

(11/15/23) This continuing education resource is from the national  
**Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

**Featured**

**>How tired are you of being bombarded by bad news about schools?**

**>What is authentic community service?**

**>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>How tired are you of being bombarded by bad news about schools?**

**From a colleague:**

"I blew a gasket a couple of weeks ago at a conference where the speaker was simply insulting to all the educators in the room. I am just tired of using "bad news" to motivate people toward progress. I think it doesn't work, and being strengths-based, at least for me and my teams, generates more energy and possibilities than continuing to discuss what is wrong. We need to promote the good news and positive results of the American educational system."

**Any good news you want to share?** Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

**Here is an example of an initiative to support public education.**

From: ***Stand Up 4 Public Schools***

"Vibrant public schools are essential to the economic, civic and social health of the U.S. and they need your support to continue to do great work. We thank everyone who Stands Up 4 Public Schools....

The success of our neighborhood public schools is grounded in the people who support them. Teachers, administrators, superintendents, parent volunteers, school board members and people throughout the community take extraordinary actions to make a difference in students' lives. Our public schools educate nine of every 10 students more than 50 million students and they have helped prepare artists, educators, engineers, health care practitioners, journalists, law enforcement officers, leaders in business and technology, scientists and people in the full array of professions for life. The Difference Makers' commitment to their students have lifted generations of people out of poverty and from middle to higher income. They have helped a child who speaks little English learn to read and a enabled a child with dyslexia to improve their comprehension on a reading test. Multiply these successes, these victories, by the millions, and you have a rich, thorough and true picture of what public education is accomplishing every hour, every day, every year. ..."

**We note that some districts are adding a public relations effort.**

From: ***Why Public Schools are Launching Marketing Campaigns***

"...In an attempt to fight the tide of dwindling student populations and to prevent more students from leaving, some public schools are putting their efforts into marketing campaigns designed to sell prospective students and their families on the virtues of their neighborhood public schools... Ultimately, the trend towards public school marketing signals an important recognition on the part of schools that students and their families have choices, and they are increasingly able to have a say in their own educations. In an era of expanded educational freedom, families must now be treated as customers with choices..."

From: *Public Relations for School Districts: Ten Best Practices*

“...What is public relations? Public relations is the strategic communication that shapes the public’s perception of a school district and its administrators. This communication engages the audience with compelling content and stories through multiple channels. From earned media to social media, the goal is to get your target audience to know, like and trust you. The specific tactic you should take will depend on your district’s or institution’s goals. Taking a proactive approach to public relations can help build long-lasting relationships and increase trust community-wide....

With a variety stakeholders within a community that you will be speaking to, it’s important that your messaging articulates your district’s priorities and mission and engages your audience...”

### **Here’s an example of a system focus on positives and strengths.**

From: *Howard County Public School System (MD)*

“An inherent shift in school improvement efforts moves the focus from what is wrong to what is strong. ... HCPSS identified a group of system leaders to be trained as Strengths Specialists. The participants consisted of directors, coordinators, a principal, and managers from various district divisions and offices; additionally, six school counselors.... The intensive three-day training focused on coaching, professional learning, and action planning. The group divided into three sub-groups, each with a specific target audience: staff and students, school leadership, and district leadership.

Through the work of the Strengths Specialists, HCPSS is establishing a strengths-based school system, which is invested in the belief that the more leaders understand strengths and talents, the more leaders can support how staff members use talents and strengths to improve performance and engagement.

#### **Strengths Action Steps for Leaders**

Strengths development has been a component of every principal and assistant principal leadership meeting throughout the school year, in addition to division and department meetings. The activities are designed to facilitate personal learning and professional reflection about how strengths are evident in leadership actions and how leaders can maximize their own potential and the potential of their teams....”

### **Here’s an opinion piece.**

From: *Support and invest in public schools to produce good citizens*

“...The mission of our public school system needs to be making good citizens. If not the public school system, then who? What other institution bears that responsibility? ...

We need public schools because the public has a critical need for citizens who are competent in navigating and participating in the public space. We need good citizens and we need to take responsibility for making sure all our citizens are competent.

Since we all need all our citizens to be competent, it seems to follow that we all need to support and invest in the success of our public schools. None of us can do everything but all of us can do something to improve our public schools. Let’s all do something. A society with any hope of continuation cannot leave this to chance.”

**Want more? See**

- >*Promoting your school*
- >*Why schools need public relationship*
- >*Increasing enrollment at your school*
- >*School community relations*

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>What is authentic community service?**

We recently heard “mandated volunteering” used to describe a school’s service learning requirements . Mandated volunteering certainly sounds like a contradiction in terms. Does making it a requirement distort what is learned and undermine the motivation for participating? How do we distinguish court ordered community services (a punishment) from opportunities that will enhance students’ compassion for others?

*The holiday season provides an impetus for all students  
to engage in activities that help others.*

**What does your school have planned? Will the service learning experiences provide opportunities for students to support their communities in authentic ways that enrich both the student and those served?**

While there are a variety of definitions for service learning, at the core is the idea of incorporating structured, authentic, community hands-on experiences into formal education. A service learning program is intended to provide meaningful, real world experiences that promote reflection on and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The emphasis is not only on benefitting the learner but on benefitting the community and ultimately society (e.g., inculcating citizenship values).

Authentic service learning is especially relevant today. Given current events, students may have a new awareness of the plight of folks other countries. They also may feel they can do little to help. Redirecting their awareness to inequities in their local community and facilitating authentic volunteer possibilities can provide students with a variety of good learning experiences and opportunities to act with empathy and compassion.

For more, see:

- >[\*Service-Learning and Community Service Clubs in Schools\*](#)
- >[\*Service Learning in Schools\*](#)
- >[\*Service Learning Can Enhance Social Emotional Development\*](#)
- >[\*Belief, attitude and critical understanding. A systematic review of social justice in Service-Learning experiences\*](#)
- >[\*Compassion as a Framework for Creating Individual and Group-Level Wellbeing in the Classroom: New Directions\*](#)

**Here are some takes from the popular press.**

From: [\*Why High School Students Should Consider Volunteer Opportunities\*](#)

“...One of the immediate benefits of volunteering is that it allows students to be in tune with and give back to their local community. And for many teenagers, doing volunteer work is a chance to experience a culture or group of people that they wouldn’t have otherwise encountered. It’s also a chance to become aware of problems in their community that they may not otherwise have known about....”

From: [\*5 ways to support families during the holidays\*](#)

“... It’s never too early or too late to start teaching children about the importance of giving and helping others....”

Donate clothing and toys to your local family and children’s agency.

Give your time and talent. Volunteer at a local agency that serves families.

Making the holidays about giving back and helping the community can have a lasting positive impression on children and the whole family....”

**>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

**Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates**

**Students' Class Participation and Creative Thinking: Basis for Class Engagement Framework**

**Classroom Climate, Intrinsic Motivation, and Academic Engagement**

**Take Action for Adolescents – A Call to Action for Adolescent Health and Well-Being**

**Building a Culture of Health for America**

**Findings from The 2022 National Census of School-based Health Centers**

**The Health & Economic Consequences of Firearm Injuries in Children on Survivors & Families**

**Black Children and Youth Can Benefit From Focused Research on Protective Community Resources**

**Examining different motivational patterns in individualized learning**

**The State of the American Student: Fall 2023 – We are failing older students: Bold ideas to change course**

**How SEAs Can Modernize the K-12 Education System to Put Student Learning at the Center**

**A Few Upcoming Webinars**

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

11/15 Creating an Evaluation Plan for Your Child With Mental Health Needs

11/16 Improving staff morale

11/16 Fostering Student Well-Being Through School-Based Peer-to-Peer Support Programs

11/16 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

11/16 Authentic partnerships

11/17 Reducing absenteeism

11/17 Systems of care for mental health

11/20 Elementary students thinking about college

11/21 Basic Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act

11/28 Worry and anxiety

11/29 Effective communication with the IEP team

11/30 Combatting racism

**My image at school is really bad.**



**Maybe a public relations campaign would help!**



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**To Listserv Participants**

- Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- Let us know your views about the topics shared and about what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)
- Looking for information? (We usually can help.)
- Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

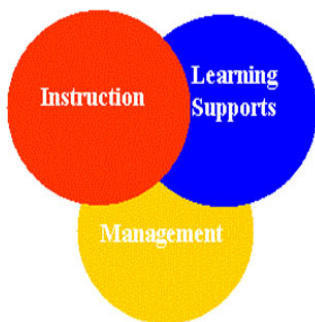
We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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***To serve is beautiful, but only if it is done with joy  
and a whole heart and a free mind.***

Pearl S. Buck



**For information about the**

***National Initiative for Transforming  
Student and Learning Supports***

go to <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND  
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

**For new sign-ups** –Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto: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 <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>  
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> )**