
From the Center for MH & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Broadly Addressing What Students Have Lost as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In a recent article, Kathleen Brinegar, Ellis Hurd, and Lisa Harrison caution schools not to limit the learning loss narrative to a focus on traditional academic teaching. They stress:

"Young adolescents across the world have lost grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings, mentors, and neighbors. Within their families, there have been lost jobs, homes, access to necessities, such as quality health care and food, as well as an overall sense of purpose."

COVID 19 has exacerbated the learning, behavior, and emotional problems schools must deal with each day. Too many students have yet to make a good adjustment to this school year; too many remain disconnected from instruction; too many are absent.

This is a critical time for schools to rethink (a) how they are addressing barriers to learning and teaching and (b) their efforts to reengage disconnected students.

Unfortunately, essential student/learning supports have long been and continue to be marginalized in school improvement policy and practice. As a result, such supports are developed in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner. Implementation is fragmented and at times redundant. Those involved often are counterproductively competitive, especially when funding is sparse (and after the relief funds are spent, it will be again).

All this needs to change.

Yet, most of the widely circulated reports about improving schools pay scant attention to the substance of such changes and how to accomplish them.

And while the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers opportunities for change, it also continues the piecemeal approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students and families. The way relief funds are being used to enhance mental health services for students, the way MTSS, PBIS, and Community Schools are being adopted *also are perpetuating limited approaches* to the multifaceted and complex problems schools are trying to address.

Our work stresses the need is to transform student and learning supports into *a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student and learning supports* - see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Because such a transformation entails fundamental systemic changes, we have prepared and are circulating the following free books:

>*Improving School Improvement*

>Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

All three can be accessed at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

In addition, we offer free TA and coaching for those who are moving toward transforming student/learning supports – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coach.pdf>

We don't have email addresses for all who we hope will read this, so please share this with your colleagues.

And as always, we ask that you share with us whatever you think others might find relevant. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Best wishes, be well,

Howard & Linda

Howard Adelman, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology & Center Co director

Linda Taylor, Ph.D.
Center Co director

Dept. of Psychology, UCLA

Emails: adelman@psych.ucla.edu Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

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