

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

January, 2018 (Vol. 22 #4) – 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:*

**Staff Discussion Topic for Addressing Barriers to Learning this Month:**

*>Re-engaging disconnected students*

**Did you see these news items?**

**System updates on efforts to transform student/learning supports**

**Resource Updates** (Useful information for personnel development)

**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**

## Staff Discussion Topic for Addressing Barriers to Learning this Month:

### >Re-engaging Disconnected Students

By this point in the year, school staff and students know that "it isn't working" for student X, Y, and Z. Some students have essentially disengaged from classroom instruction. Some of these students are passively disengaged and seem bored or burned out; others are actively disconnected – often to the point of acting out at school or not attending. Some are already on their way to dropping out.

Teachers tell us that their professional development has taught them little about re-engaging students who have become disengaged from classroom instruction.

Because disengaged students reflect low and negative intrinsic motivation and often manifest disruptive and other inappropriate behaviors, staff feel discouraged when they are unable to re-engage these students. The failure threatens their feelings of competence and self-determination and too often disconnects staff from kids who need help.

It's time for mid-course corrections to turn this all around. A time to think how to do some things differently to get results.

As Winnie the Pooh says (while Christopher Robin is dragging him by his heel downstairs and his head is bumping on each stair), "I think there is a better way to do this if only I could stop bumping long enough to think of it."

Building a strong, positive relationship with a difficult student is, of course, one of the most difficult challenges in enhancing equity of opportunity at school and beyond. In general, re-engaging students is best achieved when teachers and support staff work as a team. Support staff often have the opportunity to get to know these particular students and can help others see ways to reconnect a student with teachers and school. The following are ideas for starting to turn things around.

#### Where to begin:

The initial assessment question about such students is WHY? *Why* are these students not engaged in classroom learning? *Why* are they misbehaving?

Individual pathology as the cause is relatively rare. Factors away from school are more common. Among the most common school-related reasons are:

- not experiencing sufficient success in learning (so the student gives up)
- not having a good relationship with the teacher (so the student reacts with misbehavior)
- not having connected with a supportive group of friends and feeling isolated/alienated.

Any of the above can set a negative cycle into motion.

Based on some sense of what is causing the behavior, the objective is to develop a *positive working relationship* with the student. This all begins with a series of personal conferences.

To this end, the school administration needs to ensure teachers and support staff have time to meet individually with each disengaged student and as appropriate with the student's parents. The discussions should cover (a) why there has been a problem (without getting into a "blame-game"), and (b) exploring some new ways that the student thinks could make things better at school and make learning personally meaningful and successful. The objective is to arrive at a set of mutual agreements. (Note: mutual means avoiding one-way "contracts".)

#### Strategies that can help:

- *Provide immediate opportunities for a change of image.* For students who have acquired a negative reputation, it is critical to develop some immediate opportunities for them to take on some attractive, positive roles (e.g., team captain, special monitor, photographer for the school newspaper, part of the design group for the school's website).
- *Generate some extra caring support.* Use volunteers, aides, and/or other students to provide additional support to these specific students (e.g., mentoring, tutoring,

cooperative learning and team play, group projects). Make certain the tone is one of caring not blame and censure and that the support provides real opportunities to discover the value of learning and is not another monitoring device. For many students, there is nothing as powerful at school as the social dynamics: *Who likes me and who do I like? Who is my friend?* Students who don't have the support of one or more special individuals feel isolated/alienated. While schools focus on cognitive development, they often don't effectively address social and emotional concerns. Every day there are natural opportunities for schools to enhance students' positive relationships (e.g., in class, during breaks, before and after school, during lunch, at student activities, in the community).

- *Do more to account for individual differences.* Focus on differences in both motivation as well as capability in designing learning opportunities and then implementing them in ways than enhance intrinsic motivation for ongoing learning at school. Accommodations may be needed with respect to the physical arrangement of the classroom, presentation of material, workload and nature of feedback, and more.
- *Connect the student with positive activities when not in school.* Help connect the student with intrinsically motivating activities and projects. New classroom activities designed to re-engage the student can build on something that has been learned recently or lay a foundation for future learning. Examples include involving students in (a) carrying out special roles related to holiday events, (b) taking pictures while on trips to special places and later bringing them to school to include in learning activities (e.g., writing stories), (c) choosing videotapes that teach as well as entertain, (d) service learning in the community, and so forth.
- *Establish ways to keep them feeling cared about and positively special.* Teachers and support staff need to keep taking special steps to enhance bonding with these students and help them re-engage successfully in positive activities and learning. Again, use volunteers, aids, and/or other students to provide extra support.

For more, see

> *Engaging and Re-engaging Students* –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>

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

access this new book and for other free resources by going to the Center's homepage at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Also see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on:

> *Motivation, Engagement, Re-engagement* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

### Topics in December's Weekly School Practitioner Community of Practice

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

> *Using natural opportunities to enhance social and emotional learning*

> *Parent-teacher conferences: Strengthening or weakening school-home connections?*

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*Many teachers are incredible innovators constantly looking to push the envelope of education, shake up the system, and inspire students. They are on the front lines — they see the biggest challenges that their students face in the day to day. So when they look at what their students' needs are, where the gap is in their education, they can start to identify how to address these needs and create a more powerful and equitable education system. -John Legend*

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## News from around the country related to addressing barriers

>**Elementary students report higher engagement in schoolwork than older peers.** Most students report feeling engaged in school and taking pride in their work, but engagement drops as students get older, and less than half of middle and high school students feel like what they are learning in school is relevant to their lives outside of school. The findings are from YouthTruth's review of over 230,000 student survey responses since 2012. The analysis also shows that middle and high school students attending small schools (200 students or less in middle and 300 or less in high school) report feeling somewhat more engaged than those in larger schools. Another concerning finding is that only 52% of middle and high school students report that they enjoy coming to school most of the time. 12/7/17 <https://www.educationdive.com/news/elementary-students-report-higher-engagement-more-pride-in-schoolwork-tha/512412/>

>**Fires worsen housing crisis for vulnerable students.** As the Thomas Fire blazes through California, schools are preparing for a longer-term emergency: the displacement of vulnerable students. Ventura County schools had an estimated 4,202 homeless students in the 2016–17 school year. Schools are often the first place where young people can be identified as struggling with housing instability and then offered support. Schools are also one of the major places where that instability shows a negative impact: The psychological pressures and resource deficits of homelessness can leave students "academically compromised" and "at risk of becoming academic casualties." Schools are obligated under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to identify homeless students and then ensure they have full access to the educational opportunities offered by their district, including transportation to the schools they attended before being displaced. VCOE officials are also preparing emotional support materials to give staff, students, and their families upon districts re-opening. 12/11/17 <https://psmag.com/education/how-the-thomas-fire-is-worsening-the-housing-crisis-for-vulnerable-students>

>**U.S. school children tumble international reading exam rankings, worrying educators.** The United States tumbled in international rankings of reading skills among fourth-graders, raising warning flags about students' ability to compete with international peers. The decline was especially precipitous for the lowest-performing students, a finding that suggests widening disparities in the U.S. education system. The United States has traditionally performed well on the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, an assessment given to fourth-graders in schools around the world every five years. In 2016, however, the average score compared to 2011 dropped from 556 to 549 out of 1,000. The country's ranking fell from fifth in the world in 2011 to 13th, with 12 education systems outscoring the United States by statistically significant margins. Fourth-graders and eighth-graders continued to lag behind their counterparts in Asian countries in math and science, according to another international exam administered in 2015. That same year, high school seniors showed unchanged results in reading and slipping scores in math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, an exam given every two years. Reading scores on that test for fourth-graders remained unchanged and dropped for eighth-graders. 12/5/17 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2017/12/05/u-s-schoolchildren-tumble-in-international-reading-exam-rankings-worrying-educators/?utm\\_term=.23a1375905ad](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2017/12/05/u-s-schoolchildren-tumble-in-international-reading-exam-rankings-worrying-educators/?utm_term=.23a1375905ad)

>**District suing hundreds of student families.** Over three months this year, Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation officials sued nearly 500 families and individuals over unpaid balances for textbook and netbook/laptop rentals, meals and daycare services. The money owed EVSC ranged from \$21 to more than \$1,400. The people ensnared in EVSC's net include some who say they can't afford to pay and some who swore they didn't know they owed anything. 12/16/17 <http://www.courierpress.com/story/news/2017/12/16/evsc-suing-hundreds-student-families/935142001/>

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*If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing.  
If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime,  
help somebody. -Chinese Proverb*

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## ***System updates on efforts to transform student & learning supports***

(1) Excerpt from: South Carolina Assoc. of School Administrators' *PALMETTO ADMINISTRATOR*

### **Leading by Way of Alignment: Building a Comprehensive and Unified System of Supports**

*By Shawn P. Hagerty, Cornelius Leach, Shirley Anthonese Gamble, and Robin Mixon*

Many districts around the state and nation have begun or established a MTTSS framework of practice. We realized very early in our planning stage the common practice of MTSS did not provide enough for us to confidently fill the remnant voids of consolidation and traditional practices. Therefore, we established a MTSS framework of practice and proud to state, SSD is the only district in the nation who has merged MTSS and Integrated Learning Supports (ILS). We clearly saw the need and took the lead to build a comprehensive and unified system of supports designed to create positive and equal opportunities for students to succeed in school and beyond.

Unknowingly, our progressive practices began to ripple across the nation as we received calls and emails from various individuals deep into the ILS work. These individuals were curious as to how SSD was merging both MTSS and ILS successfully and systemically. Two renowned individuals who took an interest in our system of supports were Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) ... the founders of Learning Supports. ILS can be defined as the, "resources, strategies, and practices that support intellectual, physical, social and emotional development to ensure student success.....deployed in classrooms and school-wide to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students...."

In addition, we contacted Scholastic's Community Affairs division. This division of Scholastic was working closely with Adelman and Taylor not to promote sales, but rather promote the research and ILS practices around the nation.... Quickly, we were involved in several conference calls with the "original" practitioners of ILS such as Dr. Merrienne Dyer, former Superintendent of Gainesville City Schools and Dr. Rhonda Neal Waltman, Senior Director of Consultancy Services and former Assistant Superintendent of Student Supports in Mobile, Alabama. Both Drs. Dyer and Neal Waltman were integral parts of Drs. Adelman and Taylor's work through the groundbreaking Gainesville Case Study.... [and the] Lead District Collaborative ... Scholastic, American Association of School Administrators (ASSA), and UCLA....

(2) San Juan USD (CA) is developing Learning Supports Teams\* as it evolves its system for schools to more effectively address barriers to student learning. As of 2017-18, 23 schools have participated in special training and coaching. (<https://www.sanjuan.edu/Page/44367>)

\*The district describes a Learning Supports Team as follows: "Most schools have teams that focus on individual student issues (e.g., a Student Study Team - SST, a Student Intervention Team). These teams tend to focus on such activities as case management, triage and referral. In contrast to this case-by-case focus, a Learning Supports Team (LST) can take responsibility for enhancing the use of all resources available to the school for addressing barriers to student learning. Barriers to learning interfere with students' ability to participate effectively and benefit from classroom instruction. The work of an LST includes analyzing school site data, mapping how existing resources are deployed and clarifying how they can be used to build a comprehensive and cohesive approach to eliminating barriers to student learning. A Learning Supports Team is comprised of invested individuals who work collaboratively to address barriers to student learning (e.g., principal or Vice Principal, School Psychologist, Counselor, School Nurse, School Social Worker, Behaviorist, Special education teacher, Parents, Students and Community Members."

### ***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 to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions

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### **Resource Updates** (Useful information for personnel development)

- > *Assessment: The foundation for a differentiated classroom*  
<http://exclusive.multibriefs.com/content/assessment-the-foundation-for-a-differentiated-classroom/education>
- > *Cybersafety considerations for K-12 schools and school districts*  
[https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Cyber\\_Safety\\_K-12\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_508C.PDF?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Cyber_Safety_K-12_Fact_Sheet_508C.PDF?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)
- > *Discipline disparities and discrimination in schools* <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/11/20/discipline-disparities-and-discrimination-in-schools/>
- > *Disrupting school justice pathways for students with behavioral health needs*  
[https://www.ncmhjj.com/resources/disrupting-school-justice-pathways-youth-behavioral-health-needs/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://www.ncmhjj.com/resources/disrupting-school-justice-pathways-youth-behavioral-health-needs/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)
- > *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)-related case Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District clarifying the scope of a free appropriate public education*  
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-endrewcase-12-07-2017.pdf>
- > *Paraeducators: Statewide variation and association with academic outcomes*  
[http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1677/Wsipp\\_Paraeducators-Statewide-Variation-and-Association-with-Academic-Outcomes\\_Report.pdf](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1677/Wsipp_Paraeducators-Statewide-Variation-and-Association-with-Academic-Outcomes_Report.pdf)
- > *Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools practice guide*  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>
- > *Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review* [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2133.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2133.html)
- > *Student Victimization in U.S. Schools: Results From the 2015 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey* <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018106>
- > *Selected Statistics from the Public Elementary and Secondary School Education Universe: School Year 2015-16* <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018052>

### **A few recent journal and book publications**

- > *Highs and lows: Naturalistic changes in mood and everyday hassles over school and vacation periods in adolescents.* S. Verma, N. Allen, J. Trinder, & B. Bei. (2017). *Journal of Adolescence*, 61, 17-21 <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140197117301331>
- > *School Connectedness and Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors: A Systematic Meta-Analysis.* (2017). M. Marraccini & Z. Brier. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 32, No. 1, 5–21.  
<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/spq-spq0000192.pdf>
- > *Self-determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness.* R. Ryan & . Deci. (2017). Guilford.  
<https://www.guilford.com/books/Self-Determination-Theory/Ryan-Deci/9781462528769>
- > *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System.* H. Adelman & L. Taylor (just published by Cognella).  
<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

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I think in terms of the day's resolutions, not the year's. - Henry Moore

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## Comments and sharing from the field

(1) Here is an excerpt from an open letter to the Center from the California SUMS Initiative in response to the concerns we raised about widespread applications of the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS): [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/2017/practitioner\(11-22-17\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/2017/practitioner(11-22-17).pdf)

The California Scale-up of MTSS Statewide (CA MTSS, see [www.ocde.us/SUMS](http://www.ocde.us/SUMS)) team would like to add our voice to the Center for Mental Health in Schools & Student/Learning Supports (Center) School Practitioner Community of Practice exchange about how schools use multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to address barriers to learning and teaching and to re-engage disconnected students. We believe our collective work with schools, districts, and state departments of education to transform education systems using a strengths-based approach, qualifies us to comment about this topic. The Center published very insightful comments from individuals in the field. The wisdom displayed by these educators confirms our belief that every school and district has strengths on which to build excellent teaching and learning systems that support all students, even those with the most complex needs.

The Center expressed concern that MTSS has severe limitations as a framework for student learning and support, and needs to evolve into a much more innovative and transformative framework for increasing student learning effectiveness. Further, the Center expressed concern that MTSS is in danger of becoming just another school improvement buzzword, or in our terms, lending itself to mapping new language onto old practices and failing to address prevention and illuminating a pathway to addressing barriers to student learning.

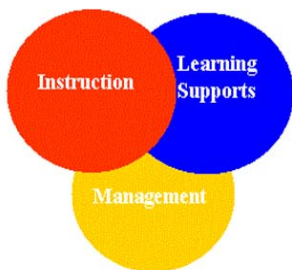
We at CA MTSS agree with all of these concerns and, in fact, aligned our task of scaling up MTSS statewide with the broader organizing framework represented by the SWIFT Education Center's [work]. ...

The complete letter and our exchange will be featured in an upcoming *Center Practitioner* (our weekly community of practice).

(2) We were asked to share the following:

I would like to distribute information about our upcoming Atlanta conference in February.  
> *Learning Disabilities Association of America 2018 Conference*. Atlanta, GA. Feb. 21-24, 2018  
<https://ldaamerica.org/>

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\*Information is online about the

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

***Every Student Succeeds Act and  
Learning Supports: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching  
to Enhance Equity of Opportunity –***

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

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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)