

(11/23/22) This resource is from the national  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured:

- >Teaching About Thanksgiving Can be Accurate, Respectful, and Still Fun
- >How should mental health specialists work with schools?
- >Facilitating student and family access to special assistance
- >Links to a few other relevant shared resources

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**For discussion and interchange:**

>from: *Thanksgiving lessons can be accurate, respectful, and still fun—here’s how*  
<https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/native-educators-say-thanksgiving-lessons-can-be-accurate>  
“Whether you’re teaching tots or teenagers, celebrate your best Thanksgiving lesson ever by teaching an accurate history of the holiday. ..  
Thanksgiving is a great entry point for learning about the culture of America’s first people, says the Director of Native American Student Services for Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) and a member of the Keetowah Cherokees.  
Teaching truth, and learning from it, helps us honor all of our students and build stronger relationships with each other...  
What’s the single most important lesson you teach students around Thanksgiving?  
How two extremely different communities worked together to coexist and how we can learn from that....  
With younger children, you can discuss how Wapanoag and English leaders were at the table for three days talking about how they were going to interact.  
With older students, you can hold a more in-depth discussion about the whole idea of diplomacy, political alliances, and leadership. Ask them to brainstorm or write an essay about how they would handle a similar situation if it were happening to them today....”

**Request from a colleague:**

- >How should mental health specialists work with schools?

*Our district is navigating how to implement 5 of us [Community Mental Health Specialists], into the different schools throughout the district and I was hoping to gather more information on evidence-based ways to go about this process. Right now, we are in the schools doing our best to navigate how our role fits into the school structure, while supporting students post-pandemic.*

**Center Comments:**

This matter is one that we have been working on for a long time with many schools and districts.

A primary focus of our Center is on helping the existing student support staff take leadership in identifying all the resources they have for student support at a district, at each school, and from the community. For example, here is a tool to use in identifying student support staff at a school: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/listingresources.pdf>

We encourage these stakeholders to establish a *Learning Support Leadership team* and work together and with community stakeholders (such as *Community Mental Health Specialists*) to create a unified, comprehensive, and equitable student/learning support system. Such a team can accomplish a variety of system improvement functions, and when new resources become available, the team can identify where critical intervention gaps exist and how to blend in the new resources most effectively.

Note: Most schools have only student case-oriented teams, rather than a team that focuses on unifying and developing a *comprehensive and equitable system* of student/learning supports (e.g., a Learning Support Leadership team). We encourage all stakeholders concerned with student well-being to advocate that schools establish a system improvement team. See:

>*What is a Learning Support Leadership Team?*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

Note: When many folks hear the term *Mental Health in Schools* or *School Mental Health*, they think mainly about students who have psychological problems, about what services they need, and how schools don't provide enough of such services. This is not surprising given the widespread tendency for the term mental health to be thought of as referring to mental disorders/illness and for relevant interventions to be seen as services (e.g., counseling/therapy). As a result, many well-intentioned initiatives and policy reports have focused on expanding mental health services in schools. Bluntly stated, however, advocacy mainly for more mental health *services* in schools often detracts from encouraging policy makers from facing up to what is needed in meeting the many mental health concerns confronting school staff, students, and their families. For more on this, see:

>*Time for straight talk about mental health services and mental health in schools*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/nhinschools.pdf>

In focusing on developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, the emphasis is on *embedding* a full agenda of mental concerns into a continuum of interventions ranging from prevention, through early intervention programs, to direct services. See:

>*Agencies Addressing Problems of Children and Youth: Pursuing a Continuum of Intervention and Working with Schools* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/agenciesschools.pdf>

**Note how the continuum depicted in the above resource goes several steps beyond most conceptualizations of MTSS.**

***Are these matters being discussed in your locale?***

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

## **>Facilitating Student and Family Access to Special Assistance**

As schools address concerns about learning loss and mental health, those that have adopted an MTSS framework now need to rethink student and learning supports. MTSS highlights that a full continuum of interventions is essential. However, addressing barriers to learning and teaching also requires organizing the supports cohesively into a well-designed and delimited set of interventions that reflect a school's efforts to provide student and learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide.

Our analyses indicate the supports can be grouped into the following six domains.

- *In-classroom supports*
- *Supports to increase home connections and engagement with the school*
- *Crises assistance and prevention*
- *Supports to increase community involvement and engagement with schools*
- *Facilitating student and family access to special assistance*
- *Supports for transitions*

In the most recent issues of the Center's Practitioner, we featured the first four domains listed. This week we focus on *Facilitating Student and Family Access to Special Assistance*. In the next Practitioner, we will feature *Support for Transitions*.

While the other five domains of a student/learning supports system are implemented as *general* interventions designed to meet the needs of a large proportion of students, there are always some students and families whose problems require special assistance. This may just be a matter of adding some special assistance to personalized instruction. However, when problems continue, such assistance often also requires facilitating access to specialized services.

In facilitating student and family access to special assistance as part of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports

- >the first emphasis is on enhancing what is provided in the classroom
- >and then, if in classroom supports prove insufficient, referrals are made for specialized services on-campus (with support staff such as psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses) or for off campus services

Done effectively, special assistance can reduce unwarranted special education referrals and misdiagnoses.

Special assistance in and out of classrooms encompasses a wide range of activities. These include processes for clarifying available assistance and how to access help, facilitating requests for assistance, identifying and assessing problems, triaging in making referrals, planning and providing direct services, monitoring and managing care, managing resources, and interfacing with community outreach to fill gaps.

Most teachers and parents have little difficulty identifying youngsters who are manifesting problems at school. So screening is not the big concern it is often portrayed as. Students receiving special assistance do require ongoing formative assessments designed to improve quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. This is where authentic, multifaceted assessment is called for (e.g., practices currently designated as Response to Intervention – RtI). Such practices guide the nature and scope of special assistance and facilitate appropriate decisions about referral for school-based, school-linked, and community-based specialized services

For a more detailed discussion of this domain as a facet of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, see

> “Student and Family Special Assistance”  
Chapter 18 in *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mh20a.pdf>

And, for more resources, go to the Center Quick Find on  
*Student and Family Assistance*  
[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2304\\_02.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2304_02.htm)  
(Center Quick Finds cover over 130 topics providing links to a host of resources, some developed by the Center as well as online resources from many other sources.)

### **A Few Examples of Center Resources included in the Quick Find for Student and Family Assistance**

*Self-study survey: Student and family assistance*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/studentfamilysurvey.pdf>

*School-Based Client Consultation, Referral, and Management of Care*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/consultation/consultation2003.pdf>

*Engaging and Re-engaging Families When a Student is Not Doing Well*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/familyengage.pdf>

*Involving Parents in Counseling*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/involvingparents.pdf>

*School-Based Mutual Support Groups*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/support/support1.pdf>

## >Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Teens and social media

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>

On shaky grounds: Peer victimization predicts friendship instability across the ninth grade school year <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jad.12081>

Bullying at School: Resources and the Rights of Students with Special Needs

<https://wapave.org/bullying-at-school-resources-and-the-rights-of-students-with-special-needs/>

American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Children Are Overrepresented in Foster Care in States With the Largest Proportions of AIAN Children

<https://www.childtrends.org/blog/american-indian-and-alaska-native-ai-an-children-are-overrepresented-in-foster-care-in-states-with-the-largest-proportions-of-ai-an-children>

Collaboration Is Key to Emergency Management

<https://apps1.seiservices.com/remsemailblast/emailfiles/2022-11/NovemberNewsletter/november2022-browser.html>

National Guidelines for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Crisis Care

[https://store.samhsa.gov/product/national-guidelines-child-and-youth-behavioral-health-crisis-care/pep22-01-02-001?utm\\_source=SAMHSA&utm\\_campaign=e20237c0c9-SAMHSA\\_Announcement\\_2022\\_11\\_10\\_1601823&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_ee1c4b138c-e20237c0c9-167791969](https://store.samhsa.gov/product/national-guidelines-child-and-youth-behavioral-health-crisis-care/pep22-01-02-001?utm_source=SAMHSA&utm_campaign=e20237c0c9-SAMHSA_Announcement_2022_11_10_1601823&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ee1c4b138c-e20237c0c9-167791969)

SAMHSA Interim Strategic Plan

[https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/interim-strategic-plan?utm\\_source=SAMHSA&utm\\_campaign=c3cc3915c9-SAMHSA\\_Announcement\\_2022\\_11\\_10\\_1601831&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_ee1c4b138c-c3cc3915c9-167791969](https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/interim-strategic-plan?utm_source=SAMHSA&utm_campaign=c3cc3915c9-SAMHSA_Announcement_2022_11_10_1601831&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ee1c4b138c-c3cc3915c9-167791969)

School Psychologists: Breaking Down Barriers to Learning

[https://childmind.org/article/school-psychologists-breaking-down-barriers-to-learning/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=pub\\_ed\\_nl\\_2022-11-15&utm\\_content=school-psychologists-breaking-down-barriers-to-learning](https://childmind.org/article/school-psychologists-breaking-down-barriers-to-learning/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub_ed_nl_2022-11-15&utm_content=school-psychologists-breaking-down-barriers-to-learning)

Supporting Trans and Nonbinary Kids at School

[https://childmind.org/article/supporting-trans-and-nonbinary-kids-at-school/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=pub\\_ed\\_nl\\_2022-11-15&utm\\_content=supporting-trans-and-nonbinary-kids-at-school](https://childmind.org/article/supporting-trans-and-nonbinary-kids-at-school/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub_ed_nl_2022-11-15&utm_content=supporting-trans-and-nonbinary-kids-at-school)

### **Studying Mental Health Problems as Systems, Not Syndromes**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/CDP/0/0>

“... discusses two barriers that have contributed to a problematic oversimplification of mental illness: diagnostic literalism, mistaking complex mental health problems for the simplified diagnoses by which they are classified; and reductionism, the isolated study of individual elements of mental disorders. The author proposes conceptualizing people’s mental health states as emerging from complex systems of biological, psychological, and social elements and shows how this perspective explains phenomena such as variability within diagnoses, comorbidity among diagnoses, and transdiagnostic risk factors. This systems approach may help researchers understand diagnoses and reductionism as useful epistemological tools for describing the world, rather than ontological convictions about how the world is.”

### **Parent Teacher Association: Healthy Minds**

<https://www.pta.org/home/programs/Healthy-Lifestyles/mental-health>

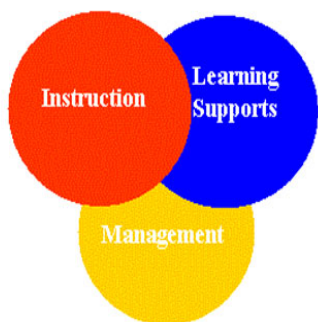
National PTA has developed the PTA Healthy Minds Program to empower families to make mental health an everyday priority. Check out the resources on this webpage, including informational and activity resources directly for families

## A Few Upcoming Webinars

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

- 11/30 What educators needs from their administrators
- 11/30 Understanding Doubled Up
- 12/1 Leading systemic redesign
- 12/5 Cybersecurity: how to protect your school
- 12/7 When kids lead
- 12/8 Peer Mentoring - Creating a Culture of Youth Empowerment
- 12/8 Mental health and the holidays
- 12/8 Building bridges to equity: part five
- 12/8 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights
- 12/14 Promoting Community Based Violence Intervention Success: Meaningful Measures and Effective Communication
- 12/20 Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness

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For information about the

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

go to <http://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.

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### **Invitation to Listserv Participants:**

**Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.**

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

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

**For new sign-ups – email [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 <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)**