Supporting BU Students and Organizations

**Education LLC Update — Spring 2015**

THE MCDOWELL INSTITUTE continues to work with the College of Education’s Living and Learning Community (LLC) on several initiatives during the spring 2015 semester.

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings and guidance sessions with the Education LLC mentors, the McDowell Institute sponsored Education LLC Speaker Session presentations on:

- **Basics of Differentiated Instruction** by Dr. Craig Young,
- **Preventive Classroom Management** by Ms. Jessica Harry and
- **Bully Prevention and Healthy Social and Emotional Growth** by Dr. Tim Knoster.

This semester’s Education LLC Speaker Session emphasizes themes that directly translate to instructional practices in schools.

The McDowell Institute also is working with lead Education LLC mentors to target service project opportunities at BU, including the Kids’ Fun Day, the Big Event, Empty Bowls, the Ronald McDonald House Charity, and Relay for Life. In addition this spring, the lead Education LLC mentors shared their college experiences with high school juniors in local school districts to help recruit highly qualified, underrepresented minority high school students to BU education programs.

**Increasing Mental Health Awareness on Campus**

THE MCDOWELL INSTITUTE, in collaboration with To Write Love On Her Arms (TWLOHA) along with the College of Education Living and Learning Community and other student organizations, is planning to host events and activities to increase mental health awareness at Bloomsburg University. The plan is to coordinate on-campus awareness activities with outreach endeavors associated with targeted events sponsored by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) and their partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

WFMH and NAMI are the primary sponsors of outreach activities associated with Mental Illness Awareness Week from Oct. 5 to 11 and World Mental Health Day on Oct. 10. World Mental Health Day aims to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilize efforts in support of mental health. The observance provides an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work and what needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

The concept being explored at BU is twofold. The McDowell Institute, in partnership with TWLOHA along with the College of Education LLC and other student organizations, will disseminate WFMH and NAMI materials and information through visibility events strategically located across the campus on Oct. 8.

Also, on Oct. 9, the McDowell Institute will convene a symposium for the BU community with emphasis on students enrolled in teacher preparatory programs within the College of Education. The symposium will highlight practical actions that classroom teachers can take to create trauma-informed learning environments, as well as collaborative statewide initiatives to support trauma-informed educational approaches sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Office of Children’s Mental Health within the Department of Human Services.

**Pre-student Teaching Professional Development: Refresher on Preventive Classroom Management**

THE MCDOWELL INSTITUTE provided a professional development experience emphasizing preventive classroom management for all of our spring 2015 student teachers on Jan. 20 in Kehr Union. More than 150 student teachers attended the training.

This event served as a refresher in preventive classroom management skills. The program focused on the core foundations of building rapport, providing clear and explicit behavioral expectations and providing high-density, behavior-specific positive reinforcement to students as they acquire and demonstrate appropriate behavioral skills and meet performance expectations. The event was well attended and received by our student teachers in preparation for their first official day at their spring 2015 placements. A similar event will be held on Aug. 24, for our fall 2015 cohort of student teachers.
TEACHER BEHAVIOR DIRECTLY influences student behavior in the classroom. While this may sound obvious, it is important to appreciate the implications of this statement. A common mistake that can lead to increasing degrees of lower-than-desired student behavioral and academic performance in the classroom is over-emphasizing reactive procedures to student misbehavior. This is not to suggest that appropriate responses to re-direct such behavioral issues are not warranted, as they are necessary in any classroom. However, the problem arises when teachers disproportionately focus on reactive procedures as opposed to emphasizing proactive, preventive strategies. One essential preventive approach is the delivery of high levels of positive reinforcement, or acknowledgment, for appropriate behavior.

Classroom teachers can provide positive reinforcement in many ways. Some teachers may use a form of token economy where students are awarded coupons contingent on academic and/or behavioral performance. Others employ less tangible systems of providing acknowledgment for meeting performance expectations. Regardless of what the reinforcement system looks like, one necessary component is the delivery of behavior-specific praise in association with the reinforcement system.

While providing general praise statements, like “nice job,” “good effort” and “great work” can be meaningful to students, such statements become instructional and more meaningful when delivered in a more precise manner, such as “nice job getting to work right away,” “good effort in working together with your partner to solve that problem,” and “great work in pulling together all the materials you needed to complete this assignment.” The goal becomes to provide behavior-specific praise statements contingent on student performance in a manner that positions the teacher to achieve a 4-to-1 ratio of praise statements for appropriate behavior in relationship to each redirection for problem behavior.

There are two interrelated ways to think about this 4-to-1 ratio, achieving the 4-to-1 ratio with each student on an individual basis and achieving it in aggregate with all of the students as a group. While no “optimal” rate of behavior-specific praise fits all types of classrooms, the literature suggests that six to 10 behavior-specific praise statements delivered to individuals or an entire group every 15 minutes leads to positive outcomes. Aspiring teacher candidates and new teachers are encouraged to periodically self-monitor their distribution rates of behavior-specific praise to enhance instructional skills to facilitate student learning.

TEACHING SPOTLIGHT: **The Importance of Behavior Specific Praise in the Classroom**

PA PBS IMPLEMENTERS FORUM

THE MCDOWELL INSTITUTE will once again facilitate activities at the Forum in collaboration with the PA PBS Network and staff from the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN). This year’s Forum will occur at the Hershey Convention Center on May 27 and 28.

Annually the forum highlights Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) scale-up endeavors across the Commonwealth in both early childhood education and K – 12 school settings. The forum draws around 1,100 attendees involved with implementation of PBIS. Go to www.PaTTAN.org or www.PAPBS.org to access additional information about the spring 2015 Implementers Forum.

CURRENT STATUS OF SCALE-UP IN PENNSYLVANIA

- 652 Schools and Early Childhood Programs
- 187 Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) / Charter Schools
- 29 Intermediate Unit Collaborators
- 144 Mental Health Agency Collaborators
- Approximately 18% of PA’s 1.8 million students

THE MCDOWELL INSTITUTE: TEACHER EXCELLENCE IN POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT ■ QUARTERLY NEWS

APRIL 2015
Systems of Care in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Schools, like schools in most states, have a significant number of students who struggle each year in their programs. Many of these struggling students receive supportive services from other child-serving systems within their local community. Others may be in need of community-based supportive services, but are having difficulty accessing such supportive services in a timely manner. Given these realities, it is important for educators to be familiar with how services and supports from other child-serving systems operate in Pennsylvania.

The services from mental health, child protective and the juvenile justice systems are organized and delivered at the county level using an array of established providers. School districts and schools within each district may fall within a given county or may be located in more than one county. This, as well, can add an additional layer of confusion when trying to navigate multiple provider networks including their respective eligibility criteria.

One initiative, System of Care, is being promoted at the state level to better address youth with complex needs. While the current child-serving systems provide effective services to a vast number of school-age children and youth, each of the systems have historically struggled to meet the needs of youth with complex needs who are involved with multiple systems. To illustrate, there are more than 17,000 youth in the Commonwealth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems who receive behavioral health services paid through Medicaid. These youth generally cost the state about twice as much as other youth who receive Medicaid yet the outcomes have been historically less than desired. Most of these youth also struggle in their educational programs. Counties installing Systems of Care report significantly better outcomes for these vulnerable youth.

- Regular school attendance increased from 83.0% to 90.1%
- Suicidal ideation decreased from 30.4% to 13.8% and attempts decreased from 9.4% to 3.0%
- Among youth 11 years or older:
  - The number of arrests decreased from 17.5% to 8.0% as compared to the prior six months
  - The proportion of youth engaging in one or more delinquent behaviors decreased from 76.6% to 44.5% as compared to the prior six months

Pennsylvania Examples of Outcomes Associated with Systems of Care (2015)
- Having a more stable place to live
- Less school discipline
- Improved school attendance and performance
- Reduced juvenile justice involvement and delinquent behavior
- Less costly juvenile justice treatment (decreases in inpatient hospitalization, residential treatment, and day treatment)
- More coordinated outpatient services and less need for mobile crisis stabilization
- Mental health improvements, such as progress related to anxiety symptoms
- Decreased internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors
- Greater emphasis and access to natural supports and community involvement resulting in less formal services being needed
- Increased youth self-efficacy and decreased caregiver strain

Systems of Care represents a natural growth and evolution in practice through partnerships among child-serving systems, schools, youth and families. In the 1980s, Congress passed legislation establishing the Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP), which became national policy for children's mental health. Congress built on the CASSP movement through the 1990s and provided funding to communities to establish Systems of Care. Current emphasis at the federal level supports establishing Systems of Care across the state.

In Pennsylvania, Systems of Care provide a range of treatment services and supports. It is guided by a philosophy and infrastructure that coordinates services and interagency collaboration through youth and family involvement in a culturally responsive manner. Seventeen of the Commonwealth’s 67 counties have formally installed Systems of Care and the Department of Human Services, previously known as Public Welfare, plans to support the program’s expansion through collaborative partnerships with all remaining counties.

Eight standards guide Pennsylvania’s Systems of Care:
- County Leadership Teams with equal partnership of system’s leaders and youth and families
- Youth driven
- Family driven
- Integration of child-serving systems
- Valuing natural and community supports
- Assuring cultural and linguistic competence
- Youth and Family Services and Supports Planning
- Evaluation and continuous quality improvement

As they work in partnership with their local schools, counties reflect varying degrees of engagement and progress across each of these eight standards. The Systems of Care from county to county will vary as the partnership process unfolds.

It is important for educators to be aware of the Systems of Care movement in Pennsylvania. Increasingly schools are installing Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) across the Commonwealth. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is one of the evidence-based MTSS frameworks that is gaining traction in Pennsylvania schools, with nearly 700 early childhood education and school building sites implementing PBIS to date. In a few counties, systematic integration of the Systems of Care standards within the PBIS framework is being explored to further enhance services and supports to students. There is no “one-size-fits-all approach” in the partnerships that are establishing local priorities and protocol for collaboration among school staff and staff from other child-serving systems. To be effective in meeting the needs of the increasingly diverse student populations, educators must be informed and ready to position themselves to interact with the Systems of Care movement. To obtain additional information about Systems of Care in Pennsylvania, contact Pat Cambria at cambripf@upmc.org.
Safe Schools Healthy Students (SS/HS) Spotlight: Lehigh Learning Achievement School

LEHIGH LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL (LLAS) is an alternative special education program for students with disabilities who have histories of problem behavior. Operated by the Carbon-Lehigh Intermediate Unit, LLAS enrolls 80 to 100 students each year who have struggled to meet their educational needs within less restrictive settings in local school districts. LLAS is one of three implementation sites associated with the Safe Schools Healthy Students (SS/HS) Partnership, a federally funded project through the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The integration of supportive services associated with Systems of Care (SOC) in Lehigh County, within the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework, serves as the focal point of SS/HS activities at LLAS. This integration also served as a catalyst for dramatic systemic change this past school year. Leadership teams initiated evidence-based practices to address gaps in services and programs across all three tiers of the PBIS framework. Further, a Student Assistance Program (SAP) was established at LLAS to manage referrals for students with mental health and drug and alcohol concerns.

LLAS uses the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) to track Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) as a part of their PBIS framework. Their Tier I (Universal Prevention) Team worked diligently during year one activities to revise their disciplinary system, placing greater emphasis on prevention. These first-year efforts resulted in a 39 percent decrease in ODRs from September 2014 to January 2015, when compared with this same period from the previous school year, and helped to further establish healthy learning environments through increased student engagement. LLAS also identified the Behavior Intervention Management Assessment System (BIMAS) as their universal screening instrument. This universal screener is used with all students to help detect risk factors associated with behavioral, mental health and drug and alcohol problems. Use of this universal screener further positions LLAS staff to provide earlier forms of services and supports.

In concert with their SAP team, a partnership has been established between LLAS and PYRAMID (a local provider agency) to provide assessments for students in need of services and supports at advanced tiers. Twenty-one youth, representing approximately 20 percent of enrolled students, were referred and screened for drug and alcohol concerns during 2014-15. The resultant assessment data supported installation of targeted intervention and support (Tier II). LLAS contracted with PYRAMID to address this need and PYRAMID implemented their CHOICES program to address drug and alcohol concerns for 16 of these youth. The other five were referred to PYRAMID for more individual-intensive services; however these youth declined to participate in voluntary drug and alcohol supportive services.

As promising as these initial results appear, further expansion of the array in supportive services to address identified gaps still is needed at LLAS. Leadership teams are using SWIS and BIMAS data to establish data-driven decision-making rules leading to school- and community-based mental health and drug and alcohol services and supports to meet the needs of youth.

During the first year of SS/HS activities, LLAS also provided training in Professional Crisis Management techniques to all staff to help protect the health and wellbeing of students and staff when dealing with students in crisis. While these techniques work to improve school safety, they have also helped de-escalate crisis situations, including student aggression. Upon further analysis of SWIS data, the leadership teams identified the need to install additional evidence-based approaches. During year one, Aggression Replacement Training (ART) was identified for installation as an additional targeted intervention (Tier II) for those youth who have higher levels of ODRs and whose scores on the BIMAS indicated higher levels of risks in the Conduct Domain on this screener.

During the first year of SS/HS endeavors, LLAS also identified the need to employ a School Police Officer (SPO), sometimes referred to as a School Resource Officer, and hired an SPO with many years of Pennsylvania State Police experience. The SPO was provided professional development in PBIS, SoC and preventive approaches for working with youth and has helped provide a calming influence at LLAS while establishing positive rapport with youth and their families by co-facilitating groups focused on building healthy relationships with youth and engaging families in the educational process.

The SPO’s actions are guided by an understanding as to how student behavior serves a function and that these behaviors may indicate mental health needs. As a result of situating the SPO within the PBIS framework, LLAS has seen a dramatic decline in the number of calls to the police to intervene in student maladaptive behavior. To illustrate, 88 calls were made to the police department during the 2013-14 school year; five were made to local authorities from September 2014 to January 2015. LLAS is increasingly becoming a safer school environment that is more conducive to learning.

In addition to these program enhancements, LLAS made an effort to better involve students and families in the educational process. LLAS initiated meetings with several students during year one of SS/HS activities to explore interest in forming a student leadership group that could provide input into overall programming. Additionally, LLAS held its first open house for parents during this current year drawing 34 visitors. During this open house community agencies assisting in various groups and treatment modalities were present to answer questions and offer information on additional available services. Staff from LLAS also contacted parents to gauge interest in forming a parent group that could offer input into school leadership team operations. It is anticipated that increased engagement will result in more youth- and family-friendly approaches at LLAS in tandem with youth- and family-informed expansion of services and supports to address identified needs.

For additional information on SS/HS implementation at LLAS contact Deanna Moerer moererd@cliu.org or Todd Breinich breinichr@cliu.org.
Addressing Non-academic Barriers to Learning

AN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED by Courtney Dunn '15 with Dr. James Palmiero, Director of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), Pittsburgh. PaTTAN is funded through the Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education. Dr. Palmiero directs numerous statewide initiatives including PaTTAN’s Behavior Initiative.

What exactly are non-academic barriers to learning?

Today’s complex and complicated learners face non-academic barriers to learning that make teacher in-service training in the field just as important as pre-service training before entering the field. Non-academic barriers to learning refer to any kind of behavioral, mental, social or emotional issue that presents itself inside or outside of a school environment that adversely impacts student learning. This can include trauma experienced outside of the school that inhibits a student’s ability to focus in the classroom or bullying, in which a student may not respond well in an uncomfortable classroom environment. Problems occur when there is no system to intervene on these issues. A lack of prevention and early intervention may result in a student’s inability to excel in the classroom. With mental health for example, a school that does not know how to respond … at present … may inadvertently create an environment that hinders the student’s ability to succeed.

What types of state level initiatives are you directing to help schools in Pennsylvania address these types of barriers to learning?

A PaTTAN initiative was initiated in 2007 to scale up PBIS in early childhood education (ECE) programs and K-12 schools across the Commonwealth. We started with 33 schools back in the early days. There are currently 652 schools and early childhood education programs implementing PBIS in Pennsylvania! In tandem with the typical disciplinary data gathered through PBIS implementation, PaTTAN also works with school systems to monitor expulsion and suspension data, attendance data and other factors such as access to what is referred to as the “Least Restrictive Environment” for students with disabilities that positions educators to determine present and future needs for intervention and supports. These types of data are used in decision-making at the ECE program or school building level. The key is to help educators see the value in organizing and using data in this manner and, in turn, to help those not implementing MTSS/PBIS see how these approaches may be helpful to them in their ECE programs and K-12 schools. By doing this, the hope is that increasingly more and more ECE programs and K-12 schools will pick up on this approach.

How important is it for teacher preparatory programs to prepare future teachers to address non-academic barriers to learning?

This in-the-moment challenge requires teacher candidates as well as teachers currently in the field to have training to address non-academic barriers to learning … which moves us well beyond traditional teacher preparation curricula. This training needs to emphasize Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as a framework to organize and provide pre-service and in-service training. MTSS is an evidence-based approach that includes both academic and behavioral lenses of support. Two important factors of MTSS are student data-matching and continuous progress monitoring. Teachers monitor the progress of individual students and the program (as a whole) to determine whether students are sufficiently responding to the interventions and supports as well as to identify additional intervention/supports that may be needed to help students learn. In doing so, educators help to address both present and future needs of students by using data to make programming decisions. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is an essential part of training curricula in that it represents one form of MTSS. PBIS is a school-wide, systematic approach to teaching behavioral expectations both inside and outside of the classroom. In doing so, every individual at the school becomes aware of behavioral expectations and can help to reinforce a positive message to students.

How has the McDowell Institute for Teacher Excellence in Positive Behavior Support been supportive to PaTTAN in these statewide endeavors?

BU’s McDowell Institute (Institute) for Teacher Excellence in Positive Behavior Support is complimentary to PaTTAN’s endeavors by broadening awareness of both MTSS and PBIS. The Institute has excelled at this by providing information on mental health resources and hosting conferences and sessions that focus on key MTSS and PBIS issues, including bullying prevention. The Institute also offers insight into higher education pre-service teacher preparatory programs that is useful in advocating for similar approaches across other institutions of higher education. Additionally, the Institute has become an integral state level partner in a number of initiatives including a federally funded project known as Pennsylvania Safe School/Healthy Students (Partnership). This federal grant works to instill promotion and prevention systems associated with healthy child development throughout educational systems within the MTSS/PBIS framework. By collaborating on such PaTTAN’s initiatives, the Institute provides leadership in providing necessary pre-service and in-service instruction for future educators. In other words, we are teaching teachers currently in the field as well as aspiring teachers how to manage behavior by helping them to work smarter … rather than harder. All educators need to be able to implement proper strategies that promote social/emotional health as well as academic growth in order to recognize and understand that academics impact behavior as much as behavior impacts academic performance. Beyond these current areas of emphasis, the Institute also collaborates with PaTTAN on other key statewide initiatives including Youth Mental Health First Aid, Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports and Education and Work (RENEW), and other evidence-based practices associated with MTSS and PBIS.
“Power of the Positive”

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