and best practices related to using transitions as an opportunity for student support. Covers a range of daily transitions, beginning a new school, grade-to-grade articulation, and more.

>**Developing Resource-Oriented Mechanisms to Enhance Learning Supports.** (Continuing Educ.)

A set of modules designed to aid in training leaders and staff about how to establish effective resource-oriented mechanisms to advance development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated learning supports (or enabling) component at every school.

Module I. Resource-Oriented Mechanisms:

Functions & Structure

Module II. How to Start

Module III. Initial Resource Mapping and Analyses

Module IV. Refining the School Infrastructure

Module V. Expanding Resource Mapping & Analyses

Module VI. Establishing a Resource Coordinating Council

Module VII. Monitoring Progress

Module VIII. School-Community Collaboration

Module IX. About Using Data for Planning,

Implementation, Evaluation, and Social Marketing

>**“Improving Teaching and Learning Supports by Addressing the Rhythm of a Year.”** A hardcopy compilation of all 12 monthly themes featured on the Center website – for use by school staff to plan work over the school year.

>**“Where’s It Happening? New Directions for Student Support.”** Features 15 places (district and state departments of Educ.) involved in broad-based systemic changes or exploring major innovations. There is a one page overview on each, along with documents these trailblazers have shared providing in-depth info (see lead article in this newsletter).

>**New Directions for Student Support: Some Fundamentals.** A volume consisting of 9 chapters and appendices designed as additional in-depth reading relevant to new directions.

>**Youth Suicide Prevention: Mental Health and Public Health Perspectives.** A presentation and training aid in the form of a powerpoint presentation with accompanying script.

***REVISED AND UPDATED RESOURCES

>**Sustaining School-Community Partnerships to Enhance Outcomes for Children and Youth: A Guidebook and Tool Kit.** Based on feedback and lessons learned, this revision expands on the theme of sustainability as systemic change and provides steps and tools for getting from here to there.

>**New Initiatives: Considerations Related to Planning, Implementing, Sustaining, and Going-to-Scale.** This brief document has been revised to highlight basic ideas discussed in the guidebook.

For all new and revised resources, go to *What’s New* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> – for the full list of resources, click on *Center Materials*.

All Center resources can be downloaded from the website at no cost. Hardcopies can be ordered for the cost of copying and mailing.

***DO YOU KNOW ABOUT?

Final Report to the President from the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. Also see: *Major federal programs supporting and financing mental health care* – a document created for the Commission. These are available online at:

www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/reports.htm

The American Psychological Association has just published: “Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists,” *American Psychologist*, 58, 377-402.

"Promoting social competence in an era of school reform: a commentary on Gifford-Smith and Brownell" (2003), by M. Gettinger, *Journal of School Psychology*, 41, 299-304.

“Prevention that works for children and youth.” Special issue of the *American Psychologist* – guest edited by Roger Weissberg & Karol Kumpfer.

Center Staff:

Howard Adelman, Co-Director

Linda Taylor, Co-Director

Perry Nelson, Coordinator

... and a host of graduate and undergraduate students

Somebody has to do something, and it’s just incredibly pathetic that it has to be us.

Jerry Garcia

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*****SUMMITS' INITIATIVE:**
New Directions for Student Support

Materials related to the initiative are available online for immediate use in planning and staff development. They include talking points on why new directions are an imperative, brief outreach materials to create initial interest, guidelines for a student support component, the report from the national summit (including an executive summary, concept paper, recommendations), highlights from the East Coast and Midwest Regional Summits, a set of Resource Aids, guidelines for a state summit, and links to the 17 cosponsor organizations.

In response to inquiries about "Where is it happening?" we have developed a beginning guide to Trailblazers (see newsletter lead article & reference on page 3).

At the suggestion of staff from the Region VII Comprehensive Center, the initiative's next Regional Summit is in Kansas City on September 9th. This will be a six state regional (OK, KS, NE, IN, IL, and MO).

We have scheduled a State Summit for WI in November and are discussing dates with folks in TN and FL.

The set of related training materials to aid in capacity building is growing. Also, in response to requests for additional in-depth readings relevant to new directions, we have pulled together a 9 chapter volume entitled: *New Directions for Student Support: Some Fundamentals*.

Want resources? Need technical assistance?

Contact us at: E-mail: smhp@ucla.edu
 Ph: (310) 825-3634

Or write: Center for Mental Health in Schools, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

Or use our website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

If you're not receiving our monthly electronic newsletter (ENEWS), send an E-mail request to:

listserv@listserv.ucla.edu – leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message type:
subscribe mentalhealth-L

FOR THOSE WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS, ALL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE BY CONTACTING THE CENTER.

>>Exchange info on MH practices in school and network with colleagues across the country by joining the **Weekly Listserv for School MH Practitioners and the Center's Consultation Cadre**. Contact the Center to sign up – E-mail: smhp@ucla.edu

>>>Also, if you want to submit comments and info for us to circulate, use the insert form in this newsletter or contact us directly by mail, phone, E-mail, or the Net Exchange on our website.

Confidence is the feeling you have before you understand the situation.

Center for School Mental Health Assistance at the University of Maryland, Baltimore

in partnership with The Policymaker Partnership of the National Assoc. of State Directors of Special Education

Eighth National Conference on Advancing School-Based Mental Health Programs

Mental Health in Schools: Doing What Works!

October 23-25, Hilton Portland Hotel, Portland, OR

In conjunction with CSMHA's conference on October 22 at the Hilton Portland Hotel, Portland, OR

First International Meeting of the

International Alliance for Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Schools

For information, see <http://csmha.umaryland.edu>

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critical elements of student support are conceived as six broad arenas of activity:

- C Personalized Classroom Climate and Differentiated Classroom Practices
- C Prevention/Early Intervention
- C Family Participation
- C Support for Transition
- C Community Outreach and Support
- C Specialized Assistance and Crisis/Emergency Support

These elements are used in developing the Standards Implementation Design (SID) at each school. (The SID process emphasizes standards based, data-driven results focused on learning.) The extent to which the elements are included in the school's delivery of student supports is assessed on an ongoing basis.

Five levels of student support also are conceived. Each increases in intervention intensity or specialization. The five levels are:

- Level 1: Basic Support for All Students
- Level 2: Informal Additional Support through Collaboration
- Level 3: Services through School-Level and Community Programs
- Level 4: Specialized Services from DOE and/or Other Agencies
- Level 5: Intensive and Multiple Agency Services

III. Infrastructure – The state Department's Division of Learner, Teacher and School Support, Student Support Branch provides leadership and guides capacity building for CSSS. Each district is asked to clarify who will provide district leadership and be accountable for the component's development. Each school is asked to identify an administrative lead for CSSS. And, schools are expected to have a resource-oriented mechanism (e.g., a Resource Coordinating Team).

IV. Systemic Change – To facilitate the necessary systemic changes, the state created the position of *Student Services Coordinator* as a pivotal person to help build school capacity for CSSS. The position of a *Complex School Renewal Specialist* also was created to help coordinate resources among feeder patterns of schools. Finally, the functions of *Complex Resource Teachers* have been enhanced to connect with the *Student Services Coordinator* and *Complex School Renewal Specialist*.

Want more info? Contact Glenn Tatsuno, Admin., Student Support Branch, 637 18th Ave., Bldg. C, Rm 102, Honolulu, HI 96816 (808/733-4400)

Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, WI

Madison's school district is developing an approach that supports the beliefs, values, and practices inherent in a system of comprehensive student support. This is described as "a major change because it requires the construction of system wide supports and staff working in professional learning communities."

Central to the work are research and best practices that can produce positive student outcomes related to the following core elements:

- C practices that focus equally on improvement of *learning*, increased student *engagement* with schooling, and development of positive *relationships* between youngsters and adults
- C collaborative problem-solving strategies to determine why youngsters are not engaged, learning, or developing positive relationships
- C systematic, progressive supports and interventions for youngsters who are not having success, which in turn is intended to reduce dependence on special education
- C a culture that embraces collaboration among staff, parents/guardians, and the community and that links with community supports and services.

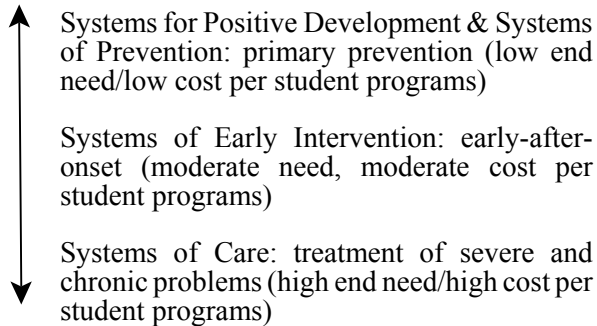
With respect to the four key problems that focus new directions thinking, Madison has done the following:

I. Policy – The district's 1999-2000 updated strategic plan established policy priorities and goals to address the immediate and emerging challenges facing the district. In addition to *instructional excellence*, high level priority was assigned to *student support* (assuring a safe, respectful and welcoming learning environment) and *home and community partnerships*. These priorities are to be accomplished in ways that enhance staff effectiveness and fiscal responsibility.

II. Intervention Framework – The new framework fully integrates student support with its concern for improving instruction. The framework's primary organizing concepts are (1) *engagement* (connection to schooling), (2) *learning* (acquiring knowledge and skills), and (3) *relationships* (connections to people). Thus, practices are to "focus equally on improvement of learning, increased student engagement with schooling, and development of positive relationships between children and adults."

For students not succeeding at school, the framework provides for a progressive assessment and problem solving sequence. The sequence starts with classroom specific supports, moves to school/district wide supports if necessary, on to time limited specialized support when needed, and finally offers long term intensive specialized support.

District staff are using the following continuum as an organizing framework for mapping and analyzing resource use, identifying intervention gaps, and identifying priorities for program development:



III. Infrastructure & IV. Systemic Change – The infrastructure at each school is conceived in terms of (1) a building leadership team, (2) an intervention team, and (3) a building consultation team. At the district level, student support leadership are part of the instructional cabinet to ensure full integration of the framework components. There also is a Framework Advisory Team.

The current focus is on developing the comprehensive student support system and professional learning community. Strategic priority action teams have been given responsibility to:

- >provide oversight for existing initiatives
- >identify implementation strategies resulting from the strategic planning process
- >identify indicators, targets and measure
- >recommend benchmarks and standards for assessing school district performance
- >use these benchmarks and standards to identify and/or validate areas of improvement
- >recommend improvement projects

The District staff development program is establishing “Framework Resource Teachers” to work with support staff and schools to develop “Framework School Teams.” These teams will include: a building leadership team, an intervention team, and a building consultation team.

Want more info? Contact Mary Gulbrandsen, Chief of Staff, 545 W. Dayton St., Madison, WI 53703 (608/663-1670)

Saint Paul Public Schools, St. Paul, MN

In recent years, the Saint Paul schools have explored new directions for providing learning supports through special projects. With support from the Wilder Foundation, they focused on three schools designated as Achievement Plus schools. Then, with a federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant (in collaboration with Wilder), they expanded from a narrow MH focus to an emphasis on addressing barriers to learning. This was done by adopting a comprehensive learning support approach. As part of this work, a plan was developed to scale up to 13 schools using specially trained consultants.

At each site, interventions are conceived in terms of the following six areas:

- >coordinating and providing services to students and families
- >responding to and preventing crises
- >classroom teacher support and consultation
- >supporting transitions
- >increasing home involvement in schooling
- >developing greater community involvement and support for the school.

The work of the specially trained consultants involves building infrastructure, facilitating systemic changes, and helping establish procedures to coordinate and develop interventions. Initial efforts have focused on integrating school interventions and developing a broad-based preventive emphasis to address the needs of urban learners. To these ends, resource-oriented mechanisms have been used to map resources and ensure interventions match the assessed needs of the school staff, parents, and students.

Based on this work and related initiatives (including the MN State Summit for New Directions for Student Support), an administrator from the District reports the following as of July 2, 2003:

“Some very exciting developments are presently underway in Saint Paul. We are on the cusp of serious change! [Here’s] a bit of a progress update:

1. Recently, the Office of Accountability has set a new direction for the office to reconstitute . . . from [being] the “accountability cops” to a functional unit which not only bears the responsibility for school improvement but also adheres to the belief that student support services are vital components to ensure student success.... Saint Paul Schools are firmly taking a stand recognizing that student support and learner support are as important as instruction.... We are even looking at a new name for the Office of Accountability! The vision and mission are in draft form....

2. ... last month, we brought the leaders of the school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses and chemical health together and formally began the discussion of how we can begin to work together as a team and resource to the schools and to the district. . . .

3. We have created a Middle School Initiative district wide to address school reform in reading and math ... This reform will be supported by training from student services and ... the Office of Instructional Services, through Title I funding. . . . We will train support staff in the learner support framework, which will match the training elements ... taking place with the teaching staff. ... Wilder Foundation will be working with us in this area.

4. While this is occurring, at a steady pace, we have also sent a message to the rank and file of the school counselors, chemical health specialists, and school social workers that we can no longer do our jobs just the way we have always done them. We are asking these groups to come together, with their professional associations – local and state – and review the learner support framework and devise professional development needs/criteria to support this move We are asking them to look at their respective professional standards and national organizations and see how this approach fits....

. . . So, we are steadily moving along with some exciting changes occurring. ... more to share as the summer progresses. The biggest step, I feel, was fully integrating student support ... into the fabric of the "new" to be named - Office of Accountability. I believe our time has come to be recognized, along with instruction, as a fundamental (priority) component to student achievement.”

Want more info? Contact Kevin Hogan, Assistant Director of Guidance and Related Services and Director of Safe Schools, Healthy Students, Strong Communities Collaborative, 1930 Como Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108 (651/603-4944)

At the Wilder Foundation, contact: Mary Heiserman, 919 LaFond Ave., St. Paul, MN 55416 (651/642-4056)

Urban Learning Center Design

The Urban Learning Center Design was developed with initial support from the New American Schools Development Corporation (now called simply *New American Schools*). The aim was to develop "break-the-mold" comprehensive school reform designs. Described here is the prototype created through a partnership among the Los Angeles Unified School District's administration, the teachers' union, and a variety of community partners brought together by a private nonprofit then called the Los Angeles Educational Partnership (now the Urban Educational Partnership). Demonstrations were initiated at two

sites in Los Angeles. The design was one of those included in the federal legislation supporting school efforts to develop Comprehensive School Reform Initiatives, and as a result, it is under adoption by schools in California, Georgia, Oregon, and Utah.

The design encompasses a three component approach to school improvement. That is, the focus is not just on improved instruction and governance/management. An equal emphasis is given to a third essential component focused on *addressing barriers to learning* by establishing a comprehensive continuum of *learning supports*. This Learning Support (or "enabling") Component offers a unifying framework and concrete practices for enabling students to learn and teachers to teach. Key to achieving these educational imperatives is an ongoing process by which school and community resources for addressing barriers to learning and development are restructured and woven together. In defining the component as one that both addresses barriers to learning and promotes healthy development, the design encompasses the type of models described as full-service schools – *and goes beyond them* to create an approach that is much more comprehensive.

With respect to the four key problems that focus new directions thinking, the Urban Learning Center Model has done the following:

I. Policy – By fully integrating an emphasis on addressing barriers, the third Component provides a unifying framework for developing policy that responds to a wide range of psychosocial factors interfering with learning and performance. It also encompasses a commitment to facilitating healthy development, positive behavior, and asset-building as the best way to prevent problems and as an essential adjunct to corrective interventions.

More specifically, a comprehensive and cohesive component to enable learning by addressing barriers calls for policy that

- >weaves together what is available at a school,
- >expands what is available by integrating school, community, and home resources,
- >enhances access to community resources by linking them to school programs.

The design team prepared the following statement to capture the essence of the type of general policy commitment needed at district and school levels.

We recognize that for some of our students, improvements in instruction and how school is governed and managed are

(cont. on p. 8)

necessary but not sufficient. We are committed to comprehensively and cohesively addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Thus, we will ensure that a Learning Support (enabling) Component is given the same priority in everyday practices as are the Instructional and Management Components. All three are essential if all students are to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

II. Intervention Framework – All this involves a rethinking of school-owned enabling activity, such as pupil services and special and compensatory education programs. Operationalizing a unified component of learning supports requires a framework delineating basic areas of enabling activity. The design specifies six areas of integrated activity. This grouping of activity emerged from research on existing and desired programs and services in schools. The six areas are:

- C Classroom-focused Learning Supports
- C Crisis assistance and prevention
- C Support for transitions
- C Home involvement in schooling
- C Community outreach for involvement and support (including volunteers)
- C Student and family assistance through direct services and referral

III. Infrastructure – Mechanisms are developed to coordinate and eventually integrate school-owned learning support resources and blend them with community resources. Restructuring also must ensure the component is well integrated with the instructional and management components. This minimizes marginalization and fragmentation, and ensures that programs addressing problems play out in classrooms, schoolwide, and throughout the neighborhood. Specifically, leadership, planning, and decision making mechanisms at district and school levels are essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of a Learning Support component.

At the district level, this calls for an assistant or associate superintendent who develops a team that

brings together all centralized staff responsible for aspects of learning supports. Such a team is to ensure every school is properly supported as it evolves a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive Learning Support component.

A school-site leader for the component ideally should be a site administrator who participates in the school's decision-making processes. Such a leader helps develop a resource-oriented mechanism (e.g., a Resource Coordinating Team) that brings together all staff at the school who have responsibility for aspects of learning support. This school-based team is key to ensuring, over time, that a school's Learning Support component is well developed.

IV. Systemic Change – An Urban Learning Center guidebook outlines a series of 13 steps for “getting from here to there” in establishing a Learning Support component. The steps are organized into three stages:

- C Orientation to Learning Supports: Creating Readiness for Change
- C Starting Up and Phasing In: Building an Infrastructure
- C Maintenance and Evolution: Refining Infrastructure, Increasing Efficacy, and Fostering Creative Renewal

Want more info: Contact Susan Way-Smith, Pres., Urban Education Partnership, 315 W. Ninth St., Suite 1110, Los Angeles 90015 (213/622-5237). Also see the website at: <http://www.urbanlearning.org>

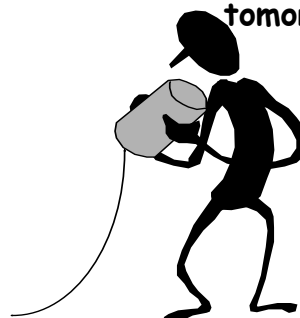
Do you know some place where a district or state is moving toward major systemic changes in providing student learning supports?

If so, let us know (see newsletter insert). We will be adding to the list and don't want to miss anyone.

What did you learn in school today?



Not enough I guess, they told me I have to go back tomorrow!



Commentary

Don't Forget About the Mental Health of School Staff

At the beginning of every flight, the airlines tell us:

"In the event the oxygen masks fall, adults should put their's on before assisting children."

This is a good metaphor for those concerned about mental health of young people in schools. We all need to pay more attention to promoting the well-being of teachers and other school staff so that they can promote the well-being of students.

We are Losing Too Many

Of particular concern is *burnout*, which is the staff equivalent of student dropout, which in both cases often is a matter of *pushout*.

Jim Hunt, former Governor of North Carolina and Chairman of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future states:

Our inability to support high-quality teaching in many of our schools is driven not by too few teachers coming in to the profession but by too many teachers *leaving* the profession.

Available data show that 20.7% of new teachers – about one in five – leave the profession within the first three years. Attrition was 15 percent for teachers who participated in an induction program, compared with 26 percent for teachers who did not.¹

In a recent issue of *Educational Leadership*, Rick Weissbourd notes:

"... disillusionment and depression undermine large numbers of teachers in urban schools. I refer... to the steady drizzle of helplessness and hopelessness that can wear teachers down. The litany of stresses that these teachers bear has become well known. They ... feel stranded, marooned in their classrooms; they don't get adequate support from administrators; they don't believe that they have the skills to deal with problems that they confront every day.... Most teachers have brought to this work their hearts and souls, and many have lost the belief that they can make a real difference in students' lives.... Schools clearly can't respond to all the troubles that lead to helplessness and hopelessness in teachers. But they can focus on two prime causes: the strain of dealing with students with behavior troubles; and isolation... Disillusionment – especially the loss of a belief

that they can make a difference in students' lives – is one of the biggest reasons that nearly one-half of teachers in the U.S. leave the profession within the first five years...²

As he suggests, frustration, a sense of isolation, and a lack of support are among the causes most often cited for attrition and turnover of school personnel. As we focus on better outcomes for students, we must also focus on better outcomes for school staff and how to achieve them.

Creating a Supportive School Environment

Just as with students, staff need supports that enhance protective buffers, reduce risks, and promote well-being. Every school needs to commit to fostering staff and student resilience and creating an atmosphere that encourages mutual support, caring, and sense of community. Staff and students need to feel good about themselves and have the ability to cope with challenges proactively and effectively.

Students achieve when they have quality teaching and appropriate support to enable learning. Teachers, principals, student support personnel, office staff, bus drivers all impact learning outcomes at a school. How staff work together and support each other makes a crucial difference.

We often hear: *How can you ask schools to do more? We are stretched to the limit in trying to increase achievement test scores!*

Our response is: *Yes, but ... can real achievement be attained in a nonsupportive environment?*

Moreover, the costs related to so many leaving the field and the "revolving door" of school personnel changing schools strain limited school budgets.

In an issue of *Principal Leadership*, Pasi stresses:

...A school's climate can be a positive influence on or a significant barrier to learning and includes all aspects ... that have the potential to influence the learning, discipline, and morale of those who work and study there... The ongoing challenge...is to identify steps for enhancing school culture and the conditions under which students can learn more, educators can teach better, and everyone can feel welcomed and respected.³

(cont. on p. 10)

A good place to start in enhancing a school's supportive environment is to improve the ways every newcomer – staff, students, parents – is welcomed and “inducted” into the school. Too often, newcomers experience benign neglect or worse. The goal should be to make such *transitions-in* a special occasion and an opportunity to make the arrival an enriching experience.

Do a Needs Assessment and Act on It

How are new staff welcomed, oriented, and then supported during their first months at a school? How is information provided about the school's history and current improvement efforts. What attitudes are conveyed about students, their families, and colleagues? Ask staff: *What would you have liked when you first came to this school? What supports are available when teachers and students need help?*

After gathering the data, what changes do you think are needed so that staff would look forward to coming to work each day? The ideal is to create an atmosphere that fosters smooth transitions, positive informal encounters, and social interactions; facilitates social support; provides opportunities for ready access to information and for learning how to function effectively in the school culture; and encourages involvement in decision making.

For any school, a welcoming induction and ongoing support are critical elements both in creating a positive sense of community and in facilitating staff and student school adjustment and performance. School-wide strategies for welcoming and supporting staff, students, and families at school *every day* are part of the broad goal of creating schools where staff, students, and families interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals.

Every school needs a few staff willing to steer efforts that create a supportive environment. Such a group, for example, might consist of support service staff, an administrator, one or two teachers, an office staffer, and possibly a few parents. To begin with, the group can provide leadership for ensuring the climate promotes rather than diminishes mental health.



We Can Help

Our Center has pulled together a variety of resources to help schools promote the well-being of teachers and other school staff so that they can do more to promote the well-being of their students. To provide a focus for doing so, over the past year our website has featured a monthly theme for those working in schools (See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>) The theme for August: *Burnout Prevention*. The focus is on “Enhancing the Resilience of Adults at School and Creating a Sense of Community.” Ideas included are ways to support new staff, how experienced staff and unions can help enhance resilience, and how staff development can enhance strategies for engaging and re-engaging students in classroom learning.⁴

For more resources related to all this, go to the Center's website <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> and click on the following Quick Find search topics:

- C Burnout
- C Collaboration
- C Environments that support learning
- C Mentoring
- C Motivation
- C Resilience/Protective Factors
- C Volunteers

And, of course, you can always contact us for more specific information and technical assistance.

Endnotes

1. National Center for Education Statistics (2000) “Progress through the teacher pipeline: 1992-1993 college graduates and elementary/secondary school teaching as of 1997. Washington, DC. US Department of Education.
2. “Moral Teachers, Moral Students” (2003) by Rick Weissbourd, *Educational Leadership*, 60(6) 7- 11
3. Raymond J. Pasi “A Climate for Achievement” *Principal Leadership*, 2001, 2(4).
4. We have assembled the monthly themes into a document that can be downloaded for school staff to plan work over the school year. See “*Improving Teaching and Learning Supports by Addressing the Rhythm of a Year.*”

I don't want to go to school today!

*Sorry, but you have to –
you're the teacher.*

Ideas into Practice



Following are two items from interchanges on the Mental Health in Schools *Practitioner Listserv*.

1) *I would like to hear from other elementary school counselors regarding how they are responding to the needs/issues of children that have parents that have been called to active duty.*

Response from a listserv participant: "What I have done with this first grader (who has had both parents deployed to the Persian Gulf) is help him start a 'book' for each parent. In this book, he either colors a picture or writes some message to the parent about how he is feeling and what he has been doing while they are gone. This activity has helped alleviate his sadness and feelings of helplessness. He knows that these books will be treasured by his parents when they get back from the war. While he is drawing or writing, he talks about how things are going now that he is staying with his grandmother, how he is scared that he may never see his parents again, and other day-to-day issues that he faces that are totally different from what he is used to. (He had to leave his home in one state to live with his grandmother who lives in a small town in our state.) He has said it is fun to make these books for his mom and dad because then they will know what he did while they were gone because he 'might forget some things.' To make a book, I just got some construction paper for the front and back cover which I will laminate and put computer paper in between and put it together with a spiral backing."

2) ***Strengthening families in support of children.*** One participant on the Listserv pointed out an article "Effective Family Strengthening Interventions" by K. Kumpfer and R. Alvarado, and asked the Center to summarize key points. (The article is accessible at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/delinqsum.html#171121>.)

Summary: The focus is on family centered approaches to prevent substance abuse. Data are from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's Prevention Enhancement Protocol Systems.

The panel found three approaches that appear to meet criteria for strong evidence of effectiveness in reducing risk and increasing protective factors: (1) behavioral parent training, (2) family therapy, and (3) family skills training or behavioral family therapy. The article provides examples of specific programs in each category rated as exemplary, model, or promising. The authors state that parent education characterized by didactic, knowledge-only approaches and affect-based parent training show insufficient evidence of effectiveness.

They conclude:

Because these reviews suggest that there is no best family intervention program, providers in the field must carefully select the best program for their target population, and guidelines must be provided to help in this selection.

As guidelines, they provide the following:

Principles of Effective Family Focused Interventions

1. Comprehensive interventions attend to the entire range of developmental outcomes of the child through improvement in all environmental domains and demonstrate positive developmental changes in youth.
2. Family focused programs are more effective than programs that focus solely on the child or the parents.
3. Family programs should be long term; short term interventions with families at high risk or in crisis are only bandages on family dysfunction
4. Sufficient program length and intensity are critical for effectiveness.
5. Tailoring the parent or family intervention to the cultural traditions of the families involved improves recruitment, retention and outcome effectiveness
6. It is important to address developmentally appropriate risk and protective factors or processes at specific time of family need when participants are receptive to change.
7. Family programs that produce changes in ongoing family dynamics and environment are the most effective in the long term.
8. If parents are very dysfunctional, intervention beginning early in the child's lifecycle are more effective.
9. Effective parent and family programs address family relations, communication, and parental monitoring.

(Note: The authors also address recruitment and retention, use of videos, and trainer efficacy.)

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These brief samples from the weekly listserv illustrate the value of regular networking and sharing among practitioners. If you want to join in, see info on page 4 of this newsletter.

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The Parable of the Two Friends and the Bear

Two best friends were taking a walk in the woods when they saw a giant grizzly bear approaching them, erect, claws bared. Being the best of friends, they clung to one another for dear life.

But then one of the two disengaged, knelt to unlace his hiking boots, and hurriedly put on his running shoes.

I don't get it, his best friend said. What can you hope to achieve? You and I both know there's no way you can outrun a grizzly bear.

Silly, said his friend, I don't have to outrun the bear. I only have to outrun you.

**Moral: Relationships are a good thing,
but they may not be enough when there are competing agendas.**

Use the enclosed response form to ask for what you need and to give us feedback.
And, please send us information, ideas, and materials for the Clearinghouse.

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The Center for Mental Health in Schools is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA. Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration. Co-funding comes from the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Both HRSA and SAMHSA are agencies of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Response Form (Newsletter, Summer, 2003)

(1) As the **Summits Initiative: New Directions for Student Support** progresses, we want as wide a range of input from across the country as is feasible. Take a look at the material online (on our Center website homepage, click on the green button labeled Summits for New directions.)

(a) Do you have a nomination of someplace we should include in the information about districts or states that are moving toward major systemic changes in providing student/learning supports? If so, please indicate names and contact information below.

(b) Please send us anything you can related to future directions for student support programs. You can use this form for brief comments. Email us any lengthier comments. And mail us any reports, plans, articles, etc.

(2) Do You Want Your State to Organize a State Summit for New Directions for Student Support?

___ I do want my state to organize such a statewide summit.

___ I might be interested; let me know if my state pursues a Summit.

Below are some people the Center should contact to see if they are interested:

Name

Contact Info

(3) If you have any resource requests, list them below.

(4) As always, we welcome your feedback on any facets of the Center's operations.

Your Name _____ Title _____

Agency _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____ E-Mail _____

Thanks for completing this form. Return it by FAX to (310) 206-8716 *or* in a separate envelope.

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(fold on the dashed line, and seal at bottom)

Return to:

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