

---

## The Mental Health Crisis and Schools: Don't Limit the Focus to MTSS

The pandemic certainly increased appreciation of the need for schools to broaden their approach to addressing students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems. However, it is clear from all the recent emphasis on mental health in schools, two major problems are arising that likely will divert attention from efforts to enhance how schools cope with the many students who are not doing well at school and the many factors interfering with learning and teaching.

The focus of recent attention to improving student (and teacher) well-being and problems *mainly* has been on

- (1) **MTSS** – with a failure to understand the limitations of the framework -- see *MTSS: Strengths and Weaknesses*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/winter19.pdf>
- (2) **mental health** – with a failure to frame the concerns in ways that *embed* Mental Health in Schools into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable student/learning supports system. It is within such a system that a *broad and sustainable* focus on a full range of mental health and psychosocial and educational concerns can be fully *embedded* in school improvement. See *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change* [https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

If the next school year is to be more effective in addressing barriers to learning and teaching, these problems must be countered.

Here are a few resources to help increase understanding of these matters and how to move forward.

> *Student Supports: What's in place? What's Missing?* <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summer2023.pdf>

> *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>

While our Center's work has produced many resources related to these matters, the work is detailed in three free books all of which can be accessed at [https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

> *Improving School Improvement*

> *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

> *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

