Featured

>*Social-Emotional Curriculum Isn't a Good Fit for Every Student*

Also for discussion:

>*Supporting the Transition to High School*

>*14- to 24-year-old: A critical period*

And, as always: *Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education*

For discussion and interchange:

>Social-Emotional Curriculum Isn't a Good Fit for Every Student

From: *Social-Emotional Learning Strategies Don't Work for Every Student. Here's What Does.*

"Throughout this academic year, I facilitated a training session on social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies for educators at a high-needs elementary school. During one of the sessions, a seasoned teacher's candid remarks struck a chord. He explicitly stated, "I know that that is what the book says we should do, but these kids are from Brownsville. We tried that, and it hasn't worked."

At that moment, it dawned on me that traditional SEL approaches might not suffice for students entrenched in adversity, necessitating a more nuanced and culturally sensitive framework to effectively meet their emotional needs.

When I looked for research on the effectiveness of SEL in impoverished neighborhoods serving Black and Latino students, I found limited data. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there is a growing demand for support among black and brown students in these communities, leading to an increase in programs and professional development opportunities for staff. However, these efforts have not effectively addressed the underlying issues.

Despite the availability of professional development opportunities, many programs seem disconnected from the realities faced by Black and Latino students, perpetuating the existing challenges. As a result, the problem persists, and the need for targeted, impactful programs and services remains unmet

As a Black social work supervisor who has navigated the educational system — and now works directly with students from underserved communities — I intimately understand the chasm between SEL ideals and our students' lived experiences.

Many of our students, despite their resilience, face immense challenges beyond the scope of conventional SEL strategies. For example, a child raised in an environment filled with violence and neglect may find it difficult to relate to SEL activities that presume stable family structures and access to emotional support....

This disconnect shows the urgent need for SEL initiatives to not only be culturally responsive but also adaptive to the diverse realities of our students.

I am committed to advocating for holistic approaches that prioritize equity and inclusion. I want to ensure that SEL initiatives resonate authentically with every student, regardless of their background or circumstances. Rather than imposing our theoretical knowledge and professional competencies in social work and mental health, we should prioritize student-led approaches....

I believe there is power in giving students the space to reflect, even if their initial response is rooted in uncertainty. By doing so, we empower them to recognize that healing and coping strategies can be personalized and do not have to conform to pre-established norms or expectations. This approach acknowledges the uniqueness of each student's experience and fosters a more inclusive and responsive environment for their well-being...."

While research on SEL has provided valuable insights in the past, it's crucial to recognize that the field is dynamic. Just because there was research conducted before doesn't mean we can't adapt and refine our methods to ensure they are inclusive and relevant to all students today. This continuous evolution is essential to meet the unique challenges and realities faced by our students

Moreover, it's essential to acknowledge our own limitations as adults and professionals in the field of SEL. Even with our expertise, we don't have all the answers. At the end of the day, students are the true experts on their own experiences, irrespective of their age. Their insights, perspectives and feedback are invaluable in shaping effective SEL practices that resonate authentically with their lives.

This requires us to challenge existing paradigms, listen intently to our students' voices and collaborate across disciplines to develop tailored strategies that honor their lived experiences. By doing so, we not only acknowledge the resilience and strength inherent in each student but also create pathways for genuine healing, growth and empowerment...."

From: *Principles of antiracist social emotional justice learning*

"...Unfortunately, the current approaches to SEL can often perpetuate racial hierarchies, apply a deficit lens toward students, and emphasize the need for student-level change while ignoring the historical, social, and cultural influences that created and actively maintain oppressive environments through which students are required to navigate...."

Center Comment

As with all instruction, social-emotional teaching needs to be personalized or it won't benefit some students. One way to do this is to use natural opportunities as teachable moments.

Schools are social milieus. Each day in the classroom and around the school students interact with their peers and various adults in formal and informal ways. Every encounter, positive and negative, represents a potential learning experience and opportunity to enhance social emotional learning. All school staff, and especially teachers, can be taught ways to use the encounters to minimize transactions that work against positive growth and enhance personal and social functioning. In classrooms, appreciation of what needs immediate attention can be garnered readily by looking at how well instruction is carried out in ways that strengthen or hinder development of interpersonal skills.

See:

>*Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH*

>*About Promoting Social Emotional Development at School: "Kernels" and Natural Opportunities*

>*Moving toward Personalized Instruction and Special Assistance* (Part II in *Improving School Improvement*)

For more on these matters, see

>*Racism, Equity, Social Justice, and School*

>*Cultural Competence*

> *Motivation, Engagement, Re-engagement*

Is this topic being discussed in your locale?

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Supporting the transition to high school

Starting ninth grade is not just another grade transition. For most students it is a major life change. Some don't even survive the transition and become early "push outs." For too many others, the emotional toll is high, and this exacerbates behavior and learning problems. From a developmental and motivational perspective, eighth and ninth grades are critical times for transition supports designed to assure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Such interventions must encompass programs to

> promote and maintain positive attitudes during the transition
> anticipate and prevent problems
> provide special assistance to those whose problems make it highly likely that the transition will be difficult to negotiate
> monitor transitions in order to respond at the first indications a student is having transition problems.

Successful ninth grade transition programs, of course, are built on the foundation of good schooling through the eighth grade. But eighth grade provides the opportunity for a variety of specific and personalized activities aimed at supporting the transition and enhancing positive motivation about and capabilities for making the move into ninth grade. And ensuring a positive transition requires transition supports as students begin the ninth grade.

A special focus is needed to quickly identify students who are not making a good adjustment to high school. It is only a matter of weeks (sometimes days) after students enter a new class, grade, school or begin a new year that it is clear to most teachers which students are experiencing difficulties adjusting (e.g., to new content and standards, new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc.). It is particularly poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but is disorganized and can't keep up. If these difficulties are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, behavior problems, and absences increase.

Addressing school adjustment problems involves:

>personal contacts to build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family
>identifying assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class)
>exploring what the youngster doesn't like at school and the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)
>identifying other possible causal factors
>exploring what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.)
>introducing new strategies in the classroom – based on the best information about what is causing the problem
>enhancing student engagement through (a) an emphasis on learning and enrichment options that are of current greatest interest and which the student indicates wanting to and can pursue and (b) a temporary deemphasis on areas that are not of high interest.

For more on these matters, see our Center resources. For example:

>*Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade*
>*The Role of School and Home in Promoting Student Engagement*
>*About School Adjustment*

And, of course, students and staff are concerned about the many transitions that require supports every day and throughout the school year – see *Supports for Transitions.*

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From: *The decisive decade: Understanding the trajectories of 14- to 24-year-olds*

"The opportunities and challenges facing young adults in the "decisive decade" — between the ages of 14 and 24 — shape their long-term health, family, education, and work outcomes....

These years are not only potential times of trouble, but of extraordinary growth and opportunity, the years in which we literally "come of age." How we navigate these ten years — the opportunities we are offered and the obstacles we face — will shape the rest of our life. These are years that really count: nothing less than the decisive decade....

The high school years

A large body of research focuses on trajectories through high school including the importance of GPA at various stages, differential risk of expulsion or suspension, rates of on-time graduation, as well as overall graduation. There is a strong emphasis, too, on the importance of school quality or type, impact of teacher quality, school funding mechanisms, school choice, and much more. There is an appropriate emphasis in the high school literature on educational disparities, by race, gender and class. The bottom line of this research is not surprising: the high school years count for a very great deal in terms not only of subsequent education and economic outcomes, but in terms of mental and physical health.

Some of the good news here includes a significant narrowing of race gaps in high school graduation and very sharp reductions in teen pregnancy. On the other hand, there remain very wide gaps especially by race and class in key outcomes including test scores and GPA. There are also wide gaps by race and by gender in on-time high school graduation (e.g., within four years of enrolling); troubling signs of worsening mental health; and evidence for a widening class gap in rates of obesity among adolescents. ...

Seventy-eight percent of 9th graders (about age 14) have hit the key milestone at the start of the decade, meaning they are enrolled in the 9th grade for the first time and have an academic GPA of at least 2.0. And the students who pass this milestone are more likely to pass later ones. Among those who hit the milestone at about age 14, over 90% go on to graduate high school on time with a GPA of 2.0 or higher (the key milestone at about age 18). By contrast, only about half of those who missed the mark at age 14 are meeting milestones at age 18. On-time high school graduation is also predictive of enrollment and workforce participation later in life; 41% of those who do not complete high school on time with a 2.0 or higher are disconnected from school and work compared with 18% of those who completed high school on time...."

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>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

>>Rethinking child and youth activism in challenging times

>>The role of adolescent social inclusion in educational attainment among vulnerable youth

>>Why adolescents conform to high-status peers: Associations among conformity, identity alignment, and self-esteem

>>Practices and settings which promote a psychological sense of community among young people who experience social marginalization

>>Perspectives on the impact of generative AI on early-childhood development and education

>>Let's Talk Before We Celebrate a "Progressive Turn": Critical Dialogue on Social and Emotional Learning

>>Career and Technical Education's Unequal Dividends for High School Students: The Stratification of a New Generation

>>Tailoring Evidence-Based Treatment to the Person, Not the Diagnosis

>>2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People

>>Collaborating to Prevent Foster Care Placement and Support Family Well-Being

>>Can Young Mental Health Navigators Ease the Crisis Facing Today's Students?

A Few Upcoming Webinars

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

6/12 Working towards positive educational outcomes: Mental health and special education

6/13 Legal changes in student privacy

6/18 Special education interventions

6/20 AI in schools: promises and pitfalls

6/20 Innovative special education

6/26 Accelerating English Learner Success

7/11 Managing conflict on interdisciplinary teams

7/11 Enhancing School Safety Using Behavioral Threat Assessment (part three)

7/18 Culturally informed crisis support

7/23 Stress management and resiliency training

7/25 Organizational commitment to a culture of care

8/13 Administrator Basics for Supporting English Learners with Disabilities

8/20 Welcoming students through transitions

8/22 Compassionate leadership

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.

Webinar recording: **Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth**

For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to
Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm

I hear they're adding social emotional learning to the curricula.
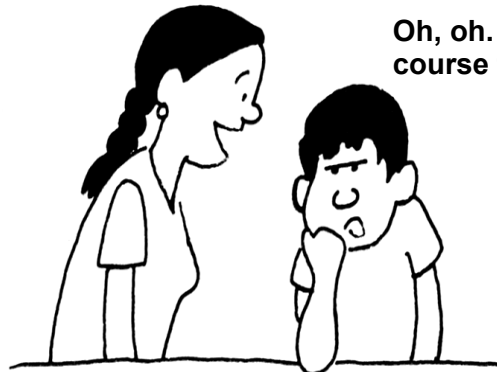
Oh, oh. That means there will be another course for me to fail.

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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

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Through the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

if you are aware of efforts underway to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching, please share with us.

And if anyone is 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 guide:

>*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

Send all info and requests to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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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.

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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.

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER

Who Are We? Recently renamed the Center for MH in Schools and Student/Learning Supports, our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.