Featured

(1) A colleague asks:
Are schools responsible for supporting staff mental wellness?

(2) Supporting students during and after a crisis

And, as always, you will find

*(3) **Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education***

**This community of practice _Practitioner_ is designed
for a screen bigger than an IPhone*.***

For discussion and interchange:
>Are schools responsible for supporting staff mental wellness?

Request from a colleague: "I've come to a quandary when it comes to supporting staff mental health in our schools. My curiosity is does the school district have a responsibility to ensure that staff are mentally healthy? I briefly spoke with a district lawyer and she said we are not. My leadership said that due to job descriptions we are not covered by the insurance to support staff. There are other possible liabilities. I'm still curious that there is something missing. That due to staff MH students may be impacted. And in a parallel process students may impact staff...."

Center Comments: As we do for students, we view supporting staff well-being on the intervention continuum. We recognize there are always concerns about limited resources, but considerable savings can accrue from enhancing staff feelings of well-being.

>The first focus is on ensuring that the basic culture at the school is welcoming and supportive of all staff and their continuing education.

>Then, there needs to be an emphasis on prevention by addressing common problems and stressors.

>As a problem arises for any staff member, the continuum calls for a mechanism that identifies and responds to any staff member as quickly as is feasible.

>Finally, interventions for serious staff mental health problems are appropriately addressed through the district Employee Assistance Program or health benefits coverage for all employees.

**When focusing on anyone's problems, it of course is
important to deal with concerns related to stigma.**

The Center has a number of resources that may be of help

>*Improving Teacher Retention, Performance, and Student Outcomes*

>*About Teacher Mental Health*

>*Promoting Staff Well-being and Preventing Burnout*

>*School Improvement Requires Developing, Supporting, and Retaining Quality Teachers*

>*School staff burnout*

>*Burnout prevention and support for school staff*

>*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*:

>*Teachers Can't Do it Alone!*

And here are resources from:

>the American Federation of Teachers

>*Beyond Burnout: A Roadmap to Improve Educator Well-being*

>the California Department of Education website

>*Individual & Collective Well-Being Among School Staff, Educators & Administrators*
This webinar series addresses staff social-emotional health as fundamental to
the success in educating youth, engaging families, and collaborating with colleagues. It
teaches how stress management and supportive relationships
create a workplace where we can prioritize our own health while serving
others.
Session 1: Commit to Forming Transformative Relationships
Session 2: Promote Staff Connections and Relationships
Session 3: Practice Self-Regulation for Stressful Situations
Session 4: Map Strengths to Improve Team Culture
Session 5: Identify Your "Why" to Increase Impact
Session 6: Create Consistent Structure and Clarity
Session 7: Build Dependability and Trust

Comments from the Field:

1. *From a former state director of student support and current consultant:* "The issue of employee
mental health has been a topic of concern in our state and other states since before the pandemic
and of course the pandemic made the issue even more difficult. As I work with school districts in our
state and other states, three concerns are part of the discussion:
>acknowledgment that some educators need mental health services [at various levels of
intervention, not just tier 3];
> access to mental health services [access is a major issue/challenge], and
> confidentiality.
Those are some of the same issues with students. Therefore, I've been working with several school
districts on how to use some of the expertise that already exists in schools through the MTSS
process, except this is for adults. I've provided an outline of the MTSS for Adults below.
In my opinion, telemental health (TMH) is the key to addressing the mental health needs of students
and staff at Tier 2 and Tier 3, with Single Session Intervention (SSI) as the Tier 2 TMH intervention.
TMH addresses the access issue and the confidentiality issue, because it is accessible to school staff

members after school hours and away from school - staff can access TMH from their home or other confidential site, including in their vehicle on their cell phone or tablet - and TMH is available on weekends. Plus, the staff member's insurance should cover the costs, considering the federal (and some state) mental health parity requirements.

   Some school districts I'm working with like the MTSS for Adults because it lets the staff members know that others care about them and they have a place to go for confidential support.

   Other school districts want to focus just on access, so they search for TMH providers who provide access for staff members and who handle the insurance billing. One school district I'm working with rolled out a pilot for SSI by putting posters in schools. They received as many calls from staff members as they did from students. For many staff members, the SSI contact became the mental health navigator for the staff member."

Here is the MTSS for Adults outline

"MTSS for Adults is an extension of the well-established framework used primarily in K-12 education. When applied to adults, particularly in professional or organizational settings, MTSS focuses on providing a continuum of support for school staff members.

Purpose of MTSS for Adults – MTSS for adults aims to (1) Address varying levels of need among employees or participants, (2) Provide targeted interventions for skill gaps, professional development, or well-being, and (3) Foster a supportive and inclusive environment for personal and professional growth.

Core Components of Adult MTSS – Similar to the student-focused model, MTSS for adults includes three tiers ...

   Tier 1: Universal Supports – Focus: Prevention and general support. This tier involves implementing broad-based strategies and resources available to all employees or participants. Examples include:
   • Onboarding programs and universal training sessions.
   • Wellness programs: stress management, health management.
   • Wellness programs based on improving health literacy.
   • Standardized professional development opportunities, based on identified needs of staff members.
   • Clear communication of existing resources available to staff members.

   Tier 2: Targeted Interventions – Focus: Targeted support for individuals who need more than universal support. This tier provides more focused interventions for adults showing signs of needing extra help to prevent the individual from escalating needs to Tier 3. Examples include:
   • Access to Employee Assistance Programs and Single Session Intervention (SSI).
   • Unwinding Anxiety Program and/or Self-Awareness Coaching
   • Skill workshops (e.g., time management, communication skills).
   • Access to mentors and small focus-alike groups (e.g., staff members struggling to deal with aging parents)

   Tier 3: Intensive, Individualized Interventions – Focus: Individualized and intensive support for those with significant needs. This tier includes personalized and intensive interventions tailored to the individual's specific needs. Examples include:
   • One-on-one counseling or therapy with preference given to telemental health, which is more accessible outside of school hours and is more confidential.
   • Unwinding Anxiety can be offered alongside direct access to mental health professionals who can tailor additional support based on the individual's progress.
   • Individualized performance improvement plans.
   • Intensive retraining or reskilling programs.
   • Access to specialized services (e.g., mental health support, disability accommodations)."

2. *From a regional state director of student support:* "This has been an additional 'burden' on me as a director in a system that has rarely to never focused on my well-being. I have had to take care of my 'mental health and well-being' and would like to see it modeled, but not likely in a state system. That said, we need to create positive work environments, and we need help doing this better. However we need to know where this begins and ends. For those who need a lot of help, we offer a list of community mental health providers, for those needing peer to peer mediation we offer mediation support, we offer office hours for teachers to come ask about behavior challenges they struggle with, allowing for debrief sessions. We have Employee Assistance Program for some.   This is a hard ask, because at some point, there needs to be clarity in the mental health and well being of the employee and their fit for the job? And while I feel it is my duty to offer support to my employees, I also need them to know how to care for themselves and others and be a part of community building where they are to the degree they can promote relationships and genuine care."

3. *From a district director of student support:* "From my perspective, it's a complex problem that intersects employment obligations and district focused SEL initiatives that tend to be directed at students. Human Resource Departments will provide some minimal level mental health supports such as a fixed number of free counseling sessions, a 'warm line' for immediate support in crisis, and sometimes district wide initiatives to create awareness around mental and physical health. Then there is the student-focused SEL piece and that depends on the adopted program. Some, such as the RULER Approach that we use in our District, does start with an 'adults first' mindset; the first year of implementation really revolves around adults adopting the 'emotions matter' mindset which in turn supports adult mental health. It doesn't necessarily prioritize adult mental health or provide supports, but it helps the adults in their implementation of an 'emotions matter' mindset when working with students. It seems to be that prioritization of staff mental health really varies by leader. Effective school and district leaders recognize that improved adult mental health directly benefits students and thus do more to prioritize it. At the same time, school and district initiatives that create an ever growing workload for teachers, and legislative and judicial environment that routinely sides with parents and students demonstrating even the most egregious behaviors, will torpedo nearly all initiatives to prioritize education mental health."

4. *From a Principal:* "Would we like to address staff mental health...absolutely. It is a fine line as we step into the realm of personal situations and divulging personal information. The added notion of as adults you are responsible for your self-care. Most districts have an Employee Assistance Program that provides a free mental health component but it is up to the adult to request and follow through with intake and appointments. Not sure what 'mentally healthy' means as well. Some can suffer from mental illness but do well and others may not. Ultimately, if it is affecting student learning then steps should be taken as far as administrative consequences. This may prompt the individual to seek outside mental health services as well."

5. *From a school social worker:* "Within our school district, we have Employee Assistance Program through our Human Respirces Department. We also have an agreement with our county local mental health agency to provide the option for staff to access mental health services (at staff cost) should they choose. There has also been free mental health support (1visit) by our local mental health agency during times of a school crisis or during days associated with holiday stress. Through a mental health grant we also provide our staff with a staff relaxation stations...a place that staff can congregate with stress relief items, comfortable seating and a student run coffee bar. For our high school staff we also provide mental health tips included in our SEL lessons that are applicable for staff or students. This SEL document goes out to all building staff."

> ### *How is this topic being discussed in your locale?*
> Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

For discussion and interchange:
>*Supporting students during and after a crisis*

Fires, hurricanes, floods, and other major disasters have a huge impact on communities, families, and children/youth. When they occur, there usually is information on how to talk with kids (e.g, limit media, listen to their concerns, keep calm so they will be calm, provide information as appropriate to their age, etc.).

But as we have seen with the disasters in North Carolina, California, and elsewhere, specific aspects of preparing, experiencing, and responding to disasters need to be understood so that our support of children/youth fits what they are going through.

We appreciate that considerable attention is being paid to mental health concerns.

A key concern is *talking* to children and youth during and following a crisis event.

Here are some lessons learned that can be applied currently and used when the time is right for upgrading crisis plans:

>*About Evacuation* – preparing to evacuate, evacuating from home, living in another place (shelter, friends, family) – all call for reassuring children and youth of their safety and providing information on when/whether they can go back home, taking steps to replace what they need but didn't bring, connecting with friends and neighbors to get and share information, and ensuring that temporary housing situations and immediate plans are discussed. If long term, anticipate evacuation fatigue.

>*About School Closures* – students need to know what will happen whether their school is closed temporarily, long term, or permanently, what is planned for them in making a transition to a new school situation (e.g., in person, online, home schooling). Staying in touch with district, school, teachers, classmates provides information and support.

>*Worry about family, neighbors, friends* – To clarify status and hopefully to reassure students that others are well or at least coping, they should be encouraged and assisted to initiate contacts as feasible (e.g., social networks, emails, calls, visits). Face to face gatherings provide reassurance and support.

>*Loss of a sense of control/feelings of competence* – While many things can't be "fixed," a focus on what small steps can be taken to adjust to the changes in daily life and routines. Providing a range of choices can help increase a sense of control/competence.

All this and more are needed in the immediate aftermath of a crisis and in the longer term recovery with the goals of helping restore (a) feelings of safety and connection with significant others and (b) a sense that actions can be taken so the situation will change for the better.

A colleague added the following advice for talking with children who have lost their homes in a disaster.

"The goal is to help the child feel supported, validated, and reassured that their feelings are normal and that they're not alone. Be patient and ready to revisit the conversation as they process their emotions over time. *Provide comfort, reassurance, and age-appropriate information*. Here are some examples:

>*Reassure Their Safety* ("I'm so sorry this happened, but the most important thing is that you're safe. We're all here to take care of you." "It's okay to feel scared or sad. What you're feeling is normal, and we'll get through this together.")

>*Acknowledge Their Loss* ("Losing your home and your things is really hard. It's okay to miss them and feel upset." "I know you had special things that you loved. We'll try to make sure you have what you need and help you feel comfortable again.")

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>*Provide Hope and Stability* ("We may not be able to go back to your home right now, but we'll find a safe place to stay and make it feel like home for you." "Things might feel different for a while, but we'll work together to rebuild and make new memories.")

>*Encourage Open Communication* ("If you have questions or want to talk about how you're feeling, I'm here to listen." "It's okay to cry or feel mad. You can share anything with me, and I'll do my best to help.")

>*Involve Them in Moving Forward* ("We'll figure out what we need to do next, and you can help decide what's most important to you." "Let's think about some of the things we can do to feel better and make our new space cozy.")

For more on specific plans and actions for supporting students during and after a crisis, see
>*Self-study survey: Crisis assistance and response*

For more resources, see our Center Quick Find
>*Crisis prevention and response*

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

>>**Children and disasters**
>>**Partnering with your and families for juvenile justice**
>>**Responding to Gangs in the School Setting**
>>**National Training & Technical Assistance Center for Child, Youth, & Family MH**
>>**Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health**
>>**School and family partnership can reduce chronic absenteeism**
>>**Social Media's Impact on the Mental Health of Teenagers**
>>**How to Help Kids Deal With Cyberbullying**
>>**Engaging Minds, Changing Futures: A Deep Dive into Student Engagement and Learning**
>>**How Mindsets Can Mitigate or Sustain Prejudice**
>>**Restraint and seclusion harmful to students, Education Department warns**

Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts

2/5 Support professional learning
2/5 Self-care and wellbeing
2/10 Positive discipline
2/11 Prevention core competencies
2/12 Safe and inclusive schools
2/12 Students as equity leaders
2/19 Planning an IEP team meeting for your child with mental health challenges
3/6 Ensure we do no harm
3/10 Language to Build Children's Self-Esteem
4/22 Student led initiatives
5/8 Creating conditions for healthy disagreement

Transforming Student/Learning Supports

Are you thinking about increasing the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing *a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports*?

We have many resources to help in moving forward.

   For example, see our recent guides that provide a roadmap for moving in new directions:

(1) *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*
(2) *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process*

These provide prototypes for new directions and first steps for moving forward on a monthly schedule. The first steps outlined involve

   (a) mapping existing student support activities and operational infrastructure,
   (b) analyzing what has been mapped,
   (c) identifying priorities for and clarifying the benefits of system changes,
   (d) developing recommendations for system changes,
   (e) building a critical mass of support

Links to resources are provided to aid in carrying out each task.
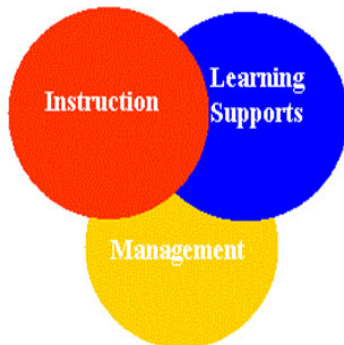
Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports

Teachers deserve more credit than they get.

They wouldn't need it if we paid them what they deserve.