

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

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**Concerned about addressing barriers to student learning and teaching & re-engaging disconnected students? about equity of opportunity? about whole child development? about school climate? All that and more is our focus.*



We encourage you to forward this to others. If this has been forwarded and you want to receive it directly, contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu



For more on resources from our national Center, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

> **Minimizing Stress Reactions and Preventing Student & Staff “Burnout”**

How the current crisis can lead to burnout:

“... while having too much to do can cause stress, it doesn't necessarily cause burnout ... More often, burnout happens when people feel out of control. If employees are working in a chaotic environment where it's not clear who is in control, they can burnout... Other critical factors that contribute to burnout are a lack of recognition and reward, a lack of community and support in the workplace...” Christina Maslach <http://paracepts.com/resources/burnout.htm>

Sound like what's been happening over the past months?

Here's what researchers are reporting:

Excerpt from: *How COVID-19 Has Influenced Teachers' Well-Being*
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/multidimensional-aspects-adolescent-well-being/2020/09/how-covid-19-has-influenced-teachers-well>

Teacher well-being has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.... Teachers reported concern regarding student basic needs, and other trying situations such as parent job loss, evictions, a lack of food in child households, increased student anxiety, and increased parental stress. Teachers were listening to these stories daily. ... Wrapped within this was a growing awareness of inequities that their students were facing regarding digital literacy, poverty, and access to language supports. Because teachers could not solve these problems of inequity immediately, frustrations grew. ... One teacher said, “I think the switch to distance learning had me feeling pretty powerless.”

An Intrinsic Motivational Perspective of Burnout

The behavior referred to as burnout is a psychological phenomenon. One way to understand the problem is in terms of three psychological needs that theorists posit as major intrinsic motivational determinants of behavior. These are the need to *feel competent*, the need to *feel self-determining*, and the need to *feel interpersonally connected*. From this perspective, burnout can be viewed as among the negative outcomes that result when these needs are threatened and thwarted. (See the work of Deci & Ryan <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-04680-000>)

Dealing with Burnout

Staff wellness is key to the well-being and progress of students. Because the psychological needs of staff often are overlooked, the following highlights staff burnout and what can be done to prevent it. It should be evident that much of what is presented is relevant to stress in general and can be applied to students and their families.

As with so many problems, it is too easy to view burnout as a personal condition. And, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long-run to address the matter. The problem is multifaceted and complex. While stress-reduction activities often are prescribed, they are unlikely to be a sufficient remedy for the widespread draining of motivation. Reducing environmental stressors and enhancing job supports are more to the point, but again, these strategies alone are insufficient.

From this perspective, we offer the following resource on how to use the coming months to increase support for school staff:

>*Promoting Staff Well-being and Preventing Burnout as Schools Re-open*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/staffwellbeing.pdf>

Here's an excerpt:

Needed: a caring environment, effective mentoring, teaming, and other collegial supports
Stress is a common place phenomenon for almost everyone who works in school settings. Some of the stress comes from working with troubled and troubling youngsters. Some stems from difficult working conditions and staggering workloads. Some is the result of the frustration that arises when everyone works so hard and the results are not good enough. The many frustrations, large and small, affect staff (and student) morale and mental health. Over time, such stressors can lead to widespread staff demoralization, exhaustion, and burnout....

As schools continue online or re-open, promoting staff well-being and preventing burnout call for ensuring a school climate that is experienced by staff and students as a caring environment in which there is a strong collegial and social support structure, personalized opportunities for growth, and meaningful ways to participate in decision making....

Both online and as schools re-open, an increasing number of students will bring problems with them that affect their learning and perhaps frustrate the teacher's efforts to teach. In some geographic areas, many youngsters always have brought a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, problems related to substance abuse, inadequate healthcare, and lack of enrichment opportunities....

As with so many problems, it is easiest to view burnout as a personal condition. And, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long-run to address the matter. The problem is multifaceted and complex.

Wellness and health promotion programs and stress-reduction activities often are advocated and sometimes pursued in meaningful ways. However, these approaches are unlikely to be a sufficient remedy for the widespread draining of motivation. Reducing environmental

stressors and enhancing job supports are more to the point, but again, alone these are insufficient strategies. The solution requires reculturing schools in ways that minimize undermining and maximize enhancement of intrinsic motivation. This requires policies and practices that ensure a regular, often a daily, focus on school supports that (1) promote staff and student well-being and (2) enhance how barriers to teaching and learning are addressed. ...”

For resources related to minimizing stress and preventing burnout, see the Center’s Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Burnout* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm>. The Quick Find provides easy access to a variety of online resources from our center and elsewhere. See, for example, these earlier Center resources:

> *Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Burnout/burn1.pdf>

> *School Staff Burnout* <http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/quicktraining/schoolstaffburnout.pdf>

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The pandemic has seen many people without traditional diagnoses struggling with emotional and psychological concerns. This means that psychology must take seriously the use of population-level models so that our discipline can better serve communities in culturally appropriate ways, with maximum impact. Sandra L. Shullman

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

Teacher Burnout & COVID-19: Supporting School Staff

<https://kognito.com/blog/teacher-burnout-covid-19-supporting-school-staff>

Preparing your kids for the holidays during COVID-19

<https://discoveries.childrenshospital.org/holidays-during-covid-19/>

How to Help Kids Handle Holiday Disappointment During COVID-19

<https://www.connecticutchildrens.org/coronavirus/how-to-help-kids-handle-holiday-disappointment-during-covid-19/>

How to Take the Stress Out of the Holidays

https://childmind.org/article/how-to-take-the-stress-out-of-the-holidays/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=How%20to%20Take%20the%20Stress%20Out%20of%20the%20Holidays&utm_campaign=Public-Ed-Newsletter

Student-focused Learning <https://www.fultonschools.org/studentfocusedlearning>

Outsourcing, Contracting Out – PRIVATIZATION OF EDUCATION

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ongoinghotissues.htm>

Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID 19 Context and Beyond

https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/restructuring-california-schools-address-barriers-learning-and-teaching-covid-19?utm_source=PACE+All&utm_campaign=61b8aabde4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_11_17_07_36_CO_PY_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9f1af6b121-61b8aabde4-522725185

Improving School Improvement http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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Why did the chicken cross the road?

Because the chicken behind it didn’t know how to socially distance properly.

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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during November
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

Note: All community of practice editions contain Links to relevant shared resources.

Topics:

- >What innovations are schools introducing during these challenging times?
- >More on resilience and teens during the pandemic
- >Empathy for students in these challenging times: Is it being treated as an imperative?
- >Teaching students in a mental health facility
- >Government Accounting Office report on education and COVID 19
- >How can the negative impact on MH of COVID protection protocols be mitigated?
- >How supported are K-8 students in moving from online to hybrid learning?

If you missed the resources and news in the Special Editions of the Community of Practice prepared in relation to the crisis, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

For an update on how the center is responding to the Coronavirus crisis, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/centercorona.pdf>

>For more resources in general, see our website <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

>For info on the status of upcoming conferences <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

>For info on webinars <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

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Our kids are watching us closely. When we impose "normal" life on an entirely unprecedented, and in no way normal school year, what message does that send?... The idea that our worth and our kids' worth is determined by how productive we are has got to go. Julie Mason

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>Calls for grant proposals
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upcall.htm>

> job and training opportunities when available
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm>

>How will schools change after the pandemic?

From: “COVID-19 education trends set to persist post-pandemic”

<https://www.educationdive.com/news/education-trends-to-continue-post-pandemic/586911/>

When the pandemic is over, there will be COVID-19-related practices many school administrators will happily like to see vanish and never return, such as mask wearing and social distancing. But there are some new or refined activities that — while forced upon the education world due to COVID-19 — should have staying power because they have the potential to improve student outcomes and school operations for the long term, some administrators predict....

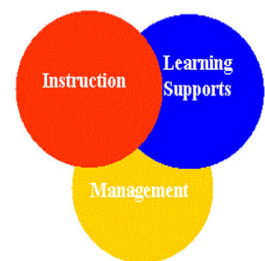
Using technology to keep kids learning even when they can't travel to school buildings will have positive and lasting impacts from the pandemic...

Educators are being creative and flexible out of necessity, but the pandemic also provided an ideal scenario to break away from stagnant practices and try new approaches. Innovative instructional practices, such as the distribution of boxes with materials for hands-on learning and the development of interactive online academic activities, helped students continue their studies from home.

Additionally, educators eager to keep positive school cultures strong even when staff and students weren't face-to-face created school spirit videos, planned drive-by graduations, and erected grade promotion yard signs. Those approaches helped boost morale, maintain traditions and strengthen community belonging during extended school closures....

This spring, many parents learned the way they were taught addition and subtraction is not at all how their children currently learn math. Likewise, school systems quickly discovered they needed to provide parents explicit and repetitive guidance in order to help them support their child's learning from home. There were lots of frustrations on both sides, but the forced pivot to distance learning also typically had a welcomed side effect: Parents and school staff felt more connected as back-and-forth communications increased and appreciation grew for each other's challenges and successes. Educators said it's one of the more positive trends they hope continues years after the pandemic has ended....

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See the **National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports** <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>



Let Us Know:

About what ideas are being proposed for transforming schools as they re-open.

And if anyone is thinking about increasing the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, we can help. Send all info to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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The past seven weeks of this school year have been some of the most innovative and exciting educational work I've ever done. Suzanne Jenkins

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>A Few News Stories (excerpted from various news sources)

- (1) **Memphis teacher unions say few are choosing to return to classrooms in January, leaving support staff to fill the void.** Memphis teacher association leaders said a vast majority of teachers are choosing to stay at home even as Shelby County Schools plans to open buildings in January. So far, the district is requiring teacher assistants and behavior specialists to report to school buildings in January to monitor classrooms where teachers are working remotely. They also plan to use substitute teachers. District officials may tap other positions to monitor classrooms.
<https://tn.chalkbeat.org/2020/11/6/21553074/few-scs-teachers-are-choosing-to-return-to-classrooms-leaving-support-staff-to-fill-the-void>
- (2) **Ds and Fs surge, attendance slips among L.A.'s poorest students amid distance learning.** Grades of D and F have increased in the Los Angeles Unified School District among middle and high school students in a troubling sign of the toll that distance learning – and the coronavirus crisis – is taking on the children, especially those who are members of low-income families. The district released a chart indicating that based on 10-week interim assessments, failing grades are increasing across the board, but are surging the most in lower-income communities. Compounding the disturbing trend, students in these same communities, hard hit by the spread of COVID-19, have the lowest attendance.
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-11-02/failing-grades-surge-poor-la-students-covid-19>
- (3) **Things You Need to Know About Student Absences During COVID-19.** Absenteeism has long been a vexing and frustrating issue for educators. During COVID-19, the phenomenon has only grown more pressing. Education Week conducted a nationally representative survey of 790 K-12 educators... Before the pandemic, daily absenteeism rates were roughly equal among elementary, middle, and high school students. Now, though, the numbers suggest high schoolers are slightly more likely to be absent (13 percent on a typical day) than middle (11 percent) or elementary schoolers (9 percent).... According to the survey, absenteeism rates are higher for schools and districts that have stuck with full-time remote learning, but they're also up in schools doing full-time in-person instruction or a mix of remote and in-person learning. In fact, absenteeism rates appear to have nearly doubled between this fall and before the pandemic... Urban schools are more likely (55 percent) than educators in suburban schools (42 percent) or rural schools (34 percent) to connect absent students' families with social workers or digital devices to help address the root causes of absenteeism. ...
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2020/10/absenteeism_covid_19_this_fall.html
- (4) **Schools are closing for millions of kids as teachers get sick and COVID cases surge.** Some districts are holding out. After weeks or months of operating in person, schools are shifting students back to remote learning as the nation grapples with soaring COVID-19 infections. Millions more students will be connected to their teachers only by whatever internet or phone connection they can secure.
In many cases, schools are closing because too many teachers are quarantined or infected with COVID-19. Others are responding to high rates of virus transmission in their communities. Kentucky's governor announced a statewide closure of schools to take effect Monday, a move that followed Michigan closing all high school classrooms and New York City schools - the largest district in the country - moving back to all-remote learning. Already, just over 40% of schoolchildren are attending only virtual classes. Adding to the confusion and stress of the moment: The metrics used for closure, and the scope of the shutdowns, diverge wildly, sometimes even within the same county. Schools can be considered safe in one town or state and ordered closed in another, even though that area has less community spread of the virus.
Still, as COVID-19 cases skyrocket, some East Coast governors - including New York's - are hoping to keep schools operating in person, as long as rates of transmission within schools themselves stay low. The governors of New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts released a joint, bipartisan statement Thursday backing the importance of continuing in-person education with the appropriate safety protocols, even in the face of rising rates of community transmission.
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/11/20/school-closings-covid-cases-surge-teachers-online/>

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[The pandemic] has moved us ahead about a decade in terms of digital learning in public education, and it's settled, I think in many ways, this question about whether or not these tools have a place in schools. We're proving that you can learn anywhere and anytime.

Aaron Spence, Superintendent

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Comments and sharing from the field

- (1) As a school nurse, I frequently see students in my office for mental health needs. School nurses can be a great asset for this population. Many people don't realize that most school nurses have had some training in mental health management. We can assess suicide risk, verbally de-escalate students, serve as a safe place to go for a stress break. Often in IEP meetings, the team is scrambling to find a way for students to get a stress break in a controlled way. As the nurse, I have often offered to be that place. Nurses do not think they can replace psychologists, social workers, or counselors, but can support and supplement their efforts.
- (2) Thank you for your hard work. I always look forward to receiving your newsletter. Schools do not have many vehicles which tell the "good" things that are happening. Your newsletter is one of the few. Keep up the good work.



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

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF ENEWS

Who Are We? Recently renamed the Center for MH in Schools and Student/Learning Supports, our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.

For more information about the Center and its many resources, go to the website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or email Ltaylor@ucla.edu or adelman@psych.ucla.edu

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu