School Practitioner Listserv

29 years & counting **A Weekly Community of Practice Network for Sharing and Interchange**

Mental Health in Schools
UCLA
Center
Program and Policy Analysis*

March 9, 2015

Request from a Colleague

>Playground problems spill into the classroom & disrupt learning: *Suggestions?*

One Colleague's Perspective

>On handling lunch hour problems

Featured Set of Center Resources

>Behavior problems, social-emotional learning, and school connectedness

Request from the Center

>Need feedback about usefulness of new introductory webinar

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Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested. The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the weekly exchange, send an email to **Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

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Note: In keeping with the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*, this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed. The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Request: "Most of the BIG student concerns happen on the playground during unstructured times" which, upon return to the classroom, leads to a lot of and interrupted classroom instruction. *Suggestions?*

Center Response: Unstructured times fall into the arena of student and learning supports we categorize as transition concerns. (See the Center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on *Supports for Transitions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm .) These times include before and after school, breaks and lunch, afterschool when there is free "play," and more. Without adult guidance and support, problems (e.g., arguments, fights, bullying, etc) frequently occur that can interfere with schooling.

[Note: *Supports for Transitions* is one of the six arenas delineated in the Center's prototype for a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports.]

In general, the first intervention step is to ensure that adult guidance and support are introduced into the problem situations – with an emphasis on strengthening positive connections among students and with staff. The second step is to use problems that arise as teachable moments for social-emotional learning.

In this context, some specifics to consider:
- Work with students' views about what will be a good solution. Talk not only with those who are getting in trouble; see what others in the class suggest (e.g., more adults on the yard, more structured activities and activities that are more engaging, etc.). It also is important to provide a process for students to report if they are being bullied.
- Plan with other school personnel ways the school can do more to ensure supports and guidance are implemented effectively during these transitional times (e.g., explore and plan in staff meetings or as part of professional development). Pay special attention to the observations of those who provide supervision on the yard/playground (e.g., about the most frequent problem areas, what has already been tried, new ideas about what to do).
- Work with playground staff to implement better guidance and support – possibly including developing special "helper" roles for students who make problems and for students who are vulnerable to peer harassment. For example, students of concern might be guided and supported into becoming ball monitors, student safety leaders, conflict mediators, assistant coaches, mentors for younger students, etc. Such special roles can break up negative interaction patterns, increase feelings of competence, and build positive relationships with adults and peers.
- For a few students, more radical preventive interventions may be needed – at least for a while. For example, in place of time on the playground, develop more productive positive alternative activities for them (e.g., they might spend recess and lunch helping in the office or working in the class of a favorite teacher).

In all cases, it is important to move away from punishment and develop strategies that increase feelings of competence and build positive relationships with adults and friendships with positive peer models.

Unstructured Times and Bullying*

From an ERIC Digest:

"...Because recess is one of the few times in the school day when children can interact freely with peers, it is a valuable time in which adults can observe children's social behaviors, their tendency to bully and fight, as well as their leadership and prosocial behaviors. Seeing how their students interact socially can help teachers and other playground supervisors intervene in situations involving aggression or social isolation. Successful intervention programs have been developed for teaching inclusion and sportsmanship. Other intervention programs have used children as playground leaders, conflict managers, or as play partners to help individual students manage their own behaviors. There is some evidence that playground interventions generalize to better behavior in other settings."
http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-2/recess.html

*The Center has a range of resources on bullying and how to stop it. See the online clearinghouse Quick Find on the topic – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/bully.htm
It provides links to specific practices and resource aids for addressing problems on the playground (e.g., see *Bullying* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/bullypn.pdf).

Listserv Participants: At all schools, problems during unsupervised breaks can be difficult for many students. What new ways have you seen local schools making these times safe and supportive? Let us know. Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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One Colleague's Perspective

>**On handling lunch hour problems in middle school**

Excerpt from *Education Week:*
http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2010/07/28/tln_marshall_bullyingandproactivity.html

Helping students get proactive about bullying

Most of the time, 6th graders arrive in middle school feeling lost and scared, and it takes some time before the bullies and troublemakers have the nerve to separate themselves out from the pack. But last fall at our middle school, trouble was brewing almost from the start.

Students might have been conducting themselves properly in the classrooms, but on the yard there was a movement afoot. A group of about 30 boys and girls, organized by a ringleader, initiated a "gang" of their own, with recruited members

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being "jumped in" during nutrition and lunch breaks...As the year progressed, many of these initial troublemakers decided it was in their best interests to settle down on the yard. However, a significant number of students continue to bully or were victims of bullies. ...

Aware that bullying peaks during middle school, I chose bullying as our them.... We examined the reasons why a character in "Tuesday of the Other June" put up with the bullying for so long and how she eventually rid herself o her bully. This led to a discussion about ways to deal with bullies...

We then turned to an article from bullybeware.com to examine some statistical evidence about bullying....

After all of this input, my students' performance assessment was to write a persuasive letter to our principal. In their letters, students were to first share their learning and then make suggestions about how bullying might be dealt with at our school. Their suggestions included more supervision on the yard and near the bathrooms, announcements to share information about bullying, lessons in every advisory class, and more severe consequences for bullying behavior.

Quite frankly, their letters were awesome!...Our principal read the letters and gave personalized feedback on each within days.

Within a week, however, one of my students returned from lunch, put his head on his desk, and cried.... Bullied at lunch. ... I talked with the class about the importance of speaking up to an adult when they witnessed a bullying incident.... We then devised a support plan together. If a friend witnessed a student being bullied, the first "point person" would immediately peel off from the group to locate an adult. ...

I remain highly concerned about the causes and effects of bullying in our schools.

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Featured Set of Center Resources
>Behavior problems, social-emotional learning, and school connectedness

Our Center approaches behavior problems as a one of the major imperatives and challenges related to school improvement policy and practice. Thus, a significant portion of our Online Clearinghouse resources is devoted to addressing such problems. A look at the Center's menu of Quick Finds (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm) will lead to a wide range of relevant resources, including links to some developed by the Center and links to other sources on the internet.

Of particular concern to us, is that interventions used to address behavior problems include a healthy dose of prevention strategies and that when problems arise they are used as teachable moments to promote social-emotional learning and development. Moreover, the aim must be to enhance positive connections with adults and peers at school and to minimize use of social control techniques since they can interfere with positive relationship building. All this is basic to efforts to enhance positive school climate.

For an introduction to all this, see

>the Quick Find on *Behavior Problems*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p3022_01.htm

Our emphasis on moving beyond social control and building positive relationships is covered in various Center resources listed there. See for example:

>*Common behavior problems at school:*
A natural opportunity for social and emotional learning –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/behaviorsocialemot.pdf

This set of practice notes outlines steps school staff can learn to implement so that the response to misbehavior expands students social and emotional learning. Emphasized is that efforts to address misbehavior provide natural, albeit challenging, opportunities to promote social and emotional development and minimize transactions that interfere with positive growth in these areas. School staff need to grab hold of these opportunities as an avenue for working with teachers in a new way. Whenever a student misbehaves, personal and social growth should become a major priority in deciding how to react. In general, practices need to enhance rather than threaten the student's feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to school staff, appropriate peer role models, and parents.

And with respect to the concern for enhancing school climate, see

>*About School and Classroom Climate –*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolclassroomclimate.pdf

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Request from the Center
>Need feedback about usefulness of new introductory webinar

We have had many requests for a brief introductory webinar to our approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. We have just done a 30 minute introductory power point with narration and an accompanying set of handouts.

>The introductory presentation is online at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/powerpoint/briefintroslidesrec.pptx

>The accompanying set of handouts is at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/intropphandouts.pdf

We are aware that the narration could have more spark and will try to enliven it at a future date. At this time, we would like feedback on the following:

(1) Is the webinar something you could use in providing an introduction to others?

(2) What changes are needed in the presentation and accompanying handouts?

(3) Is there anyone who you want us to send information to about accessing and using this webinar?

Send feedback 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
enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.***

For information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student
and Learning Supports*, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Also see: *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified,
Comprehensive, and Equitable System* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf

***Please share relevant resources ideas, requests, comments,
and experiences!*** **Send to** ltaylor@ucla.edu

**Note: Responses come only to our Center at UCLA for
possible inclusion in the next week's message.**

**We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the
Net Exchange on our website at**
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and to *Facebook* -- access from the Center's home page
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/