

(4/12/23) This resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

>Engaging and reengaging students -- featuring an effort by Pinellas County to “get middle schools right”

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For discussion and interchange:

>Engaging and reengaging students -- featuring an effort by Pinellas County to “get middle schools right”

It is a given that teachers and student support staff are faced with a complex continuum of learner motivation. Unfortunately, engagement is a widespread problem in schools. Student engagement involves not only engaging and maintaining engagement, but also reengaging those who have disconnected from classroom instruction. For school personnel to do all this effectively, they must broaden their understanding of motivation, *especially intrinsic motivation*, and the complex relationship between extrinsics and intrinsics.

The problem of engaging students is highlighted in a recent article on the way Pinellas County is wrestling with the matter – starting with middle schools.

From: [*How to get middle schools right*](#)

With enrollment down, test scores lagging and families dissatisfied, a “mindset shift” is underway in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Pinellas County has a middle school problem.

Superintendent Kevin Hendrick is the first to admit it. He prioritized improving the way sixth through eighth grades get taught. Among his concerns is that district middle school students do not perform as well on state exams as do elementary or high school students. Middle school enrollment has declined districtwide by about 2,500 students over five years. And students are saying they feel disconnected from school.

“We haven’t quite figured out how to get middle schools right,” Hendrick said. After months spent listening to parents, students and teachers about their concerns, and consulting with experts about successful efforts elsewhere, the district has started rolling out its initiatives at a handful of test sites.... Pinellas Park Middle is one of the schools leading the change.

“It’s a mindset shift for not just teachers, but for students as well,” principal Jason Shedrick said. The school is participating in a trial run of project-oriented science lessons in conjunction with Innovation Foundation, a nonprofit that prepares students and teachers for technology changes and emerging problems. In addition, teachers are inviting more participation from students during civics lessons, and physical education classes are more interactive... A focus on collaboration and real-world assignments aims to make courses more meaningful...

The school is also in the process of adding extracurriculars, such as robotics and intramural sports, to give kids a reason to come beyond the classroom. “We’ve got to try some different things,” Shedrick said. “We’re trying to live on the cutting edge of what interests students.”

He offered as an example the “Student Voice, Student Choice” model being used in eighth grade civics. Teacher Karen Midkiff led her class through animated discussions about speech issues as part of a broader conversation about civic rights and responsibilities. Rather than have them read and discuss textbook passages from their seats, Midkiff read aloud prompts from real situations, such as the Pennsylvania teen who was suspended from cheerleading after ranting about her school on social media. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which sided with the teen. Midkiff had her students conduct a “respectful dialogue” about the scenario, in which they took stands and tried to sway classmates....

The school also features a sixth grade science course based on trial and error projects. Students in Brian Walters' classroom broke into small groups, where they attempted to filter dirty water using charcoal and cotton as part of a larger lesson on water purification and water cycles. They chattered and laughed as they attempted different setups, some getting clear water and others making it blacker than before. The students said they enjoyed the way Walters presented the lessons and the chance to see for themselves what works....

Schools are working on a bell schedule that has sixth graders switch classes separately from the older students to make the move less overwhelming. Related to that, the schools are looking for ways to team teachers so they work with common sets of students and can better attend to their needs. In addition to reformatting classes to make them be more collaborative and hands-on, the district is pushing for more ways to engage students nonacademically. That means clubs, field trips and sports, among other possibilities....

For more on understanding student engagement and reengagement, see

>Motivation, engagement, and reengagement

>School Engagement, Disengagement, Learning Supports, & School Climate

>Enhancing Classroom Teachers? Capacity to Successfully Engage All Students in Learning: It's the Foundation of Learning Supports

>Project Based Learning and Student Engagement

For discussion and interchange:

>Youth mental health: Sharing decision making

When concerns are raised about a student, it is good practice for the school to have a structured "referral" form for concerned parties to fill out. This encourages folks to articulate some detailed information about the nature and scope of the problem. Then, in analyzing the problem, schools need to gather other available information from several sources, such as teachers, administrators, parents, and, of course the student and perhaps involved peers. Given that differences in perspective will arise about the concerns and potential solutions, *shared* problem solving and decision making provide a way to move forward. Here's an excerpt from an article about the process relevant to providing counseling for mental health concerns:

From:

>Shared Decision-Making as a Tool for Navigating Multi-Stakeholder Discrepancies in Youth Psychotherapy

"Discrepancies among the key stakeholders in youth psychotherapy (e.g., caregivers, youths) commonly present an obstacle to treatment planning, forcing clinicians to align with one perspective over another and increasing the likelihood of a treatment plan that is not fully responsive to divergent opinions...

Youth psychotherapy typically involves multiple stakeholders, including youths, caregivers, and clinicians, with each offering important expertise to guide clinical decision-making across the course of treatment. A large body of work suggests that these stakeholders often present differing perspectives, which can complicate clinical decision-making. These and related stakeholders (e.g., teachers, siblings) have been shown to frequently disagree on key elements of youth psychotherapy, including youth symptom presentations...

Multi-stakeholder disagreements present a challenge for clinicians when making key decisions, such as determining which concerns should be targeted and in which order. Another possibility is that multi-stakeholder disagreements increase the risk that reports of certain stakeholders (e.g., caregivers) influence treatment plan development and implementation more than reports of other stakeholders (e.g., youths)...

Initially prioritized in medical settings, shared decision making has been increasingly applied to mental health care ... and, more recently, to youth psychotherapy. Shared decision making

supports clients in sharing their treatment preferences and goals with clinicians, and it guides clinicians to focus on their clients' autonomy and perspectives when designing and implementing treatment. Essential components of shared decision making include having a conversation about the problem(s) to be addressed in treatment, reviewing options to address the problem(s), collaboratively discussing the pros and cons of each option, and analyzing the benefits, costs, and risks of each decision made in the treatment planning process..."

For more on this, see

>[School-Based Client Consultation, Referral, and Management of Care](#)

>[Interviewing and Monitoring Tools](#) -- includes gathering a student's view of the problem

>[Involving Parents in Counseling](#)

>[Prereferral Interventions](#)

About Youth-Initiated Mentoring

From: *[Needs of Youth and Parents From Multi-Problem Families in the Search for Youth-Initiated Mentors](#)*

Youth-initiated mentoring (YIM) is an innovative approach in youth mental health care that empowers youth to recruit supportive adults from within their social networks as mentors. Mentors are non-parental figures who provide youth with guidance and support. ... Including YIM mentors in mental health care for youth seems promising for improving a wide range of outcomes, including wellbeing and academic achievement... youth who perceive more trusting, mutual, and empathic relationships with their mentors experience greater improvements than youth who perceive lower levels of relationship quality. Research on YIM indicates that relationship quality also directs the selection process. Most youth chose mentors with whom they had a strong relationship already before the mentor is positioned, and some referred to their mentor as their "friend," despite their familial bonds or age difference. Moreover, youth chose mentors who they find trusting, empathic, understanding, non-judgmental, and dedicated ...

... Youth and parents wanted mentors who can help youth obtain a better future and grow into healthy adults through advice and support. Similarly, mentors said to want to help youth to achieve goals, such as going to school, suggesting that positioned mentors match youth's and parents' needs. Mentors' focus on achieving goals is promising, as a meta-analysis on formal mentoring demonstrated that friendship models, which encourage mentors to provide general friendship aimed at broad developmental goals, were less effective than targeted models of mentoring, in which mentors offer support to mentees to achieve a specific, predetermined goal.

For more on this, see the Center's Quick Find on [Mentoring](#).

>[Links to a few other relevant shared resources](#)

[Steps to Help States Support Relative Caregivers with Evidence-Based Programs](#)

[Shared Decision-Making in Youth Mental Health Care: Using the Evidence to Plan Treatments Collaboratively](#)

[A systematic review of shared decision making interventions in child and youth mental health: synthesizing the use of theory, intervention functions, and behavior change techniques](#)

**What approaches for promoting shared decision-making are used in child mental health?
A scoping review**

Exploring the factors relating to academic resilience among students with socioeconomic disadvantages: Factors from individual, school, and family domains

Empowering Students by Cultivating Agency

Creating an Inclusive Classroom for Neurodivergent Learners

School System Challenges that SEL Must Address

About How Schools can Best Play their role in Addressing Mental Health Concerns

**Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm
LGBTQI+ Youth**

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 4/12 Supporting children exposed to violence
- 4/12 Whole child policy
- 4/12 Addressing complex topics with youth
- 4/12 About section 504 plans
- 4/12 Developing and partnering with youth advisory councils
- 4/13 Community-Based Alternatives to Youth Incarceration
- 4/17 Ensuring equity and cultural responsiveness
- 4/18 Gang prevention
- 4/18 Living, Learning, and Working After High School
- 4/19 Recruitment and retention strategies for principals
- 4/20 Youth ambassadors to improve health literacy
- 4/20 Effective communication with the IEP team
- 4/25 Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility
- 4/26 Building campus relationships from the inside out
- 4/27 Resolving disputes through the special education process

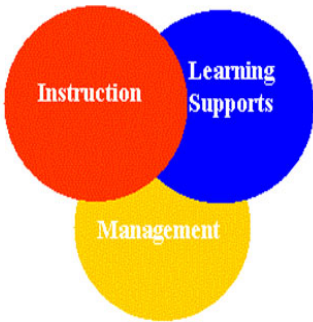
To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what's going on** to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- **For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**
- **Looking for information?** (We usually can help.)
- **Have a suggestion for improving our efforts?** (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you!
Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu



"I miss the days when tech support was a new bulb for the overhead."



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 promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive 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/>)