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School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)

October 4, 2017

Topic: *A colleague's challenging concern about the Center's call to action*

> **>Center Response and Comments from Colleagues**

> **>Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives**

Featured Resources for

> **>making sure efforts to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports do not become just another project**

Schools and *Crises*

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

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Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

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).

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For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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

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Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*, this is being sent to and forwarded by over 100,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

"Regarding your call to action for learning supports: The problem is that these advocacy suggestions are all process. They tend to fall into the 'let's hold a meeting' genre. They lack substance.

For example, these recommendations come from your materials:

1) Expand the policy framework for school improvement to fully integrate, as primary and essential, a component that brings together the supports for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

(2) Reframe student and learning support interventions to create a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports in classrooms and school-wide.

(3) Rework the operational infrastructure to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

(4) Enhance approaches for systemic change in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability.

How does this change a child's experience? Specifically. Where has this been brought to scale and produced documented results? Of course, I wish I had the answers."

Center **Response:** The Center's call to action involves more than just the introductory emails and the steps outlined on our website (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsnew/call.htm).
Over the coming months as part of the work related to the National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports, we will be following up with much more in the way of specific resources about making it happen – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html .

At this time, we offer a few comments about the concerns raised above:

(1) *About Expanding Policy:* Our experience in Alabama was that once the state expanded their policy framework for school improvement, specific changes followed. See their design document at http://web.alsde.edu/general/ALDOEDesignDocument.pdf . Also see the links to their reports on results for kids and schools as they pursue development and scale-up.
The following is an excerpt about the work in Alabama from Rhonda Neal Waltman's response to a question posed by Larry Ferlazzo for Education Week.
http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom_qa_with_larry_ferlazzo/2016/12/response_schools_cant_wish_away_ch allenges_of_student_trauma.html

"... Based on research from UCLA's Center for Mental Health in School led by Dr. Howard Adelman and Dr. Linda Taylor, the learning supports framework provides six practice areas where schools can organize and deploy resources in a comprehensive, integrated manner: classroom-based approaches; student and family interventions; transitions; crisis intervention; community collaboration; and family engagement. This approach ensures the response is not limited to the teacher's support; rather, there is a broader, more robust plan for addressing the barriers to learning associated with trauma.

The Alabama State Department of Education has adopted this systemic change approach in 75 school districts. This effort is large in scope, and in many cases, schools started with the simple idea that to learn, the 700,000+ students first needed to be present in classrooms. In the 2011-12 school year, Alabama recorded more than 1,900,000 unexcused absences. Scholastic started to work with the state to organize, identify sources and systematically approach reducing absences as a top priority. Leadership analyzed transportation, schedules, and yes, trauma among students that prevented attendance. In the first year with ten districts, 78 schools saved 110,000 days of absences, and each district saw an average of 25% decrease in student absences.

As Athens, AL, mapped out its resources, district leaders also realized a number of students in need of counseling services were not receiving them because travel off school campus was prohibitive. The district reached out to community partners and today, provides at-risk counseling services on campus. The effort continues to be increasingly preventative as the district redefines what it means to support students in crisis including a program that ensures every student has a personal relationship with an adult who is well-versed in available resources.

Every day, educators help individual children who face unfathomable stress before they walk

through the classroom door. To support both the child and the educator, schools must move away from reactive approaches. A whole-school, proactive approach for all children ensures early interventions are in place, teachers know they'll be supported, and students will be ready to learn."

The case study from Gainesville City Schools (GA) also is relevant – see
http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/face/pdf/my-books/gacasestudy2013.pdf
Here is an excerpt:

> "*The district tracks its own progress in developing a system of learning supports through monitoring a number of metrics that should be affected by the implementation of the comprehensive system of learning supports. As Gainesville students had already been scoring well on the standardized tests so the district had looked beyond the test scores to evaluate progress. The district has been tracking a number of indicators from behavior and discipline data, to graduation and pass rates, to test scores and parent or community feedback. According to statewide reports, in the 2009-2010 school year, all but one school in the district met Adequate Yearly Progress measures set by the State of Georgia. These schools were all designated as "Distinguished" schools by the state education department. In fact, one school even received the Bronze award with the highest percentage of "Students Meeting and Exceeding Standards" in the state. 2012 achievement scores showed an increase in the number of students exceeding expectations on state required tests. As of January 2013, benchmark monitoring indicates that the district is on-track to improve in every area by 4%.*
>
> *As of mid-year January 2013, the district is still maintaining its focus on discipline data, such as numbers of referrals, detentions, suspensions, etc. to track the ongoing progress of their comprehensive learning supports approach. First, referrals for disciplinary action for the middle and high schools have dropped from 91 disciplinary tribunals in 2008-09 to 47 in 2010-11, and the elementary schools saw a 75% decrease in such tribunals. Overall, the number of discipline referrals at the schools at the end of 2012 was 5,260, and the mid-year number as of January 2013 was 1,939. On a related note, the percent of students absent 10+ days would seem perhaps to be decreasing, with the percent at the end of school year 2012 being 15%, and the mid-year percent as of January 2013 at 5.2%. The district believes these consistent improvements over a number of years are a positive result of their learning supports because they developed the Woods Mill Non-Traditional High Schools as a learning support for those students who needed flexible scheduling and diverse options because their life-situations made a traditional school day impractical (i.e., teen mothers). Previously, these students had gone to the alternative school, which was actually designed for students with behavioral and cognitive challenges.*
>
> *As regards graduation rates, data shows that as of mid-year 2012-13, 85.3% of students are on track to graduate as measured by the federally required cohort calculator. Correspondingly, the drop-out rate seems on-track to continue decreasing: the 2011 rate was 12%; for 2012 it was 9%; and as of mid-year January 2013 it is at 2.7%. The district continues to carefully monitor those numbers because they do not want the numbers to decrease simply because schools are under-reporting incidents. So the district looks for patterns in what the suspensions are for, or which students receive them, etc. Even though each year to date has shown positive improvement on the previous years, Gainesville knows that system reform is an ongoing process and is resolute in not taking its existing gains for granted by continuing to implement a comprehensive system of learning supports that will offer all children an equal opportunity to succeed at school and in life. It will be interesting to continue to watch the progress of Gainesville as it embeds this 'framework for how [they] do things' into the very fabric of the district."*

In our work, then, we have found that expanding the policy framework has been a system change catalyst for the above and for a variety of other trailblazers — see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm .

Given all this, there, of course, are many problems (e.g., good formative evaluation, substantive replication to scale, sustainability when superintendents inevitably change, well designed and comprehensive summative evaluation).

C**omments from Colleagues**: We shared the concerns with colleagues working on system change for student/learning support; here are two responses:

(A) "I think those at schools who are working toward system change would admit it's not a one size fits all. But all change happens when there are dedicated personnel to coach and mentor, when administrators lead change that is more about the whole child which integrates SEL and academics, when community partnerships are solidified by lasting relationships with schools and when there is consistency over time for implementation. It's often a 4-6 years change effort. Lastly, it helps if a district has a good handle on mindsets or beliefs because belief barriers are often the cause of thwarted system change efforts. ...we are experiencing shift in beliefs about behavior and it's coming through competency building of teachers and staff to understand the impact of trauma and to learn how de-escalate problems. We are in year 4 of our changes and we are only now beginning to see results academically, attendance, reduction in suspensions... but more so in the belief that relationship and collaboration are keys to making a difference for students who are very challenging. This is a shift from alienate and punish to everyone owning their responsibility to intervene early and connect students to resources."

(B) "... It's important to address a student's immediate needs at the same time that actions are being taken to improve the overall system of supports. In that way, staff see immediate success for a few students and are more willing to take on the long-term issues of building a system of learning supports. While your recommendations are process oriented, they can't be achieved without action steps. For example:

1) *Expand the policy framework for school improvement to fully integrate, as primary and essential, a component that brings together the supports for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.*
[Action steps]
- Assess current school policies. Have a support/staff person (or two) go through the student/teacher handbooks to pull out policies that are related to student supports. Evaluate/Rate them as to their ability to support students and eliminate barriers.
- Use discipline data to determine whether policies 1.) are implemented consistently; 2.) address barriers to learning that currently exist in the building; 3.) re-engage students with school and their studies, and 4.) are working. Are these policies meeting students needs? Are they necessary? Are there reoccurring issues that could be improved with policy changes? (Hint: You can't really answer these questions without data.)

> While this is a process it is also an action step. Information gleaned from the policy review could be used to study discipline data, absenteeism, student engagement information such as involvement in extra curricular activities, or student performance in general. Use the data to postulate theories for how students could further benefit from modifying, adapting, or adding new policies. Check these theories out with other staff and especially with students to get feedback and proceed accordingly.

2) *Reframe student and learning support interventions to create a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports in classrooms and school-wide.*
A possible action step here is to, once again, collect information on the types of supports that exist, how often they are used, by whom and how effective they are. The mapping tool you've developed could be a help as a starting point for where to find such data. Since these data could be confidential or possibly unknown to a regular classroom teacher, it might be a task for a guidance counselor or administrator. Determine the gap between the most effective supports already being provided (and how do you know they are effective?) and supports that could help the greatest number of students to reduce their barriers to learning (again how do you know this?). This all presumes that data are available or able to be collected on existing barriers.

This type of activity doesn't require another meeting, but does require a few people willing to take on additional responsibilities to find answers. These few staff people should divide the task and always review the information together to make sure they are thinking about the data from differing perspectives. For example, a guidance counselor/family liaison/social worker, an administrator/discipline liaison and a special education staff person/classroom teacher could review the data to consider improvement plans.

(3) *Rework the operational infrastructure to ensure effective daily implementation and ongoing development of a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching.*

This is a very long term goal that can only be achieved if you take actions such as those already listed. To improve the experiences of students, you absolutely need to know what exists, what works (according to research), and what is needed for them to do well in school. Data is the best way to do that. Schools have tons of information — and now, much of it is electronic. What data exists that can shine a light on behavioral concerns or barriers to learning? Are there trends and do they point to a timeframe or possibly an academic area? What does research tell you about addressing these types of issues? Finding ways to use what already exists and then verifying findings with anecdotal information from staff and students can help school leaders draw a direct line from the current status to improved student supports and academic performance. Sometimes it can be very simple actions, such as asking teachers to connect with a particular student (or group of students) going through some hard times. Being responsive to information can provide immediate student supports, while the school is working on a more comprehensive system of supports. Again, information sharing and having data are at the heart of any action step.

(4) *Enhance approaches for systemic change in ways that ensure effective implementation, replication to scale, and sustainability.*

Our state oversaw a grant (*30 Iowa*) to focus on ground up/top down efforts to improve learning supports. Schools reviewed their learning supports data and made decisions on what programs they would like to implement to help support students. They implemented the programs and continually reviewed their data. Yes, there were meetings and trainings involved. However, after 3 years — ALL 30 schools were able to show improved reading and math scores and they all related these gains to the improvements in climate and culture of their schools to eliminate barriers to learning. The final data were impressive and could help to show the documented results."

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Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

*What outcomes can you share that indicate the value of
a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports?*

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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Featured Resources for

**>making sure efforts to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable
system of learning supports do not become just another project**

The Center's toolkit and a variety of other resources on a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports are designed to help those who are ready to move forward. See the System Change Toolkit at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm .

Here are a few resources that address our colleague's concern that the call to action is about holding yet one more meeting:

>*"Not Another Team!" School Improvement Infrastructure Viewed through the Lens of Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/team.pdf
>Underscores the need to rethink the proliferation of school teams, work groups, and committees. While such mechanisms are essential to enhancing school improvement, they must be designed in a delimited way to carry out fundamental functions and must be fully integrated with each other. From a functional perspective, because of current marginalization and fragmentation, particular attention must be paid to mechanisms for developing a comprehensive system of student and learning supports.

>*Another Initiative? Where Does it Fit?*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/infrastructure/anotherinitiative-exec.pdf
>Developed to highlight the current state of affairs and illustrate the value of a unifying framework and integrated infrastructure for the many initiatives, projects, programs, and services schools pursue in addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development. Specifically, it highlights how initiatives can be embedded into a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive framework and outlines how existing infrastructure mechanisms can be integrated to address marginalization, fragmentation, counterproductive competition, and wasteful redundancy. As aids for moving in these directions, several tools are included.

>*Addressing student and schooling problems: Not another project!*
http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213414000180
>Advocates arguing for schools and communities to expand their role in addressing child and adolescent problems constantly compete with each other. Competing agenda are seen, for example, in discussions of broadening the focus of student and learning supports, promoting whole child development, increasing the focus on mental health in schools, ways to facilitate social emotional learning, and how to ameliorate specific problems, such as child abuse and neglect.

>*Not another special initiative!* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/everychild.pdf
>Another day, another policy on safeguarding. Sounds familiar? Creating policy in response to calamitous events is counter-productive. Instead, integrated school policies provide a better alternative.

Schools and *Crisis*

It seems every day brings another crisis for schools to address. So many schools are in the throes of dealing with the aftermath of the hurricanes and storms.

Now some have to address the tragedy in Las Vegas. A quick aid related to this is the NEA article which offers advice from the National Association of School Psychologists for talking to students about violence and other national tragedies:

>*Mass Shooting in Las Vegas: How to Talk to Students*
http://neatoday.org/2017/10/02/mass-shooting-las-vegas-talk-students/

And as aids for reviewing crisis response (and prevention) plans, we again are including the following links to resources from our Center and from others.

See our online clearinghouse Quick Find on

>*Crisis Prevention and Response –* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107_01.htm
>This Quick Find provides links to these Center resources:
>>*Crisis Assistance and Prevention: Self-study Survey*
>>*Responding to Crisis at a School*

>>*Crisis Response Checklist*
>>*Psychological First Aid*
>>*Major Facets of Crisis Response*
>>*Responding to a Crisis: A Few General Principles*
>>*The School's Role in Addressing Psychological Reactions to Loss*
>>*Planning and Action for the MH Needs of Students & School Staff after a Major Disaster*
>>*Schools Helping Students Deal with Loss*
>>*The School's Role in Addressing Psychological Reactions to Loss*
>>*School Responses to Natural Disasters*

A crisis plan should provide for posting links to national organizations that have information about resources for students and families (and school staff). Here is an example of what we have posted related to the recent emergencies. All these and more are included on the "Responding to Crisis" feature accessed from our homepage – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu .

From our Center:
>>*Responding to a Crisis** – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisisresp.htm
>>*Crisis Quick Find* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2107_01.htm

From National Child Traumatic Stress Network:
>>*Parent Guidelines for Helping Children after Hurricanes* (English) or *Guia para los padres para ayudar a los niños despues de un hurricane*
>>*After the Hurricane: Helping Young Children Heal* (English)
>>*Helping Young Children and Families Cope with Trauma* (English) or *Ayudando a Niños(as) y Familias a Enfrentarse con el Trauma* (Spanish)
>>*Teacher Guidelines for Helping Children after Hurricanes* (English)
>>*Psychological First Aid Guide* (English) or *Primeros Auxilios Psicológicos* (Spanish);
>>*Psychological First Aid for Schools*

From the American Psychological Association:
>>*Mental Health Resources for Hurricanes/Floods*
   http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/index.aspx

The National Center on Homeless Education provides examples of aids for addressing special planning concerns. See

>*Connecting Schools and Displaced Students series* (briefs) – https://nche.ed.gov/briefs.php
  Covers:
  >>Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Displaced by Disasters: Youth on Their Own
  >>What Relief Agencies Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children Displaced by Disasters
  >>What School District Administrators Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children Displaced by Disasters

>*Connecting Schools and Displaced Students Handbook Series* –
  https://nche.ed.gov/pr/dis_hb.php
  Covers:
  >>After the Storm: Information for Parents on How Schools Can Help After Disasters (A Handbook for Parents)
  >>Disaster Relief Agencies and Schools: Working Together to Ensure School Enrollment and Success* (A Handbook for Local Liaisons and State Coordinators)
  >>From the School Office to the Classroom: Strategies for Enrolling and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (A Handbook for Local Liaisons, Enrollment Staff, and District Administrators)
  >>School as a Safety Net: Connecting Displaced Children With Educational and Support Services (A Handbook for Relief Agency Staff and Volunteers)

From FEMA:

>Multihazard Emergency Planning for Schools Site
>Community Preparedness Toolkit
>Student Evacuation (part of Community Preparedness Webinar Series)
>Sample Forms, Checklists, and Exercises
>FEMA facts and info on floods

From education agencies:

>*Disaster Recovery Policy and Systems Guidance* (Louisiana Dept. of Education)
>   http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/louisiana-believes/lde-disaste
>   r-recovery-guidance.pdf?sfvrsn=8
>*Dealing with Disasters: Frequently Asked Questions* (Texas Education Agency)
>   http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Other_Services/Weather_and_Disaster/Dealing
>   _with_Disasters__Frequently_Asked_Questions/
>*Lessons Learned from School Crises and Emergencies* (U.S. Dept. of Education)
>   https://rems.ed.gov/docs/LL_Vol2Issue5.pdf

Send us links to any school Emergency/Crisis Plans that are models we should share with others.

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If you missed the quarterly ejournal for fall 2017 or the monthly ENEWS, you can access them and more from the Center's homepage http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/

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Information is online about the
National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

**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/)