

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

(January, 2021 (Vol. 25 #4) – 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



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

>Reengaging Disconnected Students: A Major Task Ahead

What's planned for (a) those students who have become less engaged and are starting to give up and (b) reconnecting with the many students who have "disappeared" from the rolls at school?

From: *Tired of online learning? 7 ways your child can combat back-to-school burnout!*
<https://www.idtech.com/blog/tired-of-online-learning-combat-back-to-school-burnout>

It's a look teachers and parents know well: blank facial expressions, slumped shoulders, eyes that say "I'm so over this." Many kids are tired of online school, the idea of Zoom fatigue seems to be real, and the demands of distance learning have students feeling totally burned out. Meanwhile, many parents are burning the candle at both ends as they juggle work with the new normal of learning at home. Throw in the prolonged challenges and uncertainty of COVID-19, and it can seem like the stress just won't let up. ...

From: *Survey: Teachers and Students Are Struggling With Online Learning*
http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2020/11/survey_teachers_and_students_are_struggling_with_online_learning.html

Teachers in all-remote environments reported higher student absenteeism and less student work completion than teachers in face-to-face classrooms. These online teachers also said that they needed more support and guidance in planning instruction than their colleagues who were teaching in-person. Online teachers were more likely to say that they needed guidance on how best to support students with severe disabilities, English-language learners, and students experiencing homelessness or poverty. They also said they needed more general instructional support—in adapting curriculum, in motivating students, in accelerating them academically, and in assessing their learning—than teachers who are in the physical classroom every day....

Student engagement and reengagement always are concerns for schools, and it is especially critical in efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching. As schooling, in whatever form, resumes with the new year, it will be painfully clear that, for too many students, schooling "isn't working." School

staff and families often feel ineffective, frustrated, and even angry about this. And they know they need to do something different. Winnie the Pooh comes to mind as we reflect on this:

As 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.

This is the time to stop bumping and plan better ways to engage and reengage students.

For students who are still enrolled –

As an immediate place to start, teachers, student support staff, and those working with youngsters at home can

Ask students WHY they are disengaged?

For example: students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems often stem from instructional experiences that make them feel less competent, disempowered, and/or isolated/alienated. Any of these factors (and others) can set in motion a negative cycle of problems related to disengagement.

Take steps to RECONNECT!

1. *Initiate a personalized dialogue.* Schools need to facilitate time for teachers to conference individually with each student who is not doing well. In many cases, the student's family needs to be included. Student support staff can play a role in arranging such conferences and then covering the teacher's class to enable such conferences. Discussions (a) ask about the reasons why things aren't going well (without getting into a "blame-game"), (b) explore some new ways that the student thinks could make things better (for all concerned), and (c) arrive at some mutual agreements (not one-way "contracts") for renewing positive working relationships and reengaging the student in instruction.
2. *Add some extra caring support and ways for the student to feel positively special.* Support staff, family members, volunteers, aides, and/or other students can provide additional social and academic support. In doing so, the emphasis is on providing caring and supportive ways that enable the student to discover the value of what is being taught and enhance feelings of competence, autonomy, and a working relationship with others. For students who have acquired a negative reputation, it is vital to develop immediate opportunities for them to take on attractive, positive roles and to bond with at least one adult.
3. *Personalize instruction.* Account for differences in *motivation* as well as *capability*. Design learning opportunities and implement them in ways that enhance intrinsic motivation for ongoing learning. Accommodations may be needed with respect to presentation of material, workload, nature of feedback, and more
4. *Build on any positive nonschool activities.* Capitalize on any special and positive out-of-school pursuits in which the student likes to engage. Connect such intrinsically motivating activities to project-based learning opportunities.

*****About students who have disconnected from school –**

Next week we will send out a policy and practice notes document on:

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

Watch for it.

And we want to share what you have found effective in (re)engaging students in learning (in person, online). Send your comments to Ltaylor@ucla.edu
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For resources on engagement from our Center and from others, see our Quick Find on *Motivation, Engagement and Re-engagement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

Here are a few aids that the Center has developed that you will find listed there:

- > *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* (4 modules)
 - Unit I: Motivation: Time to Move Beyond Behavior Modification
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/engagei.pdf>
 - Unit II: Strategic Approaches to Enhancing Student Engagement/Re-engagement
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/engageii.pdf>
 - Unit III: Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/engageiii.pdf>
 - Unit IV: Embedding Engagement and Re-engagement into a Unified and Comprehensive System of Student and Learning Supports
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/engageiv.pdf>
- > *Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning*
<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>
- > *Engaging and Re-engaging Families When a Student is Not Doing Well*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/familyengage.pdf>

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Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, it's unlikely you will step up and take responsibility for making it so. If you assume that there's no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. Noam Chomsky

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

- COVID Collaborative – Education Reports* <https://www.covidcollaborative.us/issues/education>
- Top health concerns for kids during 2020 pandemic*
<https://mottpoll.org/reports/top-health-concerns-kids-2020-during-pandemic>
- Where schools are reopening in the US*
<https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/health/coronavirus-schools-reopening/>
- The Pendulum Was Swinging Toward Reopening Schools. Then Came the Surge*
<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/11/13/the-pendulum-was-swinging-toward-reopening-schools-then-came-the-surge>
- As COVID-19 soars in many communities, schools attempt to find ways through the crisis*
<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/11/covid-19-soars-many-communities-schools-attempt-find-ways-through-crisis>
- Improving distance education in the early grades*
<https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/improving-distance-education-early-grades>
- Learned Helplessness, Criminalization, and Victimization in Vulnerable Youth*
<https://squareonejustice.org/paper/learned-helplessness-criminalization-and-victimization-in-vulnerable-youth-by-elizabeth-trejos-castillo-evangelina-lopoo-and-anamika-dwivedi-december-2020/>
- Roadmap for Resilience:* <https://osg.ca.gov/sg-report/>
- Foster Care: How We Can, and Should, Do More for Maltreated Children*
<https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sop2.10>
- Flourishing in Adolescence: A Virtual Workshop: Proceedings of a Workshop*
<https://www.nap.edu/read/25940/chapter/1>

Ten Ways to Make Online Learning Work

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f85f5a156091e113f96e4d3/t/5fcac39799bb037aca03c56f/1607123864545/OnlineLearningPaper_FINAL_11.20.pdf

Health Care in 2020: Year in Review

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2020/health-care-2020-year-review>

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Our greatest strength is our ability to find solutions and help each other. Daniel Bassill

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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during (December)

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

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

- >Minimizing stress reactions and preventing student & staff “burnout”
- >How will schools change after the pandemic?
- >Holidays during the pandemic

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

And if you missed the Winter Quarterly ejournal, you can download

- >What Are Schools Planning to Do About the Increased Number of Emotional, Behavioral, and Learning Problems?
- >Let's focus on providing support before screening and labeling

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

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

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

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

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

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This year may have been hard, but we won't let it harden our hearts. As the seasons change, now is the time to reflect on the past but also to set intentions and gather energy for the year ahead.

Dolores Subia BigFoot

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

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

>Engaging families to strengthen student learning during the pandemic

From: *Improving Distance Education in the Early Grades*

<https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/improving-distance-education-early-grades>

Communicate with Families to Understand Their Context and Provide the Supports They Need to Engage Students in Learning. Schools can communicate with families to learn what they need to participate in distance learning. Many families experienced a piecemeal response to school closures with inconsistent communication and unclear expectations regarding instruction, grading, and attendance. Research suggests that schools can use regular communication to build relational trust with families and boost student engagement. Research also indicates that parents and students benefit from consistent structures and processes—such as regular communication—for engagement, especially after experiencing the disruptions associated with school closures and related impacts of COVID-19. Such structures include morning meetings to check in on student and family well-being, regular one-on-one conversations, and weekly email updates. Parents need regular updates on student outcomes to support distance learning. Individualized communication with students and families can be used to share student progress, highlight learning gaps, and set expectations for engagement....

Develop Curriculum and Resources for Teachers and Parents to Guide Learning. State, county, and district education agencies can create resources to support distance learning ... Districts can also provide resources and training that parents can use to help students learn foundational concepts through daily activities offline including reading to students—or listening to students read—in any language, learning math through household activities, and learning science concepts and skills through cooking. Districts can ask parents what they need help with—related to student learning—and provide educational opportunities around key issues such as navigating learning-management systems....

Teachers can provide flexible learning opportunities for students that allow parents to cocreate or modify learning tasks so that they are interesting to students and are relevant to their current context and family...

Instruction that allows for flexible assignments and student choice can lessen the burden parents feel in distance learning and drive student engagement respectively....”

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

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

Let Us Know:

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

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

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**What's so great about 2020 hindsight?
... looking forward to 2021!**

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

Top health concerns for kids in 2020 during the pandemic. Overall, 8 of the Top 10 concerns most commonly rated by all parents as a “big problem” are frequently associated with changes in lifestyle and may be related to efforts to control the COVID-19 pandemic. These include overuse of social media/screen time, internet safety, unhealthy eating, depression/suicide, and lack of physical activity. COVID-19, the disease itself, is thought to be a “big problem” by almost half of all parents (48%) coming in at #10. An important finding in this Mott Poll was that a much higher proportion of Black parents rated racism as a big problem for children and teens, compared with Hispanic and White parents, making it their top-rated health issue.

<https://mottpoll.org/reports/top-health-concerns-kids-2020-during-pandemic>

College Students Recruited as Teachers to Keep Schools Open. As the coronavirus sidelines huge numbers of educators, school districts around the country are aggressively recruiting substitute teachers, offering bonuses and waiving certification requirements in order to keep classrooms open. In Connecticut, Gov. Ned Lamont appealed late last month to college students who were coming home for their winter break to help in hospitals, virus testing sites – and in schools. In cases where teachers are leading instruction remotely because they have to be in quarantine, for example, Lamont said college students could be paid to come into the classrooms and help provide supervision.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2020-12-18/college-students-recruited-as-teachers-to-keep-schools-open>

District will not give Fs this semester and instead give students a second chance to pass. Citing pandemic hardships, Los Angeles school officials deferred any failing grades from this semester until at least Jan. 29, giving students additional time to avoid receiving an F in their classes. The move is the latest effort by the nation’s second-largest school district to avoid penalizing students under increasing strain during the surging coronavirus emergency that continues to upend their education and worsen family hardships. Compared with last year, grades have dramatically deteriorated, especially for Latino and Black students, English learners, students with disabilities, foster youth and those experiencing homelessness. The new L.A. Unified policy grew out of district concerns about the rise in D and F grades, a pattern mirrored across the country in school systems that have closed campuses and relied on distance-only learning. Among the problems faced by students is inconsistent or inadequate internet access and a poor learning environment at home. <https://www.latimes.com/>

New Report Offers Clearest Picture Yet Of Pandemic Impact On Student Learning. A sweeping new review of national test data suggests the pandemic-driven jump to online learning has had little impact on children’s reading growth and has only somewhat slowed gains in math. That positive news comes from the testing nonprofit NWEA and covers nearly 4.4 million U.S. students in grades three through eight. But the report also includes a worrying caveat: Many of the nation’s most vulnerable students are missing from the data. Roughly a quarter of students were missing — meaning they didn’t take the MAP test this fall. The researchers cite a host of possible reasons these students weren’t able to take the latest test, including a lack of technology or Internet access at home as well as the possibility that some children have disengaged from school more broadly.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/12/01/938048852/some-good-news-student-reading-gains-are-steady-while-math-slows-down>

Fewer student enroll in college. The number of students enrolling in college immediately after high school plunged nearly 22% this fall over last year, hitting high poverty, urban schools hardest. The survey by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Ctr found the drop off varied by institution with community colleges showing the largest enrollment decline among low income students.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-12-10/fewer-high-school-graduates-enrolled-in-college-this-fall-a-mid-covid-19-pandemic-national-data-show>

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from national test data story

Addressing the unfinished learning is going to be a matter of time. We really need to be thinking about the supports and interventions for kids over at least a two- or three-year runway.

Aaliyah Samuel

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Comments and sharing from the field

As the year ends, we want to express our appreciation to all who have continued to address barriers to learning and teaching in these harrowing times. And as you can see from the comments below, we hear that our efforts have been of some help.

- (1) “Just a deep note of gratitude for your continued efforts to support so many across the country with your illuminating repository –I remember you so fondly from our work years ago and marvel at your altruism and caring. Clearly, the pandemic has offered so many windows into the social injustices, structural and inter-personal racism, and the importance of continuing our efforts to fight for those who have no voices. My hat is off to you and I just wanted to express my deep gratitude for all that you continue to do on behalf of learners and their families and communities.”
- (2) “I came across the SMHP website when looking for mental health resources on adolescent mental health. I saw that feedback was encouraged and I just wanted to say that I think what you’re doing is awesome.”
- (3) Response related to December enews topic of burnout
“I was looking at the various resources you present on Staff and Student Burnout. It’s more complex than I have thought. I am organizing a Winter Conference called Invincible Summer. It is based on the quote by Albert Camus, “In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.” Some of the sessions will focus on promoting hope and/or happiness in staff and students. We are trying, in the midst of a pandemic winter, to bring some light. The topic of minimizing stress reactions and preventing burnout seems quite appropriate. I appreciate your continued resources.”
- (4) Feedback on policy report entitled: *Restructuring California Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID-19 Context and Beyond*
https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/restructuring-california-schools-address-barriers-learning-and-teaching-covid-19?utm_source=PACE+All&utm_campaign=61b8aabde4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_11_17_07_36_COPY_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9f1af6b121-61b8aabde4-522725185
 - (a) “In the midst of the strangest year in memory, you were able to produce this valuable document. Congratulations....really. ... I’ve been thinking a lot too about fragmentation, in policy, in curriculum, even in the terms of art we use to talk about education, so I welcome this brief on many levels. Simply put, you are on the money. Low-income kids (and poor adults in community colleges and other educational programs) face this maze of disconnected services, interventions, etc. which is problematic because the services often aren’t integrated in ways that would increase effectiveness and b. The people using them have huge burdens already with time, transportation, lack of savvy about the system, etc....
Obviously a huge effort will be required to organize the array of services, treatments, and interventions into the continuum and subsystems you suggest. ...”
 - (b) “I was so excited to see your recent policy brief on restructuring schools to address barriers to learning. Without understanding these factors, children who struggle with the many issues that impact their education will continue to fall behind. And the interruption in schooling caused by the pandemic will exacerbate the loss even more. We, at the Children’s Health Fund (www.childrenshealthfund.org) have been working to address “health barriers to learning” in NYC by assessing the need and bringing in health and mental health services into underperforming elementary schools. We have found some promising preliminary outcomes...
We have a literature review of the education related impact of health barriers to learning that you might find interesting, as well as an on-line resource center that provides information to families, educators and school health staff about

health barriers to learning, absenteeism and trauma-informed practices - www.healthyandreadytolearn.org

I would love to keep in touch about your work and advocacy around these critical issues for children. Thank you for all you do.”

(5) Feedback on 12/17 email About trauma-informed, ACES, SEL, disengaged students, etc. etc.:
Increased Concern, Misdirected Action

“I found your recent email regarding pulling away school resources for the latest media sensation verbalizing what I have often thought. One thought I would like to add is that schools can't do it all! It takes the entire community including state and national resources and buy in to work on the issues you named. Thank you for sharing your articles. I have learned a lot and also have gotten some great ideas. Thanks for all you do!”

Finally we note that Secretary of Education designate Miguel Cardona states that for him, “education was the great equalizer. But for too many students, your ZIP code and your skin color remain the best predictor of the opportunities you'll have in your lifetime.” And he stresses that America needs to “forge opportunity out of crisis” and “build something better than we've ever had before.”

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

Here's some free books from the Center that stress ways to build something better:

>Improving School Improvement

>Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

Access all three at -- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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