

**School Practitioner Community of Practice**  
(A network for sharing & exchange)  
(6/8/22)

**Contents**

**>After Texas School Shooting: What are you doing to prevent the next one?**

**>As violence spikes, Chicago Schools are taking the need to provide activities for students 'very seriously'**

**>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

**(Scroll down to read about the above and for hotlinks to resources)**

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

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

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

\*\*\*\*\*

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>After Texas School Shooting: What are you doing to prevent the next one?**

After every mass shooting, as the following article stress, there is a familiar fight about what needs to done. Minimally, schools and communities are reviewing their safety plans and crisis response. But as the second article underscores, typical safety plans aren't sufficient. Our research finds that too many don't focus enough on (a) after the event care for all those who need it at school and the community, (b) addressing root causes, and (c) doing more than "hardening" the school in pursuing prevention. So, following the two articles, there are excerpts from articles suggesting the need to broaden perspectives about what needs consideration in tackling what has been an intractable problem for our society. These are followed by a few responses we solicited to garner perspectives from older students. Finally, we suggest some resources you can use and share.

From: *After Texas School Shooting, a Familiar Fight About How to Make Schools Safe*  
<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/after-texas-school-shooting-a-familiar-fight-about-how-to-make-schools-safe/2022/05>

"Hours after the deadliest school shooting in Texas history, lawmakers and educators around the nation launched into another round of a tragically familiar debate about how to make "never again" a reality.... State leaders called the attack "incomprehensible," but educators and school safety experts around the country said that the killings—and the resulting political arguments—follow a pattern established over a decade of high-profile mass school shootings...

"Unfortunately, I think we've seen the tone of the discussions," said Amy Klinger, co-founder of the Educator's School Safety Network, an organization that seeks to bring teachers and school administrators into school safety conversations. "People latch onto one issue," she said. "They retreat to their corners and scream at each other." Public leaders quickly restart familiar arguments ... Meanwhile, experts who study school safety caution that another round of task forces and best-practice reports won't make a difference if the resulting ideas sit on a shelf unheeded.

Questions swirl: What, if anything, can lawmakers do to stop the pattern of gun violence in schools? Are existing policies being adequately enforced? Will knee-jerk policy reactions add to districts' burdens without helping the situation?..."

From: *The Uvalde school district had an extensive safety plan. 19 children were killed anyway.* <https://granthshala.com/the-ualde-school-district-had-an-extensive-safety-plan-19-children-were-killed-anyway/>  
“...According to public documents, the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District had doubled its security budget in recent years,.... The district adopted a range of security measures that included each school having its own police force, threat assessment teams, a threat reporting system, social media monitoring software, fencing around schools... Uvalde’s School Safety Plan also includes support and monitoring for students’ emotional health, including bullying reporting programs and access to social workers and case managers. ...”

Here are a few excerpts from articles suggesting the need to broaden perspectives about what needs consideration in strengthening the focus of prevention efforts:

From: *Tackle the causes of mass shootings: Rage, fear, social isolation and guns* <https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/2019/08/08/tackle-causes-mass-shootings-rage-fear-social-isolation-and-guns/1944429001/>

“... David Brooks makes an interesting observation: “These mass killings are about many things – guns, demagoguery, and the rest – but they are also about social isolation ... Whenever there’s a shooting, there’s always a lonely man who fell through the cracks of society, who lived a life of solitary disappointment ....”

So yes, guns continue to be a problem for this country. But so is social isolation, anger, fear, and rage. Addressing just one of these factors and failing to address the others will not fix the problem....”

From: *Salvador Ramos' Expulsion Allowed 'Isolation and Disconnection' to Fester* <https://www.newsweek.com/salvador-ramos-expelled-high-school-psychologists-isolation-disconnection-1711374>

“...the suspected perpetrator in the mass shooting at the Robb Elementary School in Texas last week, had been expelled from school, and that may have led to feelings of “isolation and disconnection,”...

“We know that the generator of difficulty is isolation and disconnection and disaffection,” Maurice Elias, a professor of psychology and director of the Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab. “We know that this is the situation that brews violence, so schools need to become places of support, welcoming, they need to be places where children’s social and emotional needs are seen as important as their academic needs. They are completely interconnected, from a practical point of view, when students drop out they cannot be allowed to drop off. What happens now is kids drop out, the schools are not responsible for them anymore, no one is responsible for them anymore and then we hear about them again. Elias warned that if a young person is thrown out of school and not properly supported, this can “brew and become trouble for society.”

From: *School Threat Assessment in the USA* <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40688-018-0188-8>

“... there is no accurate or useful “profile” of a “school shooter,” that is, no composite of demographic or other visible or background characteristics that showed accurately whether that person was more likely to engage in a school shooting. However, the researchers did conclude that looking at any threatening or troubling behavior exhibited by a student, former student, or any other person of concern could prompt an examination of whether that person was on a pathway to violence. ... threat assessment is a primarily support-focused process, and that preventing a violent act relies heavily on assessing the needs of the person engaging in the threatening behavior and in developing a plan to ensure connection with services needed to change that behavior and reduce any threat posed....”

From: *Reaching Out versus Lashing Out: Examining Gender Differences in Experiences with and Responses to Bullying in High School*  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12103-017-9408-4>

“... repeated rejection that alienates youth has been linked to school violence and school shootings ... Social rejection is evident in the majority of cases of shootings and school violence, with one-third of school shooters specifically reporting that they felt bullied by others..... Among older youth, individuals who have been alienated have also been found to angrily lash out towards their perpetrators ... Important next steps to take in improving school safety, reducing aggression, and preventing antisocial responses might include increasing the accessibility of prosocial response options for boys.... It is likely that multi-systemic approaches are most successful in reducing aggressive behaviors and promoting prosocial behavior and positive social relationships in schools and among children and adolescents. ...”

From: *School Bullying, Mental Health, and Well-being in Adolescents: Mediating Impact of Positive Psychological Orientations* <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12187-020-09780-2>

“...Positive psychological orientations are defined here as ... positive psychological strengths (e.g., gratitude, optimism, self-efficacy, empathy, self-awareness) that can be fostered and cultivated. Considering certain theoretical frameworks (e.g., Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Self-Determination Theory), the presence of positive psychological orientations allows one to meet basic needs (e.g., relatedness, competency, autonomy) that enable enhanced well-being, mental health, and even physical health... the cultivating and building of positive psychological orientations at school should be a priority and certainly a central consideration of bullying interventions and prevention programs. ...”

### **We asked university students to share their responses to the follow questions:**

In looking at root causes of school shootings, people often describe the shooter as having been bullied and isolated in school. As you think back to your school experiences, can you remember such students? What do you think the school might have done better to support and include these students?

Here is a sample of what they said

- (1) I believe that it is very necessary to make mental health counselors more accessible to students in elementary, middle and high school. Many times students who need someone to talk to either do not have access to a counselor or therapist or may also not know how to reach out for help (specially at such young ages). I believe that a student just being able to talk to a counselor about events going on in their life can make a huge difference in the trajectory of their life. Specifically, many times students who are deemed “troubled”, and/or are the ones acting out in class are disregarded or labeled trouble makers, instead of looking deeper into why they may be acting out in the first place. Instead of just punishing students, I believe it would be very helpful for these students (and all) to have access to a mental health counselor who would be on campus.
- (2) ...During my four years in high school, we had two instances of students making shooting threats that were taken seriously..... The students who indicated shooting plans were isolated in the sense that they kept to their own close groups more than most. They were regarded as "weird," and were avoided by more popular kids, even if they were not directly bullied. I believe a big part of why they were avoided was because they would say things that made others uncomfortable, such as sexist, racist, or homophobic comments -- it was mostly in the service of performative "edginess,"... The students implicated in the shooting plans were on the social fringes. Much of the discussion around shooters has to do with how they were treated by their classmates, but I believe that often unfairly shifts the blame. ... how can we expect students to respond to intolerant or insensitive speech/behavior, if not to avoid it?  
Schools can scarcely punish anything short of hate speech, and punishment is likely not a solution anyway, and schools cannot make students like each other. My school attempted some interventions with the intention to create a more tolerant and understanding environment, ...  
More attention must be given to the circumstances of the community itself, whether that be

better support for struggling families, more consistent mental well-being education starting from earlier years, or a more serious discussion of dangerous rhetoric found on the internet....

This issue cannot ever be truly settled by addressing mental health alone; it is fundamentally an issue of national policy and culture. ... This goes far beyond anything schools, let alone individuals, can do to change it. It is, at its core, a problem with state and federal policy regarding access to firearms, and the culture that has grown in this country around guns....

- (3) ...My belief is that mass shootings can be avoided by limiting accessibility to guns in the US. But in terms of the student's mental health support, I feel like a lot of mass shooting incidents at schools happen because the students do not have proper support at home or school to deal with their mental health issues..... What I think is necessary for schools to implement is more counseling-based services and accessible activities that give students a safe base to talk about their struggles or their emotions.... I think it's also good to take preventative measures to prevent bullying that happens outside of school, such as monitoring social media use or anti-bullying campaigns to show what kind of toll bullying can take on students....Prevention programs should be in all school districts,...to help control anger, violence, and bullying. I also think gun violence is a gender-related issue. As the majority of mass shooters are male, prevention measures should be also approached in a gender-specific way. The culture instills toxic masculinity into males at a young age, stigmatizing men from sharing their feelings with others. .... I believe that counseling-based services and support should teach male students from a young age by giving them other routes to take out their anger,....
- (4) I do remember students like this growing up, kids that were outcasts and did not have friends... Many times the isolation seems to stem from household issues such as divorced parents, no parents, abuse, trauma, etc. These are the issues schools need to be aware of. ... In the classroom, teachers can focus on more group work, allowing for students to work together, helping to create new friendships...
- (5) I think more team building and inclusion would serve to support and include these students. Activities in which these students are more integrated with other students to better get to know one another could create empathy for those who are wayward and disconnected. Assigning individuals to groups or teams could be done randomly as to negate the social hierarchies that are often in place in schools. Not only will this foster an environment of inclusion for those who are often considered outcasts and isolated, it will humanize those who how would be a target of the disconnected's wrath. These activities could be geared towards humanizing not only the bullied, but the bullies as well. Such activities may include "icebreaker" exercises, cooperative task completions, and community work. Competitive activities may want to be avoided as they often create a more out-group mentality.
- (6) The principal could form a committee that oversees students who are known to be or have a history of emotional and behavioral disturbance as well as training teachers to watch for signs of social isolation and extremism. Offer the students counseling that is non judgmental and non confrontational in nature. Have the guidance counselors check in a few times in the quarter with students. Have social workers pay a visit to students who may be at risk of family problems like poverty, divorced / abusive / neglectful parents.... Schools should also offer after-school program to socially incorporate these isolated and socially awkward kids into peer groups with someone trained in child psychology to oversee and facilitate them. There should also be individual help available as far as tutoring and making sure they get the specific help they need in order to get them up to date with the curriculum and re engage them in academic life so that school will be more interactive and enjoyable for them. There really should be more staff who are trained and experienced in detecting signs of social isolation, suffering, emotional disturbances and mental health problems in children so that early intervention through counseling, cognitive behavior therapy, group therapy or even help with resources such as nutrition, safe home and family life so as to get them re engaged and maintain engagement in the classroom as well as socially with their peers before they get a chance to grow up with all these emotional burdens foster a deeper emotional and mental disturbances that puts them at high risk or violence and outbursts.

**In reviewing your school crisis plans, think about expanding the focus on (a) after the event care for all those who need it at school and the community, (b) addressing root causes, and (c) doing more than “hardening” the school in pursuing prevention. With respect to prevention, we pay particular attention to addressing bullying, alienation, dropout, school climate, and sense of community.**

The following resources might be helpful:

- > *Developing Systems at a School for Problem Identification, Triage, Referral, and Management of Care* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/developingsystems.pdf>
- > *Working with Disengaged Students* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/disengagedstudents.pdf>
- > *Embedding Bullying Interventions into a Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring11.pdf>
- > *Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Problems at School* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/promotingmh.pdf>
- > *Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and MH* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>
- > *Social and Interpersonal Problems Related to School Aged Youth* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/socialproblems/socialprobs.pdf>
- > *Supports for Students Deemed At-Risk* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/risk.pdf>
- > *Schools as Caring, Learning Communities* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/caring.pdf>
- > *Promoting Positive Peer Relationships* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/peers.pdf>

Links to more resources always can be freely accessed by going to the Center’s Quick Finds. For example, see

- > *Bullying* - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/bully.htm>
- > *Dropout prevention* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html>

And because the context for the above is the larger focus on improving schools to more effectively address barriers to learning and teaching and enhance healthy development, the Center has put the following books online to provide for more in-depth discussion:

- > *Improving School Improvement*
  - > *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
  - > *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*
- all three can be freely accessed at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

**Be a community of practice participant**  
**Share your experiences, views, comments**  
Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

***Every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story.***

***Kids need us most when they are in trouble.***

## As violence spikes, Chicago Schools are taking the need to provide activities for students 'very seriously'

From: *As violence spikes, CPS taking need to provide activities for students 'very seriously' — and says teens shouldn't get all the blame*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/education/2022/5/18/23125934/cps-summer-programs-violence-alternative-public-schools>

As debate rages over Mayor Lori Lightfoot's new, restrictive policies for teenagers this summer in response to a weekend shooting that left a Chicago Public Schools student dead, district leaders said they're focused on connecting kids with safe spaces and engaging programming.

Chicago Public Schools' education chief, said engaging students this summer is a priority, and it's important children feel welcome and safe in the city. "We're taking this very seriously... Our kids are not to blame for everything that is going on. We definitely want to engage them because they're looking for social opportunities after two very tough years. We have a very simple process for schools to basically tell us what they want to offer from an enrichment program to a tutoring program to anything else, and we are funding it. Some schools have already put in requests for "really extensive summer programming," she said, and those offerings are being updated on an online dashboard and interactive map. More information is available at [cps.edu/campaigns/summer-programs](https://cps.edu/campaigns/summer-programs).

There are also Park District programs, and 15,000 students have applied for One Summer Chicago, an initiative that connects kids with summer jobs. City Hall also announced Wednesday the launch of the "My CHI. My Future." mobile app to help teens find summer programs, events and jobs.

Pedro Martinez, the Chicago Public Schools CEO, said officials are working with schools in the weeks leading up to summer break to "get children involved in those programs now so that we know they'll be engaged and safe.... Martinez said he wants principals and teachers to ask students about the type of summer programs they'd like to see and help identify gaps. Those discussions, and thoughts on the mayor's new policies, will help inform the city.

### >Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Can We Prevent School Shootings?

<https://www.alfred.edu/about/news/studies/lethal-school-violence/can-we-prevent.cfm>

Know the Signs. Save Lives <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/our-programs/program-overview/>

School shootings: 10 risk factors you need to know

<https://reddotalert.com/school-shootings-10-risk-factors-you-need-to-know/>

Supporting child and student social, emotional, and behavioral mental health

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-afterschool-summer-enrichment>

Making Space for Gratitude: Ideas for Schools During Challenging Times

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/gratitude>

To my students on the final day of the school year

<https://crawlingoutoftheclassroom.wordpress.com/2021/06/02/to-my-students-on-the-final-day-of-the-2020-2021-school-year-thank-you/>

Simulation Results Suggest That Improving School Readiness May Yield Long-term Education and Earnings Benefits  
<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/simulation-results-suggest-that-improving-school-readiness-may-yield-long-term-education-and-earnings-benefits>

Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America  
<https://education.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence>

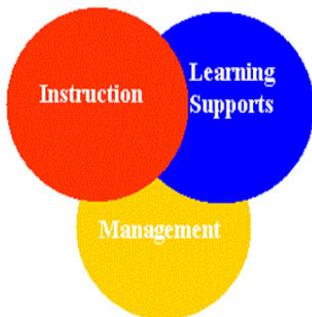
Bridging the Mental Health Care Gap for Black Children Requires a Focus on Racial Equity and Access  
<https://www.childtrends.org/blog/bridging-the-mental-health-care-gap-for-black-children-requires-a-focus-on-racial-equity-and-access>

### A Few Upcoming Webinars

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

- 6/8 Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility
- 6/30 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights
- 6/14 Impact of Social Media on Youth
- 6/16 Culturally Sustaining Social/Emotional Learning
- 6/16 Alternatives for Preventing & Responding to Crisis
- 6/21 Emotional first aid
- 6/21 From Plan to Action
- 6/23 Modernizing Principal Support: The Road to More Connected and Effective Leaders
- 6/28 Protect Our Youth Online
- 6/30 Intersections of Secondary Traumatic Stress with Racism

\*\*\*\*\*



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.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Invitation to Listserv Participants:**

Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.

Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

*Why are you mad at your teacher?*



*She didn't think it was funny when I told her I had to forget what she taught me yesterday so there would be more room in my brain for today's lessons.*

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

**For new sign-ups – email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto: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/>)**