How Mental Health and Wellness Support Engaging, Excellent, Safe, and Equitable Schools

David Osher
2018 Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health
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Las Vegas, NV
My Grounding
A Grounding Example: North Lawndale College Preparatory School, Chicago

- Strong academic press; strong social support
- Supports academic risk taking: “teachers are like another set of parents”
- Development of moral community
- Fellow students “like brothers, sisters, cousins”
A Grounding Example: North Lawndale College Preparatory School, Chicago

• “This is not about graduating from high school; it is about graduating from college”

• Money for counselors, not metal detectors and security staff

• One counselor stays with same students grades 9-13; another one follows up 14-16
Agenda and Main Points

Equity & The Historical Moment
SoLD & Equity
Building & Extending What We Know
Joining Efforts
Building Readiness & Capacity
The Glass is Half Full
The Glass is Half Full: Good News

• Accumulation of knowledge from practice and research
• Convergence of knowledge
• Lesson’s from Federal investments
• Development of research communities and communities of practice
The Glass is Half Full: Good News

• More appreciation of the centrality of:
  • Whole child
  • Promotion and SEL
    • Compare the 1994 and 2009 IOM Reports
  • Youth development
  • Cultural competence and responsiveness
  • School mental health and wellness
  • Computational and methodological advances
The Glass is Half Full: Negatives

- Persistent inequities and disparities in school, community, and life outcomes
- Historic marginalization of mental health in schools
- Chronic fragmentation
- Convergent knowledge often in silos or under-aligned
- Lack of common measures and indicators
THE CHALLENGE:
MANY LOW-INCOME STUDENTS FAIL TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL

Source: U.S. Department of Education
THE CHALLENGE:

ONLY 29 PERCENT OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GO TO COLLEGE

Source: U.S. Department of Education
THE CHALLENGE:
ONLY 9 PERCENT OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS COMPLETE COLLEGE

Source: U.S. Department of Education
The Challenge
Racial Disparities

• Within and across systems
• Access to robust academics
• Exclusionary discipline
• Low and narrow expectations
The Implications of the Science of Learning and Development

Thriving Not Just Surviving
Science of Learning & Development: Some Takeaways: Malleability and Plasticity

• Genetics are not destiny; epigenetics matter.
• Malleability and neural plasticity are core to human development.
• Social and emotional competencies can be developed.
• Resilience and thriving are possible.
• Address the interconnectivity of children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development.
BODY-BRAIN LOOP

Body

Brain

Annemaree Carroll and Julie Bower
The University of Queensland, Science of Learning Research Center
Brain, Mind & Body

• Complex dynamic feedback loop between the brain, mind and body

• Effects on:
  • Cognition
  • Appraisal
  • Motivation
  • Behavior
  • Memory

• “We feel, therefore we learn.” (Mary Helen Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007)
More Oxytocin, Less Cortisol
Science of Learning Development: Some Takeaways: Mechanisms

• Experiences and their processing drive, growth and change.
• Context matters: contextual influence and ecology cannot be ignored.
• Relational context is particularly salient.
• Adversity can affect development, mental and physical health, and learning.
• The ability of adults to attune with children, buffer stress, and support their cognitive, social, and emotional development is key to the personalization of learning and healthy development.
The Science of Learning and Development: Relationships

• The human relationship is the primary process through which biological and contextual factors mutually reinforce each other.
• The ability of adults to attune with children, buffer stress, and support their cognitive, social, and emotional development is key to learning and healthy development.
The Science of Learning & Development: Meaning Making, Culture, and Social Structure

• We make meaning through:
  • Experience
  • Moderating lenses
    • Culture
    • Visibility & Observability (What can and can’t be seen by whom)
  • Perceptions as moderated by attitudes
  • Social networks and reference groups
  • Mindsets
Science of Learning & Development: Some Takeaways: Development Over Time and Across Social Fields

• Developmental opportunities occur over the life course.
• We all walk different roads but can realize common outcomes.
  • Jaggedness
  • Equifinality
Todd Rose, The End of Average
The individuality as well as social nature of development

• Individuality
  • Jaggedness
  • Pathways
  • Equifinality

• Webs of Group Affiliation (Simmel)
Building & Extending What We Know
Development Within Contexts

Individual

Personal Characteristics

Quality of the Interactions & Support

School and Other Environments

Contexts
Supporting Effective Social & Emotional Development & Wellbeing

Teacher & Student Well-Being and Awareness

Effective Conditions for Learning

Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Skill Development
Social and Emotional Skills/Competencies

Cognitive
- E.g., managing & shifting attention, controlling impulses, planning & goal setting, critical thinking.

Emotion
- E.g., emotion knowledge and expression, emotion & behavioral regulation, empathy
- E.g., understanding social cues, social perspective taking, prosocial behavior, conflict resolution, social problem solving

Social

Slides by Stephanie Jones
Social and Emotional Dispositions

Skills/Competencies

Belief Ecology (attitudes, habits of mind)

Cognitive

Emotion

Social

Beliefs/Knowledge of Self & Identity

Character/Values

Personality

- E.g., self-efficacy, growth mindset, agency, self-esteem, self-knowledge, purpose
- E.g., ethical, performance, intellectual, and civic values
- E.g., optimism, gratitude, openness, enthusiasm/zest

Adapted from slide by Stephanie Jones
# Social Emotional Conditions for Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students feel SAFE</th>
<th>Students experience SUPPORT &amp; CONNECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physically</td>
<td>Meaningful connection to adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally &amp; socially</td>
<td>Strong bonds to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectually</td>
<td>Positive peer relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In terms of identity</td>
<td>Effective and available support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treated fairly &amp; equitably</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students experience CHALLENGE &amp; ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>Peers &amp; teachers are SOCIALLY CAPABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Emotionally intelligent &amp; culturally competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong personal motivation</td>
<td>Responsible &amp; persistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School is connected to life goals</td>
<td>Cooperative team players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust academic opportunities</td>
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Unpacking Conditions for Learning

Impact of

EMOTIONAL STATES

ATTENTIONAL STATES

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

on

STUDENTS

ON LEARNING

TEACHERS
Safety

1. Physical Safety
2. Emotional Safety
3. Identity Safety
4. Intellectual Safety
5. Treated Fairly and Equitably
Fear

- Narrow focus (tunneling)
- Fight, freeze or flight

![Cortisol](image)
Anxiety and Toxic Stress

• Compromised working memory
• Less attention
• Limits to creativity
Supporting Conditions for Learning

- Connection
- Attachment
- Trust
- Care
- Respect

Social Emotional Learning & Support

Opportunities Reinforcement

Learning Supports
- Effective Pedagogy
- Engagement
- Motivation
Support and Intervene Across Settings and Social Fields

Community

School Setting

Family Teachers Friends Classroom

Child Youth
Provide Individualized Intensive Supports
Provide coordinated, intensive, sustained, culturally appropriate, child and family focused services and supports.

Intervene Early and Provide Focused Youth Development Activities
Implement strategies and provide supports that address risk factors and build protective factors for students at risk for severe academic or behavioral difficulties.

Build a Schoolwide Foundation
Universal prevention and youth development approaches, caring school climate, positive and proactive approach to discipline, personalized instruction, cultural competence, student voice, and strong family involvement.
Taking What We Know and Improving Upon It

• Broadening MSST
• Broadening and deepening SEL
  • Integrating SEL into practice
  • Moving from programs to kernels
• Attending to the unanticipated consequences of well-intentioned help
• Addressing connections
  • Social, emotional, and academic development
  • School Climate and SEL
  • SEL, MTSS, Restorative Practice
Taking What we Know and Improving Upon It

- From addressing being on track to on track to thrive
- From engaging families to engaging with families and being engaged by them
- From parallel play to integrated as well as aligned practices
- From strengths based to building as well as building upon strengths
- From cultural competence to cultural responsiveness & humility
Taking What We Know and Improving Upon It

• From the science of averages to the science of the individual
  • Multiple opportunities for succeeding
  • Intersectionality and the web of affiliations
  • Personalization within context
  • Including ideographic analyses in our research designs
Taking What We Know and Improving Upon It

• From a focus on individual interventions to a focus on the ecology of interventions
  • Peer effects
  • Effects of other interventions
  • Practices, not just programs (e.g., Chopita, Weiss, Lipsey, Jones)
Taking What We Know and Improving Upon It

• From separate indicators to common indicators
  • The example of the Interagency Working Group on youth programs

• From coordination, alignment, and collaboration to braided practice-based integration
Avoid Fragmented Perceptions, Approaches, and Indicators
Avoid Fragmented Perceptions, Approaches, and Indicators
Readiness
(Dymnicki, Wandersman, Osher, Grigorescu, & Huang, 2014)

\[ R = MC^2 \]

Readiness = Motivation \times \textit{General} \ Capacity \times \textit{Implementation-Specific} \ Capacity
The Concerns-Based Adoption Model
The Importance of Contextual Fit when Implementing EBIs (Horner, Blitz, & Ross, 2014)
The Challenge of Contextual Fit

- Schools are dynamic systems
- The ecology of interventions
Think About Contexts and Interventions Ecologically

UC Davis Arboretum & Public Garden
Summing Up

- Equity & The Historical Moment
- SoLD & Equity
- Building & Extending What We Know
- Joining Efforts
- Building Readiness & Capacity
Supportive School Environments

- Minimize Toxic Conditions
- Support the Whole Child
- Challenge & Engage
- Promote Social & Emotional Skills & Psychological Flexibility
Time to Feel Good
Links

• http://www.air.org/topic/social-and-emotional-learning
• https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov
• https://www.gtlcenter.org
• http://casel.org
• https://www.edutopia.org
References


