

# Students & Schools: Moving Forward\*

(February, 2021, Vol. 25, #5) – 35 Years & Counting

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



**For more on resources from our national Center, see**

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

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## >Minimizing Dropouts and Maximizing Graduation Rates During the Pandemic

Here's a few examples of what we see reported:

"...Even before COVID-19 struck, students in low-performing schools had graduation rates of 41 percent on average, compared to students in other high schools who had graduation rates of 90 percent or higher. Students experiencing homelessness, English language learners, and students of color all had lower graduation rates than their peers.

COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges. To address these issues, many districts are [using] ... Learning Management Systems (LMS) that help teachers choreograph online learning. These systems allow teachers to push out assignments to students, organize content, videos, and activities, as well as facilitate communication. In addition to these benefits, LMS can provide early warning indicators for student disengagement, which can trigger follow-up actions from the school, including reaching out to students and their families to understand their circumstances. This kind of outreach often uncovers underlying equity issues, such as a lack of access, connectivity or stable learning environment, that the school can help address once they are aware of the barrier. This kind of outreach to our most vulnerable learners needs to be prioritized and is most effective when the entire school community can be mobilized to assist through a coordinated effort...."

From: *Ten ways to make online learning work*

<https://www.covidcollaborative.us/issues/education>

"To support struggling students during the pandemic, the Los Angeles Unified School District has decided that secondary students who are failing their courses can have more time to try and bring their grades up before an "F" or "no pass" mark is entered into their academic record.

In a memo to secondary school principals on Monday, Dec. 14, district officials announced that students who would otherwise receive an F can have until Jan. 29 to submit makeup assignments that might improve their grades....

All make-up work must be turned in Jan. 29, and teachers will have until Feb. 15 to grade the work and change the student's final grade from an "incomplete" to a letter grade. Teachers who hold online drop-in sessions over winter break, afterschool or on Saturdays over the next several weeks to provide additional support to students seeking help in specific subject matters will be

paid their hourly rate for the extra work....

Students who aren't able to raise their grades from an F after January can still take part in credit recovery later in the school year." A link to the district credit recovery programs is

<https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/15212>

From: *LAUSD students with Fs will have more time to bring grades up*

<https://www.dailynews.com/2020/12/15/lausd-students-with-fs-will-have-more-time-to-bring-grades-up/>

A "Meeting the Moment Plan" to sustain gains in H.S. graduation rates

- >National response to COVID-19 that includes an integrated approach to social, emotional, and academic development
- >Customized State Plans: get to a 90% HS grad rate, college-and career-ready, for all students, based on pre-COVID-19 data & COVID-19 impact
- >Spread On-Track/Early Warning Systems to monitor progress of all students with predictive indicators and multi-tiered support systems
- >Strategic deployment of additional person power via National Tutoring Corps to close relationship and support gaps (e.g. School Success Coaches)
- >Structures and funds to support enhanced teacher, school leader collaboration, professional learning, continuous improvement, high school redesign, & community partners/family involvement
- >Alignment of high school graduation requirements with admissions criteria of state university system—including flagships and workforce prep"

From: *Meeting the Moment Plan to Sustain Gains in High School Graduation Rates*

<https://www.covidcollaborative.us/issues/education>

### Center Comments:

Clearly there is a segment of students who will proceed to graduation without much difficulty. There are, however, many who require a good deal of special attention if schools are to minimize dropouts and maximize graduate rates.

At this critical juncture, teachers need to work with learning support staff with an emphasis 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. The need in both instances is for personalized problem solving. This usually requires an in-depth conference and a series of follow-ups with students and families.

The essence of these exchanges is to clarify specifics related to the problem and formulate flexible steps to solve it; the process itself aims at 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.

For more related to this topic, 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>

>*Transition from Adolescence* [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition\\_from\\_adolescence.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition_from_adolescence.htm)

Here are three recent free books from the Center that stress ways to move forward:

>*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.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.htm)

**New Resources:**

*Finding and Reengaging Students who Went Missing During the COVID Pandemic*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Findingdisconnectedstudents.pdf>

*Re-engaging Disconnected Students Online and at School: Focus on Intrinsic Motivation*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/reengage.pdf>

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*With our focus clear, we must ready ourselves with the care, grace, and commitment necessary to reimagine a new nation. There has never been a moment more ripe for radical transformation.*

Michael McAfee

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## >About Extending the School Year

We have received requests about the topic of extending the school year to help school districts address academic loss. We have responded as follows:

We view calls for extending the school year as related to the general call for getting kids back in school. As such, the discussion needs to focus on what schools need if they are to be effective in doing more than being a repository for the young.

The discussion should be carried out in the context of understanding that there will be an increase in the number of students manifesting learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Moreover, students will vary considerably in the academic and social-emotional help they need. In addition, a school will need to continue the process of finding and reengaging the many students who have “disappeared” from its rolls. And all this probably will have to be done with a reduced budget.

These realities mean that, in too many schools, even the most expert teachers with the best curricula cannot be expected to be successful with quality instruction alone. Schools that were struggling before will find it even harder to

- (1) ensure a safe environment (safe from COVID-19 and other all too familiar problems)
- (2) provide personalized instruction
- (3) enhance the ability to address the variety of other factors that will interfere with learning and teaching.

And, the difficulty here is that many of these factors are the result of long-standing, unresolved structural and systemic barriers that require transformative school improvements.

Educators, families, and students are eager for school to go “back to normal.” We all want to make up for learning-loss. In doing so, it is essential to avoid widening the opportunity gap. Any agenda for schools must include enhancing equity of opportunity for all students to succeed at school and beyond.

To better appreciate the above points, you might find the following useful:

- Our Center’s recent policy brief prepared at the request of PACE:  
*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>

While the brief was prepared for California, it has relevance for every state.

And as already cited above, see

- *Finding and Reengaging Students who Went Missing During the COVID Pandemic*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Findingdisconnectedstudents.pdf>
- *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.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.htm) )

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](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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More than any institution, our public schools cultivate a diverse democracy. We teach students to think critically about voting and elections, and in the face of political polarization, we give students opportunities to practice how to engage with people and ideas across their differences. These are the social-emotional and life skills that we want to instill in every student. Jill Baker

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### >Quick Links to Online Resources

What kids need to know about getting a COVID-19 shot

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/covid-19-coronavirus-vaccine-kids-teens>

Supporting the foster care community during covid 19

<https://www.air.org/resource/air-informs-episode-8-supporting-foster-care-community-during-covid-19>

Understanding ADHD medications

[https://childmind.org/article/understanding-adhd-medications/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=How%20to%20Change%20Negative%20Thinking%20Patterns&utm\\_campaign=Public-Ed-Newletter](https://childmind.org/article/understanding-adhd-medications/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=How%20to%20Change%20Negative%20Thinking%20Patterns&utm_campaign=Public-Ed-Newletter)

ADHD and substance abuse

[https://childmind.org/article/adhd-and-substance-abuse/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=ADHD%20and%20Substance%20Abuse&utm\\_campaign=Public-Ed-Newsletter](https://childmind.org/article/adhd-and-substance-abuse/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=ADHD%20and%20Substance%20Abuse&utm_campaign=Public-Ed-Newsletter)

### A Few Upcoming Webinars

- 2/9 – Educating your Child with Mental Health Needs: Special Education
- 2/10 – Mental Health Awareness
- 2/10 – Transforming Your Leadership And Those You Lead
- 2/11 – How Parents Can Effectively Communicate with the IEP Team
- 2/16 – Build a Positive School Culture via a Student Leadership Team
- 2/16 – Stakeholder and Family Engagement
- 2/23 – Beyond Equity - the Lens Through Which We Lead
- 2/23 – The Resiliency Journey

*How Learning Happens* (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.

<https://www.edutopia.org/how-learning-happens>

Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth

<https://preventioninstitute.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4bf5a36bd9f72789255d49a&id=17f472fea9&c=b6757fd9d7>

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

### A Few New Resources from the Center at UCLA

Examples of MTSS in practice <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mtssexamples.pdf>

Students diagnosed with ADHD: Gender Differences and Misdiagnoses

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adhddiag.pdf>

Neglect experienced by children of substance abusing parents: Implications for schools

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/neglect.pdf>

LGBTQ+ students: Family reactions and school support

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/lgbtqfamily.pdf>

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income college students

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/lowincome.pdf>

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*En la union esta la fuerza. We gain strength from joining together.*

Miguel Cardona

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**Here's what was discussed in the community of practice Practitioner during January**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

Note: All editions of the Practitioner contain links to relevant shared resources.

- > Schools Responding to the Violence at the U.S. Capitol:  
*A Time to Help, a Time to Model, and a time to Teach*
- > A Superintendent's search for ways to address the strain on staff in her district
- > Why are students asked to pay for equipment?
- > About the nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education
- > How might schools respond to the violence at the U.S. Capitol?
- > How are schools planning to meet the needs of special education students?
- > What's being done to reach youth and connect them with needed services?
- > Psychological impact of multiple challenges: What should schools do?
- > Tackling the Pandemic's Mental Health Impact
- > Concerns about the push to "catch up"

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

**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)

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

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

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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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Maintaining hope is so essential during times like this. To take an active approach to dealing with a disaster, which is what we hope for — that people are going to find their way through it — they have to have a vision for the future. Dr. Joan Anzia,

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

**Calls to reopen classrooms grow as teachers get vaccinated.** State leaders around the U.S. are increasingly pushing for schools to reopen this winter — pressuring them, even — as teachers begin to gain access to the vaccine against the raging pandemic. Ohio’s governor offered to give vaccinations to teachers at the start of February, provided their school districts agree to resume at least some in-person instruction by March 1. In Arizona, where teachers began receiving shots this week, the governor warned schools that he expects students back in the classroom despite objections from top education officials and the highest COVID-19 diagnosis rate in the nation over the past week.

<https://apnews.com/article/us-coronavirus-deaths-1-day-over-4300-1efb7805ae0ff217a4753ee89550771d>

**3 in every 8 St. Paul students pick distance learning over return to school.** When St. Paul Public Schools (MN) reopens its elementary schools for in-person classes in February, thousands of students will continue learning from home. Thirty-seven percent of elementary students are sticking with distance learning, according to data provided by the school district. Preferences range widely by student demographics. Just 29 percent of white students chose distance instruction, while half of the district’s Asian students will be staying home. Strike talk has resurfaced among teachers since the announcement, as the St. Paul Federation of Educators has pushed back against the plan to reopen. The union has been pressuring the district to keep school buildings closed and encouraging parents to do the same. *Those efforts included a car rally at district headquarters.*

<https://www.twincities.com/2021/01/12/3-in-every-8-st-paul-students-pick-distance-learning-over-return-to-school/>

**More students to head into classrooms, but most still learn from home.** At least 12,000 additional students will head to Palm Beach County schools at the start of spring semester next month, according to a report of parent choice that came due this week. While that’s an 18 percent increase over this semester and will bring the number of students learning in-person to about 78,400, thousands of struggling students the district had hoped to woo back will continue to get their lessons via a computer screen and risk falling further behind. Statewide, nearly 65 percent of Florida public school students have returned to the classroom despite the surge in the pandemic. The district flagged the records of more than 22,000 students learning remotely, advising parents the students should return to schools to make up for lost ground. That included 10,100 elementary students, 8,000 high schoolers and 3,800 middle schoolers.

<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/story/news/2021/01/13/12-000-more-students-heading-into-palm-beach-county-classrooms/6644334002/>

**School board locks teachers out of virtual classrooms, threatens to dock pay if they don't report to class.** Chicago Public Schools has threatened to dock the pay of teachers who do not report to class as the school district returns to in-person learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The school district reopened 1/11 for the first time since closing at the start of the pandemic, despite pushback from the Chicago Teachers Union, which claims that proper protocols are not in place to keep teachers and students safe from the virus. About 6,000 students returned on Monday, but another 71,000 students are expected to return on Feb. 1.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/chicago-school-board-threatens-dock-pay-teachers-report/>

**Elementary school receives national honor for serving its homeless and economically disadvantaged population.** More than half of students at Sandstone school (Henrico, VA) were considered economically disadvantaged in 2020, meaning these students either qualify for free lunch, receive temporary assistance from the government for food, are eligible for Medicaid or homeless under the federal McKinney-Vento Act. Reading authors on childhood poverty, and training teachers to understand the behaviors of trauma, and doing consistent family outreach resulted in rising test scores and is ongoing. Research from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development shows that students who grow up in poverty are more likely to struggle with engagement in school. Teachers who are uninformed about poverty, a report from the nonprofit says, can interpret a lack of effort from students in poverty as being lazy and not interested in the school work presented to them. Oftentimes, however, students in poverty are showing symptoms from a lack of hope or optimism due to their own life circumstances.

[https://richmond.com/news/local/education/sandston-elementary-receives-national-honor-for-serving-its-homeless-and-economically-disadvantaged-population/article\\_39df0996-2751-5558-b174-2c04132a2d05.html](https://richmond.com/news/local/education/sandston-elementary-receives-national-honor-for-serving-its-homeless-and-economically-disadvantaged-population/article_39df0996-2751-5558-b174-2c04132a2d05.html)

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From the story about Sandstone school:

*These families are working hard. They're working three times harder than many of us have to work in order to keep things rolling for their kids. That's what I wanted my teachers to understand.* Kim Powell

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## Comments and sharing from the field

(1) We had many responses to the question about school responses to the violence at the U.S. Capitol (see 1/13/21 community of practice *Practitioner* at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner\(1-13-21\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner(1-13-21).pdf) )

Some responses came from those who appeared to support the violence. One said it was time for schools to ask such questions as:

*How will schools respond to their educators not being vaccinated with front line workers?  
How will educators manage the risk of working directly with students with disabilities who can't wear masks, social distance or manage their bodily fluids?  
How will educators respond to those who have never experienced a lock down, lock out or threat to their safety?  
How will educators feel when they hear "with liberty and justice for all," while those who commit sedition are allowed to go home?*

Another asked for more resources:

“I was browsing through all the valuable resources that you share with all of us. I appreciate how prompt I received a response requesting resources to address the election last November. Sadly, we come again to a point in which our nation and communities were impacted again. I will appreciate it if you can share any resources to support our community in understanding and making sense of the critical incidents that happened today in our nation's Capital. We are a Preschool-12th district, and I would like to offer support to our students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators. Thank you in advance for your time and for being a solid hub of knowledge, applied practice, and resources.”

This request prompted our special *Practitioner* on 1/7/21

*Finding and Reengaging Students who Went Missing During the COVID Pandemic*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Findingdisconnectedstudents.pdf>

- (2) In the 1/6 *Practitioner* we asked:  
*What would you ask/tell Dr. Cardona about the role the federal Department of Education should now play in supporting the schools in your state/community/district?*

Here's a response that was quite detailed:

The Federal Department of Education does not provide funding to support equitable access to school nurses across states and the nation. The National Association of School Nurses has tried to pass the NURSES ACT (NASN supports the Nurses for Under-Resourced Schools Everywhere (Nurse) Act, which would recognize the critical role of school nurses in providing students access to quality health care so that they are safe, healthy, and ready to learn. The NURSE Act, S 1362, was introduced by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) in the Senate and Representative Dina Titus (D-NV) introduced the companion bill in the House of Representatives, HR 2606. Members of Congress are urged to ensure that all children have access to a School Nurse.) I would be curious where he stands on the ask for \$1.36B to fund a school nurse in every U.S. school. A recent analysis concluded that reopening safely will cost an additional \$400,000 per school district to hire more nurses, even if just part-time. There are 13,598 school districts in the United States and since 24.7 percent currently have no school nurse, \$1.36B would provide funding for every school to have at least a part-time school nurse.

I am providing the url from NASN's ask to the BIDEN team as well as research conducted recently by the University of Washington.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/school-nurses-key-to-reopening-schools-but-new-research-shows-equity-gaps-in-washington/>

- (3) And we want to acknowledge our appreciation for the following positive feedback:

>“I wanted to share a note of appreciation and gratitude... I thank you for all your efforts in planning, organizing and sharing this database of research and knowledge. I am a school counselor in New Jersey; your resources are my go to when searching for resources to support my school community. Thank you for all you do!”

>“Thank you for all the work you do to help inform and guide our work in schools ! “

>Response to 12/23 email about *Mental Health in Schools: Much More than Part of the System of Care Delivery System* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/12-23.pdf>

“Thank you so much for the links. I direct the Comprehensive Adolescent Health Program In the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division of our Department of Health. I love to receive your emails with such important information. Those related to handling earthquakes anxieties and fears in children and youth helped us in developing interventions since January 2020's earthquakes and now during pandemic. Thanks again.”

### ***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)*



**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)**