Institute of Education Sciences

REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

Behavior and Mental Health
May 2020

Question:

What challenges do students experience when re-entering school after a crisis or extended school closure, and what strategies can educators use to support student needs during re-entry?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about student challenges and support strategies associated with school re-entry after a crisis or extended school closure. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on student challenges and relevant strategies for support regarding student re-entry. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed student needs associated with school re-entry after an extended school closure or crisis. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

Hagman, G. (2014). Helping Newtown: Reopening a school in the aftermath of tragedy. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 45*, 168–175. Abstract retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10615-014-0498-x

From the abstract: "Four days after the Sandy Hook tragedy, the schools of Newtown, Connecticut reopened. The author discusses his work as a leader of a mental health team which supported the students, teachers, and parents in one elementary school. The goal was not just to restore the school system in its educational role, but also sustain it as a source of

psychological and emotional support. The author illustrates the step by step process by which clinical and supportive services were developed and provided. Specific issues related to managing affect in an institution are demonstrated, and the special psychological demands on teaching staff are highlighted as is the significance of tapping into community resilience. The importance of a responsive empathic approach broadly applied and attuned to both community and individual needs is emphasized."

Kanter, R. K., & Abramson, D. (2014). School interventions after the Joplin tornado. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine, 29*(2), 214–217. Retrieved from https://nyuscholars.nyu.edu/en/publications/school-interventions-after-the-joplin-tornado

From the abstract: "Background/Objective: To qualitatively describe interventions by schools to meet children's needs after the May 2011 Joplin, Missouri tornado. Methods: Qualitative exploratory study conducted six months after the tornado. Key informant interviews with school staff (teachers, psychologists, guidance counselor, nurse, principal), public health official, and physicians. Report: After the tornado, school staff immediately worked to contact every enrolled child to provide assistance and coordinate recovery services. Despite severe damage to half of the city's schools, the decision was made to reopen schools at the earliest possible time to provide a safe, reassuring environment and additional services. An expanded summer school session emphasized child safety and emotional wellbeing. The 2011–2012 school year began on time, less than three months after the disaster, using temporary facilities. Displaced children were bused to their usual schools regardless of their new temporary residence locations. In just-in-time training sessions, teachers developed strategies to support students and staff experiencing anxiety or depression. Certified counselors conducted school-based, small-group counseling for students. Selective referrals were made to community mental health providers for children with greatest needs. Conclusions: Evidence from Joplin adds to a small body of empirical experience demonstrating the important contribution of schools to post disaster community recovery. Despite timely and proactive services, many families and children struggled after the tornado. Improvements in the effectiveness of post disaster interventions at schools will follow from future scientific evidence on optimal approaches."

Kataoka, S. H., Nadeem, E., Wong, M., Langley, A. K., Jaycox, L. H., Stein, B. D., & Young, P. (2009). Improving disaster mental health care in schools: A community-partnered approach. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *37*(6 Suppl 1), S225–S229. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2822649/pdf/nihms-164173.pdf

From the abstract: "Background—Although schools are often the first institution to provide recovery efforts for children post-disaster, few studies have involved the school community in research to improve the delivery of these mental health services on campuses. This community partnered study explores post-disaster counseling services ten months following Hurricane Katrina. Methods—In July 2006, nine focus groups, comprised of 39 school-based mental health counselors and 6 program administrators (10 men, 35 women), were conducted following a two-day clinical training regarding a youth trauma intervention following Hurricane Katrina. Participants discussed types of services they had been providing prior to the training and potential barriers to delivering services. Results—Participants identified high

mental health needs of students and described populations that did not seem to be adequately supported by current funding sources, including those with preexisting traumatic experiences and mental health issues, indirect psychological and social consequences of the storms, and those students relocated to less impacted communities. Participants also described the need for a centralized information system. Conclusions—Participants described the need for greater organizational structure that supports school counselors and provides system-level support for services. Implications for next steps of this community partnered approach are described."

Lerner, M. D., Volpe, J. S., & Lindell, B. (2003). Teacher guidelines for crisis response. In *A practical guide for crisis response in our schools* (pp 96–101). American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcrisisresponse.com/teacherguidelines.pdf

From the chapter: "A crisis is a traumatic event that is typically unpredicted and overwhelming for those who experience it. This situation may be volatile in nature and, at times, may involve threat to the survival of an individual or groups of individuals. Moreover, a crisis state may result upon exposure to drastic and tragic change in an individual's environment which has become common and familiar to them. This alteration in the status quo is unwanted, frightening, and often renders a person with a sense of vulnerability and helplessness. Ultimately, with successful intervention, the equilibrium is restored between the environment and the individual's perception of their world as a safe and secure place…Crisis response, as it pertains to the school environment, is a proactive, organized and well thought out plan to a crisis situation that has adversely affected many individuals in a school district, including students, faculty and administrators."

Nastasi, B. K., Overstreet, S., & Summerville, M. (2011). School-based mental health services in post-disaster contexts: A public health framework. *School Psychology International, 32*(5), 533–552. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ937291; full text available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0143034311402926

From the abstract: "Large scale natural disasters pose serious risks to mental health and simultaneously wreak havoc on the very systems called upon to ameliorate those risks. School-based mental health services have been identified as a potential mechanism through which gaps in service delivery systems can be addressed in post-disaster environments. We believe that a public health framework provides a useful guide for school psychologists who may be called upon to develop school-based systems of care following a disaster. In this article we discuss considerations and challenges in the application of this model in the context of our experience developing school-based mental health services in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, following Hurricane Katrina."

Warbington, N., Owenby, K., Brady, H., Shears, S. B., Burton, J, & Strong, K. (2019). School counselors help build resilience after natural disaster. *European Journal of Educational Sciences, Special Edition, 57–66.* Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1236721

From the abstract: "Natural disasters affect large numbers of children and youth in communities around the world. Unlike other crises, natural disasters impact entire

communities, including the students and educators alike. These critical situations cause physical, emotional, academic, and psychological issues for those impacted. Educators, especially school counselors, often become a source of support for students and families. Providing support to students after a natural disaster is one protective factor that school counselors can provide that can help the students build resilience. Interviews were conducted to explore the lived experiences of school counselors who had experienced a natural disaster in their community and/or school. A dozen school counselors were contacted via email asking for their participation. Seven counselors participated in the interview. The school counselors interviewed all believed that experiencing the disaster with their students helped them provide more meaningful aftercare and all experienced some level of vicarious trauma or stress. All seven interviewees believed their personal experience of the natural disaster helped them to provide support to their students in a more empathic way."

Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult

Ask A REL Mid-Atlantic at Mathematica. (2020). *What does the literature/research suggest about the effect of unexpected school closures, such as natural disasters, on student achievement?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel_132.asp

Ask A REL Northeast & Islands at Education Development Center. (2017). *What research exists regarding the role of the federal government in supporting school systems devastated by catastrophic events, including lessons from Hurricane Katrina and other events?* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/AskAREL/Response/49

Additional Organizations to Consult

National Center for Homeless Education: https://nche.ed.gov/

From the website: "The National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE creates and distributes a number of valuable and informative resources dealing with the issue of education of homeless children and youth."

- COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Information: https://nche.ed.gov/covid-19-coronavirus-information/
- Disaster Preparation and Response: https://nche.ed.gov/disaster-preparation-and-response/

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools: https://rems.ed.gov/

From the website: "The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools has administered the REMS TA Center to serve two critical functions aimed at helping education agencies, with their community partners, manage safety, security, and emergency management programs. We build the preparedness capacity (including prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts) of schools, school districts, IHEs, and their community partners at the local, state, and Federal levels. We also serve as

the primary source of information dissemination for schools, school districts, and IHEs for emergencies via the REMS TA Center Website."

Regional Educational Laboratory Program, COVID-19: Evidence-Based Resources: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19/

From the website: "The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences funds a network of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). Each REL serves a designated region of the country and works with educators and policymakers to support a more evidence-based education system. In response to COVID-19, the RELs have collaborated to produce this series of evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment, as well as other considerations brought by the pandemic."

U.S. Department of Education, COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel: https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus

From the website: "Health officials are currently taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 ('Coronavirus') into communities across the United States. Coronavirus.gov offers the most up to date information about this rapidly evolving situation. Through collaboration and coordination with State and local health departments, State and local educational agencies, other education officials, and elected officials, schools can disseminate critical information about the disease and its potential transmission to students, families, staff, and community."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- ("school reopen*" OR "unplanned school closure" OR "extended school closure") AND (disaster OR crisis OR pandemic)
- ("student support*" OR "student need*" OR "social emotional") AND (disaster OR crisis OR pandemic)
- student AND return AND (disaster OR crisis OR pandemic)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover information available within the last 10 years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Reference sources: IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on May 15, 2020. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.