

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

January, 2020 (Vol. 24 #4) – 33 Years & Counting

What's Here

For Discussion

>Re-engaging disconnected students

Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

About transforming student/learning supports

Comments, requests, information, questions from the field
and more

**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>



For discussion:

>Re-engaging disconnected students

By this point in the school year, it's clear which students aren't doing well and are disengaged. Disengaged students often appear bored or burned out; some act out and avoid coming to school. All are potential dropouts.

Common staff laments about such students:

- *He just won't do the work!*
- *These kids could do it if they only wanted to!!!*
- *I just don't know how to reengage a disconnected student.*

Now is a critical time to learn ways to reengage those who are disconnected. (See *Engaging and Re-engaging Students* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>)

The following are some matters to discuss:

(1) How do you understand a student's disengagement from classroom instruction?

Certainly, factors away from school may be involved, but focus discussion first on some common school-related reasons that can lead to students' having a motivation problem, such as

- not experiencing sufficient success in learning, so they give up
- not having a good relationship with the teacher, so they react/resist
- not having connected with a supportive group of friends, so they feel isolated/alienated

(2) How to intervene?

We suggest that the key to reengaging students is to focus on enhancing their *intrinsic motivation*. Research on intrinsic motivation clarifies the value of school interventions designed to increase the following:

- Feelings of self-determination
- Feelings of competence and expectations of attaining valued outcomes
- Feelings of interpersonal relatedness
- The range of interests and satisfactions related to learning.

In particular, the research stresses the importance of

- Minimizing threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness
- Maximizing such feelings (e.g., providing caring support; increasing the range of options and choices and emphasizing real life interests and needs; enhancing student involvement in meaningful decision making; providing opportunities to escape a negative image/reputation)

In this context, the following four personalized intervention strategies are recommended in working with disengaged students: (1) clarifying student perceptions of the problem, (2) reframing school learning, (3) renegotiating involvement, and (4) reestablishing and maintaining an appropriate working relationship. Here's a start for discussing each of these:

(1) *Clarifying student perceptions of the problem.* It is desirable to create a situation where it is feasible to talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged. Such open interchange provides an invaluable basis for interpreting responses to intervention (RtI) and formulating a personalized plan to alter current negative perceptions and prevent others from developing. The dialogue with a student should cover (a) why there has been a problem (without getting into a "blame-game") and (b) exploring new ways that the student thinks could make things better at school. (In some cases, the student's parents need to be included in the exchange.)

(2) *Reframing school learning.* Disengaged students need to (a) view the teacher as supportive (as contrasted with controlling and indifferent) and (b) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. To these ends, it helps to eliminate threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences and underscore how current activity builds on previous learning; and clarify why it is reasonable to expect the procedures to be effective (especially those designed to help correct specific problems).

(3) *Renegotiating involvement in school learning.* New and mutual agreements (not one-way "contracts") are needed. This can be done through ongoing conferences with the student (including parents when appropriate) that allow for reevaluating and modifying decisions as necessary. The intent is to develop positive perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome by clarifying awareness of valued options (including enrichment opportunities), enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. For the negotiation to be most effective, students usually need to sample new processes, content, and options.

(4) *Reestablishing and maintaining appropriate and valued relationships.* This involves ongoing interactions that create a sense of trust, open communication, and provide personalized support and direction. Special attention is given to minimizing social control and other practices that lead to psychological reactance and resistance.

Social control strategies can temporarily suppress negative attitudes and behaviors, but such practices do not guarantee reengagement in classroom learning. And, without reengagement in classroom learning, suppressed behaviors can be expected to reappear.

All this argues for moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation and ensuring that RtI and Positive Behavior Support initiatives include practices designed to reengage disconnected students in classroom instruction.

Two other matters to discuss about reengagement:

- >*Ensuring that students feel cared about by staff.* Building a strong, positive relationship with difficult students is a challenge. Obviously, it is not an easy task to decrease well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors. Establishing relationships of mutual respect usually takes the efforts of student/learning support staff and teachers working as a team. Support staff often have the opportunity to get to know these students in greater depth and can take the lead in helping others see what is "special" in a student who hasn't yet made good connections with teachers. Teaming and use of volunteers, aides, and/or peers to provide additional support to these specific students also helps minimize the need for discipline, censure, and other controlling techniques by enabling use of personalized support, guidance, and accommodations as needed.
- >*Enhancing positive peer connections.* Disconnected students often don't have a supportive group of friends and feel isolated/alienated. Some may just need a bit of help in connecting with other students in a positive way. Other may need a quick dose of social-emotional learning. For students who have acquired a negative reputation, it will help to provide opportunities for them to take on some attractive, positive roles at school.

For more resources related to reengaging students, see the Center's Quick Find on:

>*Motivation, Engagement, and Reengagement* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

Did you miss the following discussions?

These were explored in December as Part of the Weekly School Practitioner Community of Practice.
See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

- *About suicide prevention campaigns*
- *Should legislation for mental health in schools emphasize using school staff or community mental health providers?*
- *Addressing the stress of winter break and holidays*

@#@#@#

I loved high school, but I wouldn't want to do it again. Tom Lehrer

@#@#@#

Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

A few relevant resources, reports, and journal publications

Hearing youth voices and the "schools that work for us" framework

https://cycle-rwu.org/blog/2019/12/16/partner-spotlight-hearing-youth-voices?utm_term=0_c85496b90b-f38c015c24-294951789&mc_cid=f38c015c24&mc_eid=44cf5cad29

The importance of providing Native American education for all students

<https://ednote.ecs.org/the-importance-of-providing-native-american-education-for-all-students/>

How education has changed since 2010

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/12/11/teaching-in-2020-vs-2010-a-look.html>

Relationship mapping strategy

<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy>

Protecting America's schools: A U.S. Secret Service analysis of targeted school violence.

<https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/usss-analysis-of-targeted-school-violence.pdf>

Roots of empathy <https://rootsofempathy.org/>

Promoting Positive Adolescent Health Behaviors and Outcomes: Thriving in the 21st Century

<https://nap.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=eaea39b6442dc4e0d08e6aa4a&id=719f0a004e&e=ac5cd8a62>

Fostering Healthy Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Development in Children and Youth: A National Agenda.

https://www.nap.edu/login.php?record_id=25201&page=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nap.edu%2Fdownload%2F25201

Teacher stress interventions: A systematic review (2019). N. von der Embse, S. Ryan, T. Gibbs, A. Mankin. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56, 1328-1343.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/15206807/2019/56/8>

Developmental stages of social emotional development in children

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK534819/>

Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education <http://ccare.stanford.edu/>

>For more resources, see our website

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

>For info on upcoming conferences, initiatives, workshops

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

>For info on webinars

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

@#@#@#

Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world. Harriet Tubman

@#@#@##

About Transforming Student and Learning Supports*

See the Center's Winter Quarterly eJournal (out next week) for a look at the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports in 2020*.

Here we thought it would be good to note a few examples of how the Center's work related to the national initiative is referenced by others.

(1) A dean of a school of education notes using the Center's work on establishing comprehensive approaches to addressing barriers to learning and development "with education policy leaders in North Carolina and Tennessee and could not recommend any one else more highly to help inform efforts to learn more about school supports."

(2) An educator in Israel states "I just found your work on school improvement online. I would like to reference it in a position paper and work we are doing here in Israel related to recent government reforms in providing special education."

(3) An ACLU chapter recently used the Center's document *Rethinking discipline to improve school climate* (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/disciplineclimate.pdf>) in preparing participants for a session on "Understanding the Discipline Cycle: Analyzing Discipline Data & Disrupting the Disciplinary Cycle" <https://www.aclu-de.org/en/analyzing-discipline-data-disrupting-disciplinary-cycle>

(4) Frequent recommendations are made for establishing a *Learning Supports Leadership Team* (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>). For instance, see the What Works Brief #7 on Harassment and Bullying from WestEd. <https://www.issuelab.org/resource/what-works-brief-7-harassment-and-bullying.html>

Let Us Know:

- (1) About any state legislators you think we should contact**
- (2) About efforts you know about focused on transforming student/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/learning supports, we can help. Send all info to ltaylor@ucla.edu

@#@#@#

A day is not going by when we don't hear of a horrific case of something that a student is dealing with that I just never heard about when I was going to school, If we want students to be able to read, write, be fluent with numeracy, get jobs, we've got to get some of these huge issues that are in their lives out of the way or they're not going to do any of it. Superintendent Will Schofield (Hall County, GA)

@#@#@##

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

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

News from around the country related to addressing barriers

Santa Fe (NM) schools to move specialized staff into classrooms to cover teacher shortages. Superintendent Veronica García plans, at least temporarily, to convert reading instructors, digital learning coaches and other specialized support staff into classroom teachers throughout Santa Fe Public Schools. During her annual State of the Schools address, García announced Project Put Students First as her response to a teacher shortage that plagues the local district and many others across the state. She said she has identified 15 classrooms in which she plans to replace long-term substitute teachers with current staff members who are licensed educators working in different roles. https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/education/santa-fe-schools-to-move-specialized-staff-into-classrooms-to/article_18776730-833e-533c-ba88-a546b8c163c7.html

Washington high schools do away with federal testing. Starting this school year, Washington students won't need to pass a federal test to earn a high school diploma. Instead, there are now seven pathways, and districts will have some flexibility in how they're crafted. Now it's up to districts to lay out those pathways. There are seven, and each student must pass one of them. 1. Passing Smarter Balanced Assessments. (measure understanding of English and math.) 2. Earning college credit through dual-credit programs with a local university or college. These programs partner the high school with a college. 3. Passing Advanced Placement exams. 4. Passing college admissions exams. Students who meet certain requirements on the SAT and ACT can use their test scores to pass the state requirement. 5. Passing the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery 6. Earning credits through career and technical education (CTE) courses. 7. Taking Bridge to College courses. <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2019/nov/29/washington-high-schools-do-away-with-federal-testi/>

Special needs students, ELS more positive about school mental health. Students with special needs are more likely than general education students to report having thoughts of suicide, 22% compared to 14%. But they are also more likely to report there is an adult in school they can talk to when they're having problems or feeling upset, 53% compared to 45% of general education students, according to a new YouthTruth analysis of students' responses over a six-year period. Students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals and English learners are also more likely than

peers not in those groups to report their schools have programs or services to help them. One model of prevention is the Hope Squad, currently in place in almost 100 schools in the Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio areas. The squads are made up of students trained to recognize warning signs among their peers and seek help from adults.

<https://www.educationdive.com/news/survey-special-needs-students-els-more-positive-about-school-mental-health/568153/>

Minnesota schools grapple with school safety concerns, parental angst. In the wake of recent school shootings — in Wisconsin and California — Minnesota parents are anxious to know what their children's schools are doing to make sure students are prepared in the event of an active shooter. But school leaders say they're reluctant to disclose details of the emergency drills they conduct, sharing with parents only information about basic safety procedures they follow to respond to any threat. Making public their active-shooter emergency plan, school officials say, may compromise students' safety and tip off intruders. Minnesota law requires school districts to conduct five active-shooter drills a year. Parents are not notified and students are not always told when the drills will happen in order to better prepare them for unexpected situations.

<http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-schools-grapple-with-school-safety-concerns-parental-angst/565979171/>

@#@#@#

I am infuriated that the response to the school shootings is to traumatize our kids.

Cate Long, parent quoted in the above story on school emergency drills

@#@#@#

Comments and sharing from the field

>We were asked to share the following: "The annual Southern Region Student Wellness Conference (SRSWC) is approaching and planning for this event is well underway. The SRSWC will be held July 27 - 31, 2020 in Palm Desert, CA. Please visit our website for detailed information about this conference. www.srswc.org The theme for this year's event is: *20/20 Perspective; Engage, Empower, Elevate*. Breakout topics will inspire our attendees to strengthen school and community engagement, enhance their knowledge about personal and youth empowerment and provide the tools that can elevate their current efforts in student wellness to the next level."

>From a state department of education colleague:

"We thought you would be interested to know that as schools work to improve school climate an encouraging dynamic is taking place. The focus on school climate is leading schools to take a closer look at the determinants of misbehavior. We are encouraging this and suggesting that schools use an epidemiological approach of noting that behavior is not random and that there is always a determinant, which then allows schools to look for patterns and clues, and to view misbehavior as a possible skill deficit.

In our work with students, teachers, administrators, schools, juvenile justice, juvenile courts, and others, we recognized that language deficits are manifest in misbehavior. Our extensive review of research confirmed that observation. In fact, language deficits may be one of the leading causes of misbehavior, and it is rarely ever considered. ...

Here is the link to a summary of our work on the impact of language on behavior....

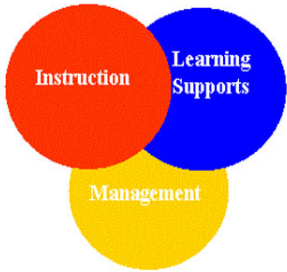
<https://www.gadoe.org/schoolsafetyclimate/Documents/Language%20Missing%20Link.pdf>

We developed a Health Barriers to Learning Committee that is focusing on multiple determinants that may be manifest in behavior....

I thought you might also be interested in the webpage we created for student safety and well-being. <https://www.gadoe.org/schoolsafetyclimate/Pages/Protective-Factors.aspx>

This is part of our newly formed Office of School Safety and Climate at the Georgia Department of Education that focuses on school safety, school climate, and student safety and well-being. <https://www.gadoe.org/schoolsafetyclimate/Pages/School-Safety.aspx>

This includes information for schools, of course, but it is also part of a larger effort to train educators on protective factors for children, which has led to Georgia training over 21,000 educators over the last twelve months on mental health and behavioral health awareness.



*Information is online about the

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

Also online are two free books

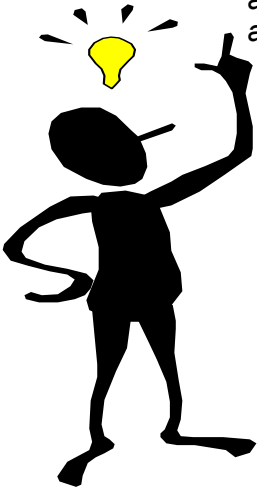
Improving School Improvement

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

Here's a crazy idea: What if we provide schools with full budgets and have prisons make up for budget shortfalls with bake sales and family contributions.



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