

**ENEWS -- Another Center Resource for ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO LEARNING\***

**February, 2018 (Vol. 22 #5) – 31 Years & Counting**

**\*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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**



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

**W***hat's Here*

**Topic related to addressing barriers to learning:**

**>Working at all levels to increase graduation rates**

**Did you see these news items?**

**About transforming student/learning supports**

**Resource Updates**

**Comments, requests, information, questions from the field**

**Note: Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other resources**

**>Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops**

**>Upcoming and archived webcasts, video, & PD**

**>Calls for grant proposals, presentations & papers**

**>Training and job opportunities**

## Topic related to addressing barriers to learning:

### >Working at all levels to increase graduation rates

Most late high school dropouts (83%) listed a school-related (versus a family or employment related) reason for leaving. These reasons included missing too many school days, thinking it would be easier to get a GED, getting poor grades, and not liking school.

National Center for Education Statistics

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009307>

**R**ecent reports indicate that more than half a million young people dropout of high school each year.

Now is a critical time in this school year for intervening to minimize student dropouts and maximize graduation rates. (Time is running out for catching up; decisions are being made about who passes and who fails.)

As with so many problems in our society, we know that increasing graduate rates could be tremendously aided by reducing generational poverty. At the same time, available research suggests that school factors can account for as much as two-thirds of the differences in mean school dropout rates. Being held back is the single strongest predictor of dropping out (i.e., being held back one grade increases the risk of dropping out by 40 to 50 percent, two grades by 90 percent).

Schools play a proactive role in preventing dropouts by (1) promoting positive development and (2) addressing barriers to learning and teaching (especially school-related experiences that push students out). At this critical juncture in the school year, it is imperative that teachers and student/learning support staff intensify the focus on (a) helping students who need special assistance to “catch-up” (e.g., homework help, tutoring, peer to peer support) and (b) turning things around for students who are falling further and further behind.

In both instances, this means increasing personalized and shared problem solving through in-depth conferencing and a series of follow-ups with the student and family. In essence, the *content* focus is on clarifying specifics related to the problem and formulating flexible steps to solve it; the *process* focus is on establishing and continuously enhancing a positive working relationship and monitoring the intervention steps closely to make immediate changes as necessary. Special attention needs to be paid to addressing any underlying factors interfering with school learning and performance.

In general, this is a critical time to rethink classroom and schoolwide approaches to (a) enhance engaged, personalized learning and (b) provide the type of learning supports that re-engage disconnected students in classroom learning and that enhance equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school. Doing this involves practices based on understanding intrinsic motivation and that use classroom assessments (e.g., comprehensive response to intervention practices) that inform *personalized* intervention and provide immediate special assistance when needed (see the Center’s guidance notes *Dropout Prevention* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dropoutprevention.pdf>).

Also note that the U.S. Department of Education’s *What Works Clearinghouse* guide recommends:

1. Monitoring the progress of all students, and proactively intervene when students show early signs of attendance, behavior, or academic problems.
2. Providing intensive, individualized support to students who have fallen off track and face significant challenges to success.
3. Engaging students by offering curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success and that improve students’ capacity to manage challenges in and out of school.
4. For schools with many at-risk students, creating small, personalized communities to facilitate monitoring and support.

(See the 2017 guide at [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/practiceguide/wwc\\_dp\\_summary\\_101717.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/practiceguide/wwc_dp_summary_101717.pdf).)

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**Want more resources related to Improving Graduate Rates?**

See the Center’s online clearinghouse Quick Finds on:

- >Dropout Prevention – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html>
- >Barriers to Learning – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/barriers.htm>
- >Accommodations – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/idea.htm>

See the following websites

- >National Dropout Prevention Centers – <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>
- >Focus Adolescent Services: Youth Who Drop Out – <http://www.focusas.com/Dropouts.html>
- >School Dropout Prevention Program – <http://www.ed.gov/programs/dropout/index.html>
- >National Center for School Engagement – <http://www.schoolengagement.org/>
- >Youth Build USA – <http://www.youthbuild.org/>

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**Topics in January’s School Practitioner Community of Practice**

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

- >About school use of a multi-tiered system of support
- >Connecting schools, juvenile justice, and the community

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*Under ESSA, school leaders, educators and parents have the latitude and freedom to try new approaches to serve individual students. My message to them is simple: do it! Embrace the imperative to do something truly bold . . . to challenge the status quo . . . to break the mold...*

Betsy DeVos  
Secretary, U. S. Department of Education

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**News from around the country related to addressing barriers**

>**State trying to fix illegal special education system.** A U.S. Department of Education investigation found Texas violated federal law for more than a decade by capping the percentage of students allowed to access special education services. Department of Education regulators say Texas illegally capped its special education services at 8.5 percent of students statewide in 2004, allowing school districts to deny services to thousands of kids with disabilities until 2016. Affected students couldn't get assistance such as therapy or extra instruction for learning disabilities. State data shows that about 32,000 fewer students got special education services between the 2003-2004 school year and the last academic year, even though Texas' booming population saw classroom enrollment jump by around 1 million kids to 5.3-plus million over the same period. 1/12/18 [http://www.richmond.com/news/national-world/government-politics/ap/texas-trying-to-fix-illegal-special-education-system/article\\_825a9605-1f7f-558d-8e51-c5b1307ee514.html](http://www.richmond.com/news/national-world/government-politics/ap/texas-trying-to-fix-illegal-special-education-system/article_825a9605-1f7f-558d-8e51-c5b1307ee514.html)

>**High schools test different, often controversial, approach to education.** (IL) Transformation has replaced hopelessness at Proviso East, where administrators, select teachers and a cadre of kids have launched a bold and controversial experiment: They’re abandoning most aspects of traditional classroom instruction and reshaping the way kids learn. The approach, called competency-based learning, puts the onus on students to study and master skills at their own pace, making their own choices along the way and turning to peers and online searches for answers before they lean on

teachers for help. Students may show proficiency on a topic not simply through traditional testing but by using projects, presentations or even activities outside school. Proviso is one of 10 school districts chosen statewide to pilot competency-based learning. Computer testing and other work show how kids are progressing, and teachers provide individual feedback to students, acting as facilitators or coaches who monitor student growth and ensure kids are self-directed enough to assist and even teach their peers. 1/16/18

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-no-teacher-learning-20171212-story.html>

>**MetooK12, a new hashtag for students sexually assaulted or harassed in K-12 schools.** This social media hashtag was created by a national nonprofit organization, Stop Sexual Assault in Schools as an extension of the #MeToo social media movement. It is intended to encourage young people who were sexually harassed or assaulted while attending K-12 schools to speak out and highlight sexual harassment and assault at K-12 schools, a problem that has received far less public attention than on college campuses and in the workplace. 1/3/18

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/01/03/metook12-a-new-hashtag-for-students-sexually-assaulted-or-harassed-in-k-12-schools/?utm\\_term=.d5df97819921](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/01/03/metook12-a-new-hashtag-for-students-sexually-assaulted-or-harassed-in-k-12-schools/?utm_term=.d5df97819921)

>**State plans to offer more ways to gain high school equivalency.** The Illinois Community College Board says it plans to roll out several alternative credentialing methods by the fall of 2018 that the agency hopes will get more people into the workforce pipeline. 1.2 million people in Illinois do not have a high school equivalency certificate. One of the major changes is to help people who are a few credit hours short of graduating high school earn their certificate. Rather than have the person pass the four sections of the GED, another avenue could be to pass a course at a community college or complete a credit-recovery program. The Illinois State Board of Education is also piloting a “competency based” high school graduation requirement at 10 schools. The state agency says the program allows educators to assess and advance students based on demonstrated mastery of specific skills, rather than on time in the classroom. 1/2/18

<http://www.sj-r.com/news/20180102/state-plans-to-offer-more-ways-to-gain-high-school-equivalency>

>**Schools sharing grants to education students from Puerto Rico.** A dozen school districts that serve students who came to Massachusetts from Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria are sharing in federally funded grants. The \$60,000 in McKinney-Vento homeless education grants can be used for a variety of purposes, including tutoring and before- or after-school programs. Boston, Chicopee, Fall River, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, New Bedford, Southbridge, Springfield and Worcester will each receive \$5,000. Officials say those districts are educating 85 percent of the more than 2,100 students from Puerto Rico who have enrolled in public schools in Massachusetts since the hurricane. 1/7/18

[http://www.richmond.com/news/ap/schools-sharing-grants-to-educate-students-from-puerto-rico/article\\_51a85a37-bcb6-55ce-baca-e6584ba56008.html](http://www.richmond.com/news/ap/schools-sharing-grants-to-educate-students-from-puerto-rico/article_51a85a37-bcb6-55ce-baca-e6584ba56008.html)

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*January is always a good month for behavioral economics: Few things illustrate self-control as vividly as New Year's resolutions. February is even better, though, because it lets us study why so many of those resolutions are broken.*

Sendhil Mullainathan

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According to Gore Vidal, the four most beautiful words in the English language are:

I TOLD YOU SO!

I prefer:

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED!



## About transforming student & learning supports

### The problem

School improvement planning is not appropriately and effectively addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

### An example of the problem

[Excerpt from Testimony to the Texas Senate Finance Committee re. Addressing Barriers to Student Learning <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5728d34462cd94b84dc567ed/t/58885c6259cc681363f0e1ca/1485331557808/Senate-Finance-TEA-budget+testimony-January2017.pdf> ]

*...On average, schools use about 14 different strategies or programs to prevent violence and promote safe learning environments. Instead of adopting a different program to combat each new problem that emerges, schools can develop a consistent and long-term strategy that addresses multiple student concerns through a set of well-integrated programs and services. Rather than having siloed efforts that are disconnected from each other, schools have the opportunity to strategically align policies, strategies and practices, weaving together school and community resources, to promote students' healthy development and learning and prevent things schools, students, families and the state wants to see less of: bullying, truancy, mental health concerns, substance abuse, disciplinary actions, and school failure.*

*TEA provides little guidance to districts on using available resources to more effectively address nonacademic barriers to learning. ... Education service centers (ESCs) offer schools information and training on things like positive behavior management and supports, bullying prevention, and family and community engagement. However, with separate ESCs leading different efforts, training related to school climate is largely planned and delivered in silos. ...*

### A step forward

On its website, the California Department of Education (CDE) states that it is committed to aligning a system of supports to better meet the needs of the whole child (from cradle to career). Within CDE, we have created a One System Action Team (OSAT) made up of CDE division representatives to support and continue to build the basis for "whole child" support systems and drive the CDE-wide integration of the "one system" concept. The OSAT will provide the internal mechanism to ensure a collaborative, department-wide focus on supporting and building the capacity of LEA's to implement proven or promising research-based programs and practices, specifically targeted at one system serving the whole child. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/onesystem.asp>

And the testimony to the Texas Senate Finance Committee concluded by recommending

*Establishment of an Office of Student Learning Supports at TEA, with a minimum of one FTE, charged with leading agency efforts to address non-academic barriers to student learning.*

### Call to action

Now is the time for everyone concerned about ending the marginalization of student/learning supports to act. Be a voice for

- >ending the marginalization of student/learning supports
- >developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports.

**For action steps, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/whatsnew/call.htm>**

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### ***Let Us Know What You See Happening to Transform Student and Learning Supports***

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 supports, *we can help*. Send all info and any requests to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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*My friends tell me I have an intimacy problem. But they don't really know me.*

Garry Shandling

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### **Resource Updates**

(informative and useful resources for school improvement & personnel development)

- >Public education funding inequity in an era of increasing concentration of poverty and resegregation – <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2018-01-10-Education-Inequity.pdf>
- >How to craft useful, student centered social media policies – <https://www.eschoolnews.com/2018/01/16/craft-useful-student-centered-social-media-policy/>
- >50 state comparison: States school accountability systems – <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-states-school-accountability-systems/>
- >Enrollment and Staffing in Public Schools and School Districts – <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018052>
- >Breaking down barriers: Using youth suicide-related surveillance data from state systems – <http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/BreakingDownBarriersReport.pdf>
- >Student Victimization in U.S. Schools: Results From the 2015 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey – <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018106>
- >Early Language Development Problems – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/languagedevelop.pdf>
- >About Dress Codes and School Uniforms – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/uniforms.pdf>
- >From the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) – updated homeless education issue briefs reflecting new provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – online at <https://nche.ed.gov/briefs.php>
  - >>Dispute Resolution
  - >>Ensuring Full Participation in Extracurricular Activities for Students Experiencing Homelessness
  - >>Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness under Title I, Part A
  - >>Supporting the Education of Immigrant Students Experiencing Homelessness

### **A few recent journal publications**

- >Happy classes make happy students: Classmates' well-being predicts individual student well-being. R.B. King & J.A. Datu (2017). *Journal of School Psychology*, 65, 116-128.
- >Parental involvement in education during middle school: Perspectives of ethnically diverse parents, teachers, and students. (2018) N. Hill, D. Witherspoon & D. Bartz. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 111, 12-27. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00220671.2016.1190910>
- >Student trust in teachers and student perceptions of safety: Positive predictors of student identification with school. (2018). R. Mitchell, L. Kensler & M. Tschannen-Moran *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 21, 135-154. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603124.2016.1157211>

If you missed the Center's Winter, 2018 special edition eJournal, see the following articles at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/winter18.pdf>

- > *Evolving School Improvement Plans to Better Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
- > *Updates on Advancing Efforts to Transform Student & Learning Supports*
- > *Who Else is Working to Transform Student/learning Supports*
- > *Two Cautionary Notes:*
  - >> *About Piecemeal Approaches*
  - >> *About Settling for an Integrated Services Initiative*
- > *Center Assistance for Transforming Student/ Learning Supports*

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*We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.*  
Kurt Vonnegut

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### Comments and sharing from the field

> We were asked to share the following:  
*I posted a blog article yesterday under title of: Connecting Rich and Poor in America - Follow-up to Reeves & Putnam. <http://tutormentor.blogspot.com/2018/01/connecting-rich-and-poor-in-america.html>. I hope you'll take a look and read the recent article by Richard Reeves and look at the work by Robert Putnam.*

> As we begin 2018, it was nice to receive the following encouragement for our efforts:

*Thank you for your dedication and continued efforts in this learning arena. I have earned a PhD on an Office of Special Education training grant and moved onto work with the IDEA Partnership as a technology consultant, this is my 17th year impacting education and advocating for our poor and students with disabilities. This work holds my passion as I believe it does yours. I resemble the struggling learners we invest in. As a 7th grader I couldn't read, LD and poor provide horrible odds at accomplishing anything in this country. YOUR work, is so important and I'm glad to READ it, digest it and communicate in my circles your valuable science of high quality systems and learning practices. I hope you and those at the center have a prosperous New Year and I look forward to more briefs and updates!*

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\*Information is online about the

**National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

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### **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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu) or [adelman@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:adelman@psych.ucla.edu)

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)