This resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA
(8/17/22)

Featured:

>*Concerned about student anxiety, aggressive behavior, school climate?*
What are the plans for addressing these in the coming school year?

Plus:
Links to other resources

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For discussion and interchange:

>**Student anxiety, aggressive behavior, school climate, & other related concerns**

About Anxiety: The reality is that anxiety is an expected and normal response to the challenges that confront all of us. And, given the events of the past several years, it is not surprising that concerns about anxiety are on the rise. In planning, it is important to understand matters such as

(1) What is normal anxiety when entering a new school year?

(2) When is anxiety excessive? How can you tell?

(3) What can be done to support students as they return to school?

Schools need to plan for enhancing staff, parent, and student awareness each of these matters, with an emphasis on how to normalize general concerns and identify and respond when students are overwhelmed.

As aids for discussions about student anxiety, see
- *About Anxiety, Resilience, and Schools* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/anxiety22.pdf
- *Back-to-School Anxiety* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/backtoschanx.pdf

For more on responding to anxiety at school, see the Center's Quick Find:
- *Anxiety & Stress* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/anxiety.htm

About aggressive behavior: A colleague notes: *I have been hearing from a lot of teachers that students and families seem to be more aggressive.*

We've been hearing that concern quite a bit. After more than two years of living under stressful conditions, many people clearly are frustrated and angry. School boards and administrators across the county have been confronted by angry constituents. In response, the term "de-escalation" has come into wide use. But, de-escalation techniques, of course, are only temporary measures.

Schools must plan how to help staff, parents, and students understand the reasons for the aggressive behavior, how to express frustration and anger in more appropriate ways, and how to respond when aggressive confrontations arise.

As aids for discussions and planning, here are some resources and excerpts for both short-term and longer-term responses.

For short-term measures to de-escalate aggressive confrontations, see
- *Conflict De-Escalation Techniques* https://hsi.com/resources/conflict-de-escalation-techniques
  Excerpt: " Empathy needs to be shown during conflict situations. Even if you do not agree with the person's position, expressing an understanding why that person feels a particular way will

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help resolve the conflict. Clarifying, paraphrasing and open-ended questions all help to ensure that the person is aware you have understood their frustrations completely. Ask for their ideas or solutions. Help them talk out angry feelings rather than act on them...."

- *CPI's Top 10 De-Escalation Tips Revisited*
  https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/CPI-s-Top-10-De-Escalation-Tips-Revisited

Summary of the top 10

>*Be Empathic and Nonjudgmental* – Do not judge or be dismissive of the feelings of the person in distress. Remember that the person's feelings are real, whether or not you think those feelings are justified....

>*Respect Personal Space* – Be aware of your position, posture, and proximity when interacting with a person in distress. Allowing personal space shows respect, keeps you safer, and tends to decrease a person's anxiety....

>*Use Nonthreatening Nonverbals* – The more a person is in distress, the less they hear your words—and the more they react to your nonverbal communication. Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice. Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way toward defusing a situation.

>*Remain calm, rational, and professional* – While you can't control the person's behavior, how you respond to their behavior will have a direct effect on whether the situation escalates or defuses....

>*Focus on Feelings* – Facts are important, but how a person feels is the heart of the matter....

>*Ignore Challenging Questions* – Engaging with people who ask challenging questions is rarely productive. When a person challenges your authority, redirect their attention to the issue at hand....

>*Set Limits* – As a person progresses through a crisis, give them respectful, simple, and reasonable limits.

>*Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences*....

>*Choose Wisely What You Insist Upon* – It's important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not....

>*Allow Silence for Reflection* – While it may seem counterintuitive to let moments of silence occur, sometimes it's the best choice. It can give a person a chance to reflect on what's happening, and how they need to proceed....

>*Allow Time for Decisions* – When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to think through what you've said...."

For resources about *longer-term solutions* to resolve aggressive confrontations, see

- *Dealing With Angry Parents* https://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin474.shtml
  Excerpt: "All teachers and principals must deal with angry parents from time to time. In those times of heated passions, our responses carry great weight. A miscalculated response can backfire; it can fan the flames of a parent's upset and even burn bridges we've worked hard to build between school and home...

  Build a school community that focuses on the positive. Establish a relationship and build a community with families that is consistently focused on positive school news and child celebrations that parents and community members then feel like partners with the school. A school community built on such a positive foundation helps in dealing with the difficult issues that arise from time to time. When you have to deliver difficult information to a parent, you have already established a healthy relationship. They know that you value them as a partner and a valuable member of the school community.

  Even in the strongest of school communities, disagreements or difficult situations can arise. When that happens, listen to a parent's complaints -- without interrupting....

  >Listen. "When parents are upset, they want to be heard. Many seem to think they must raise their voices to be heard. So listen -- actively!"

>Empathize. "Even if you think the parent is wrong or misguided, their feelings are real.
>Acknowledge that they are upset....
>Ask. "Ask questions such as Is there is anything else you want me to know? or Do you have
anything else that you are concerned about? or What is bothering you the most?...
>Problem Solve. What do you want me to do? or What do you think I should do? Many times,
parents don't have an answer, but if they do see if you can use their ideas in the action
plan. At the end the conference, go back over what was agreed to do and share a plan
for how the school will report back to them.
>Always try to offer alternatives, so the parent has some control over the situation and so
there is a sense of shared decision making....
It might even be a good idea to have another person in the room with you. That person
should be, preferably, a person who can see both sides of an issue and remain calm. When
you are feeling beleaguered, this person can refocus the conversation on finding a solution,
rather than shifting blame. A guidance counselor is a good person for this role, because they
know about mediating conflicts and may have valuable knowledge to contribute to the
situation."...

Key to longer-range strategies are establishing working relationships and developing effective
dialogues. Here are a few resources:
- *Improving Working Relationships Inside the Classroom*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/relations.pdf
- *How teachers can support and talk to students as they return to school?*
https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/how-teachers-can-support-and-talk-students-they-return-school
- *The Art of Talking With Children*
https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/22/06/art-talking-children

In working with angry students, it is important to enhance opportunities for students to
express their perspective of the problem, causes, and solutions. To this end, it is helpful
to use structured interviewing techniques. See
- *Interviewing and Monitoring Tools* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/interviewtools.pdf
Excerpt: "Our talk today will help us to discuss what's going O.K. and what's not going so well.
How would you describe your current situation?
What problems are you experiencing? What are your main concerns?
What do you think would help solve the problems?
What type of help do you want?
What changes are you hoping for?"

Note: Student support staff can do such interviewing if it is not feasible for a teacher to do it.
When this is the case, the next step involves bringing the teacher effectively into the process.

For more on responding to aggressive behavior at school, see the Center's Quick Find menu at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm . For example, see the following:

- *Conflict Resolution in Schools* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2108_02.htm

- *Anger Management* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2108_06.htm

- *Classroom Management* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/clssroom.htm

School Climate: Anxiety, aggressive behavior, and other related school and schooling problems affect and are affected by school climate and culture.

Here is an excerpt from a recent research study on the reciprocal effects of school climate with student engagement and burnout:

"...school climate perceived at one time has a far-reaching capacity to affect students' educational paths, extending beyond the end of the current school year. This is an innovative and relevant finding that supports the importance of reflecting and intervening on school climate not only for preventing undesirable outcomes, such as bullying and aggression, but also for promoting better learning. More specifically, it suggests that schools interested in improving engagement and reducing burnout for their students may obtain long-lasting results by intervening not only directly on didactic practices, but also on school-wide climate aspects, such as the quality of relations among students and between students and teachers, on the transmission of educational values and on the students' sense of belonging and fairness..." https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pits.22691
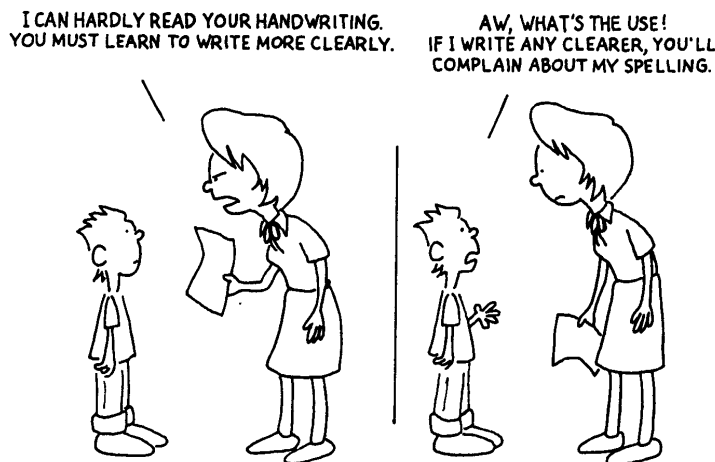
From the perspective of our Center's work: Enhancing positive climate schoolwide and in classrooms requires intensive planning for (1) enhancing the quality of life at school and especially in the classroom for students and staff, (2) pursuing a curriculum that promotes not only academic, but also social and emotional learning, (3) fostering intrinsic motivation for learning and teaching, and (4) enabling teachers and other staff to use effective supports to enhance equity of opportunity for success at school for all students.

For more, see

- *Enhancing Classroom Climate for All Students*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall11.pdf

- Classroom Climate/Culture and School Climate/Culture and Environments that Support Learning
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/environments.htm

> **Are these topics being discussed in your locale?**
> Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

I CAN HARDLY READ YOUR HANDWRITING. YOU MUST LEARN TO WRITE MORE CLEARLY.

AW, WHAT'S THE USE! IF I WRITE ANY CLEARER, YOU'LL COMPLAIN ABOUT MY SPELLING.

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

School-Based Accommodations and Supports for Anxious Youth
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15374416.2020.1723601

Teaching Kids How to Deal With Conflict
https://childmind.org/article/teaching-kids-how-to-deal-with-conflict/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub_ed_nl_2022-08-09&utm_content=teaching-kids-how-to-deal-with-conflict

Impact of school based law enforcement
https://www.wested.org/resources/impact-of-school-based-law-enforcement-systematic-review/

Engaging youth for positive change
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740922002225

2022 KIDS COUNT Data Book--2022 State Trends in Child Well-Being
https://www.aecf.org/resources/2022-kids-count-data-book

Civic Knowledge, Engagement, and Participation Narratives of Youth of Color in Urban Schools
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0161956X.2019.1553585

Cultural humility https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/Cultural-Humility-Intro-Sample.pdf

Youth empowerment and support https://www.schleiderlab.org/yes.html

Statement from Secretary of Education on National Center for Education Statistics' Data Showing Student Recovery Throughout the 2021-2022 School Year
https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/statement-secretary-education-national-center-education-statistics-data-showing-student-recovery-throughout-2021-2022-school-year?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

New Data from NCES: School Experiences with COVID-19: June 2022
https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/

Updated Tables: Digest of Education Statistics 2021
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2021menu_tables.asp

Teaching Kids About Boundaries
https://childmind.org/article/teaching-kids-boundaries-empathy/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub_ed_nl_2022-08-09&utm_content=teaching-kids-boundaries-empathy

The Enigma of "Real World" Mental Health Care
https://www.jaacap.org/article/S0890-8567(22)00194-0/fulltext

Can We Accurately Screen for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder? Moving to a Dimensional, Multistep Process to Support Youth Development
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35271988/

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

8/18 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

8/23 IEP: Access to a free appropriate education

8/25 A Discussion About Inclusion for Kids with Special Needs

8/30 Special Education: Parent Action, Accountability, and Resolving Differences

8/30 Critical conversations: prepares students for heart-to-heart conversations with parents, peers

8/30 Understanding Doubled Up

8/31 Growing Voters In and Out of the Classroom: A Role for K-12 Schools

9/21 Legal and Ethical Considerations: Suicidal Risk & Informational Gathering

9/27 Emotionally Connect, Partner, and Respond

Did you miss any of these?

>*More Federal Funding for Safety and Mental Health in Schools*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/8-4-22.pdf

>*Is it a Community School OR is it a School with a Community School Initiative?*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/6-23-22.pdf

>*We won't Argue Against Adding More Counselors,
   BUT ...
   Addressing Student Mental Health Concerns Involves Much More than Increasing the
   Number of Mental Health Providers* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/morethan.pdf

>*Growing numbers of students labeled with disabilities: Why is anyone surprised?*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7-7-22.pdf

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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.

For those who are ready to move forward, we have prepared a brief set of notes
outlining some first steps along with links to aid in accomplishing the steps. See

>*First Steps in Transforming Student and Learning Supports into a Unified
and Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/1ststeps.pdf

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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

**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/ **)**