

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

**March, 2018 (Vol. 22 #6) – 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>**

### ***What's Here***

**Resources related to student walkouts about school shootings**

**Resource links relevant to school improvement and personnel development**

**This month's special topic – Helping students who experience a *Spring Slump***

**Transforming student/learning supports – Survey of states & districts**

**and more**

*We did everything that we were supposed to do. Broward County Schools has prepared us for this situation and still to have so many casualties, at least for me, it's very emotional. Because I feel today like our government, our country has failed us and failed our kids and didn't keep us safe.*

Melissa Falkowski, teacher at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

### **Resources Related to Student Walkouts about School Shootings**

We received the following request this week:

*We are looking for advice about the best way to handle the school walk out days. Can we get ahead of this? We live in a very conservative area, very pro gun. We are concerned about the potential for conflict.*

This, of course, is not a concern limited to any one locale. (e.g., see <http://wsav.com/2018/02/20/savannah-students-plan-to-participate-in-nationwide-school-walkout-to-honor-the-17-victims-of-parkland-massacre/> -- search the web for updates).

We sent out links to a few immediate resources and asked for others to share what they are circulating. Here is what we sent plus a couple more from what we have received so far.

>Responding to school walkout demonstrations --

[https://rem.s.ed.gov/docs/LL\\_Vol3Issue1.pdf](https://rem.s.ed.gov/docs/LL_Vol3Issue1.pdf)

>School safety and security measures -- <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=334>

>Youth engaged for change -- <https://engage.youth.gov/>

>Know your Rights: Student walkouts and political speech at school –

<https://www.aclunc.org/search?keys=walkout>

>How to Approach Student Walkouts – just prepared by education agencies and associations in Michigan. (We have put it on our website to make it immediately accessible to everyone – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/walkout.pdf> )

From a school in KY:

*We talked with senior leaders. If all goes as planned they will be expressing sympathy with notes tied to balloons and released (School leaders only, about 50) as a group. The others will watch and everyone will wear the same color. This is to show sympathy, not to control or attempt to hold anyone, including the politicians, hostage. They are very good, very smart kids*

We are pulling together a fuller response for the next mailing of the School Practitioner Community of Practice. If you have anything you think should be included, please send it to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

### Resources from Across the Country

- > *Helping kids after a shooting* – <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/shooting-resources>
- > *About school shootings* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/shooting.pdf>
- > *Psychological first aid in schools* – <http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid-schoolspfa>
- > *Family engagement Toolkit* – <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/documents/family-engagement.pdf>
- > *Discipline disparities and discrimination in schools* – <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/11/20/discipline-disparities-and-discrimination-in-schools/>
- > *Initiatives from preschool to third grade: A policymakers guide* – <https://www.ecs.org/initiatives-from-preschool-to-third-grade-a-policymakers-guide/>
- > *Preventing and responding to teen dating violence* – <https://vawnet.org/sc/preventing-and-responding-teen-dating-violence>
- > *Breaking down barriers to help seeking* – <https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/breaking-down-barriers-to-help-seeking>
- > *MTSS: Strengths and weaknesses* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/equityresps.pdf>

**>upcoming conferences, initiatives, workshops**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

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

### A few relevant journal publications

- > Exploring the context of strengths – a new approach to strength-based assessment. N. Bozic, R. Lawthom, & J. Murray (2018). *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 34, 26-40. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02667363.2017.1367917>
- > School as community, community as school: examining principal leadership for urban school reform and community development. T. Green (2018). *Education and Urban Society*, 50, 111-135. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0013124516683997>
- > In search of meaning: Are school rampage shootings random and senseless violence? E. Madfis (2017). *The Journal of Psychology*, 151, 21-35. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00223980.2016.1196161>
- > Alone and adrift: The association between mass school shootings, school size, and student support. A. Baird, E Roellke, D. Zeifman (2017). *The Social Science Journal* 54, 261–270. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/the-social-science-journal/vol/54/issue/3>

@#@#@#@#

*I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas.  
I'm frightened of the old ones.*

John Cage, composer

@#@#@#@#

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

## **This Month's Special Topic – Helping students who experience a *Spring Slump***

Excerpt from "Spring Slump" – by Amanda Gray – <http://www.ndsmcobserver.com>

I noticed a trend lately -- a sleepy, tired and sad trend. We're growing, slowly but surely, more impatient and grumpy as the year progresses. I'm calling this phenomenon the "Spring Semester Slump." It's common sense, really. We start out the school year relatively excited to be back on campus, with friends, possibly even excited to be in class. Fall break comes, and while it's well-appreciated, we can come back to school without much coaxing. School has yet to get truly difficult ... This goes out the proverbial window, however, after Fall Break.... Winter Break cannot come fast enough. Those three beautiful weeks are the shortest three weeks of my life.... After that brief respite, spring semester begins.

While a spring slump may have a small effect on motivated and successful students, there is a sense of mounting frustration for students who aren't doing well (socially, emotionally, academically) that can lead to problems in attendance and effort. For some, it is just that the school year seems so long and their motivation lags. For others, it is clear that they aren't doing well and are unlikely to catch up. For those in their last year at a school, a version of "senioritis" hits, and they hope to coast through and survive the last few months.

How do you understand the drop in effort/energy/motivation and what do you think might counter the "slump" and maybe enhance motivation for school and for learning during spring?

Here are some thoughts from a colleague about this to stimulate discussion:

I see this very often happening with middle school students, those who have struggled through the grades prior but done well enough to pass or aren't "failing enough" to identify. These students hit 8th, 9th grade and any compensating skills they have aren't enough to get them through the increased difficulty in curriculum and additional demands. The first and second quarters of struggling are often met with "let's wait and see before we evaluate or implement comprehensive RTI strategies." By the time they hit the 3rd quarter they are often so buried/behind in skills that they fall into the "giving up" mode and the year is lost. ... This is magnified with students who have underlying mental health issues, bringing to the surface anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, depression and the like. Too often it is these students who succumb to typical peer pressures and a negative domino effect comes into play.

In elementary students, they are often seen as 'late developers' and as it becomes apparent in looking to the next grade level they will have challenges meeting with success, how do you catch up when a half the year is gone. In high school students, with the demands of passing every required exam to be able to obtain a diploma, it can be one exam that keeps them from their goals. How do you motivate a student that has been able to pass up until this point, but can't graduate due to inability to pass a one required exam.

Fundamentally, something has to change to keep the spark of wanting to learn be meaningful and rewarding to students. A meaningful diploma needs to be in place for those whose 'success' is

currently measured by being able to pass all regents. There is something to be said for keeping a student engaged learning, knowing and believing there is benefit to learning despite what grade they are able to obtain on an exam.

Keeping parents involved at every grade level is important and sometimes that means creative ways of keeping them involved other than once a year parent conferences. In addition, more earnest efforts in Child Find and RTI need to occur. ... Catching these students earlier in their educational careers can help prevent issues commonly seen with older students second semester lack of motivation. As well, identifying struggling students and providing supports early in the year in order to be able to provide more intensive services if needed, versus waiting until half the year is over will give a greater opportunity for success.

Keeping kids connected, a hook, so to speak, be it a adult mentor at school, sports, club, etc can help struggling students stay motivated. Kids have to have something to feel positive about going to school, staying the entire day in an environment where you consistently struggle or meet with failure isn't conducive to motivation or a desire to learn.

I am not sure that teachers are given the skills to teach struggling students, especially struggling students with mental health issues. And with budget cuts, many of our teachers are faced doing this without the supports of AIS teachers, Title I support staff, etc. A truly serious look at unfunded mandates needs to occur and alternatives to what almost always seems to occur in times of budget crisis; cuts that most directly affect our students at risk.

**For more on student engagement, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>**

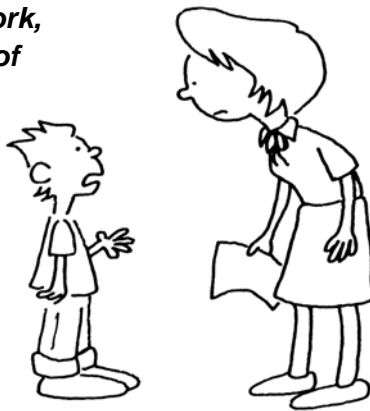
#### **More Discussion Topics**

**(from February's Weekly School Practitioner Community of Practice)**

- >*How to more effectively identify/prevent child abuse and neglect*
- >*More on MTSS and working with a continuum of interventions at schools*
- >*Sexual harassment awareness and prevention for secondary students*
- >*More on connecting schools, juvenile justice, and the community*
- >*School shooting raises concerns about enhancing schools' ability to provide mental health assistance*

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

***I would do the math homework,  
but I've already got enough of  
my own problems.***



## **Transforming Student & Learning Supports – Survey of States/Districts**

Excerpt from: *ESSA and Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching: Is there Movement toward Transforming Student/Learning Supports?*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/2018%20report.pdf>

...There is widespread awareness and concern about the need to address a range of learning, behavior, and emotional problems. However, the evidence over the last few decades suggests that what we see in ESSA plans and on websites is grossly insufficient for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students, especially in schools where the majority of students are not doing well. Clearly, there remains a fundamental gap in school improvement policy and practice.

Thus, we anticipate that *direct* efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students will continue to be marginalized and pursued in a piecemeal, fragmented, and sometimes redundant manner. And, as long as this is the situation, it is likely that student/learning supports will continue to be sparsely funded, with resources inequitably distributed and pursued with counterproductive competition. Our hope is that this report will be an imperative wake-up call for expanding the focus of school improvement policy and practice.

ESSA stresses a devolution of power to states and districts; this is the time to use that power to transform student/learning supports. Our Center at UCLA and the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* are dedicated to mobilizing direct actions for

(a) elevating school improvement policy discussions in ways that lead to ending the marginalization of student/learning supports and

(b) moving toward transformation of such supports (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>).

It is noteworthy that a variety of states and districts have flirted with transforming the way they think about addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. (See examples at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm> and lessons learned at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/lessonslearned.htm>.) These trailblazing efforts provide examples of ambitious and comprehensive "escaping old ideas" thinking and have helped clarify the type of systemic changes that are required to succeed.

Of considerable importance, the work highlights four key interacting considerations involved in moving in new directions for student/learning supports. These involve the need to

- revisit school improvement policies to expand them in ways that end the marginalization of student/learning supports
- adopt intervention frameworks that unify and guide development of a comprehensive, equitable, and systemic learning supports component at every school
- reframe the infrastructure at school, complex, and district levels to ensure effective leadership, redefine roles and functions, and establish resource oriented mechanisms
- develop strategic approaches to enable effective systemic change and replication to scale.

An in-depth discussion of each of these matters is presented in two recent books:

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

a free resource available at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf>

>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports:*

*Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System*

<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>

## **WHERE'S IT HAPPENING?**

We are receiving an increasing number of requests about what sites we recommend contacting and perhaps visiting to see efforts that are being made to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports (i.e., efforts to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching). **Please let us know about schools/districts that would be good to contact. Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

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*. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coach.pdf> and send all info to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

@#@#@#

Organizational theory expert Peter Senge describes a learning organization as a place *where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.*

@#@#@#

## News from around the country related to addressing barriers

**For student protesters, consequences are across the map.** The consequences for students who leave class to protest school shootings depend a lot on where they live. Students in Prince William County have been told they will be disciplined for walking out of school without authorization. In Montgomery County, students learned their absences would be unexcused and their grades could be affected. For Arlington County students taking part in protests, the message from the school district was one of understanding, not punishment. 2/22/18  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/for-student-protesters-consequences-are-across-the-map/2018/02/22/1ac1b07e-17fd-11e8-92c9-376b4fe57ff7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.0e82a80df96e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/for-student-protesters-consequences-are-across-the-map/2018/02/22/1ac1b07e-17fd-11e8-92c9-376b4fe57ff7_story.html?utm_term=.0e82a80df96e)

**Florida, angry and grieving, take gun protests to streets.** Thousands of angry students, parents, teachers and neighbors of a Florida high school where 17 people were killed demanded that immediate action be taken on gun-control legislation, insisting they would not relent until their demands were met. The rallies in Fort Lauderdale and St. Petersburg gave a political outlet to the growing feelings of rage and mourning sparked by the carnage. Authorities say a former student who had been expelled, had mental health issues and been reported to law enforcement, used a legally purchased semiautomatic rifle to kill students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. 2/18/18  
<https://apnews.com/8a882b800c2f4d16944b735cf5c3219f/Florida,-angry-and-grieving,-takes-gun-protest-to-streets>

**State funds schools to collaborate.** The Maine Department of Education announced the latest round of EMBRACE regionalization grant recipients. The districts involved in these projects are largely in rural areas where prolonged enrollment declines and budget challenges have prompted officials to weigh fresh approaches. In 2017, the state awarded 10 grants ranging from \$130,000 to \$798,000 to school districts so they could tackle a range of issues, including collaborations to offer special education and professional development for teachers at a regional level, instead of through individual school districts. 1/31/18  
<http://bangordailynews.com/2018/01/31/education/maine-awards-4-6m-in-latest-push-to-spur-schools-to-collaborate>

**With thousands of homeless students, this district put help right in its schools.** Dallas schools have put something called a drop-in center at nearly every high school. At Bryan Adams, the drop-in center is a converted classroom that offers a lot that a homeless student might need: coffee, packaged foods, deodorant, a new backpack, even counseling. Some local non-profits lend supplies and volunteers. The drop-in center could serve up to 200 kids at Bryan Adams, about 10 percent of the student body, where 90 percent are economically disadvantaged. 2/2/18  
<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/02/02/579971311/with-thousands-of-homeless-students-this-district-put-help-right-in-its-schools>

### **Officials propose drastic changes in low performing schools to avoid state take over.**

Houston ISD plans to close and immediately reopen six chronically low-performing elementary and middle schools, a process that would force hundreds of students to leave their home campuses and result in the replacement of all staff at those schools. Under the law, 10 Houston ISD campuses must meet state academic standards this year to avoid immediate closure or a state takeover of the district's school board. As required by state law, the six closure-and-restart schools would only serve limited grade levels in the 2018-19 school year. The four elementary

schools and Woodson PK-8 would offer pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, while Cullen Middle School would offer sixth grade. The campuses would add a single grade level each year. "The focus is not to close schools," Houston ISD Superintendent Richard Carranza said. "The focus is to ensure our students have incredible opportunities and that we control our destiny and nobody else controls our destiny."

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/education/article/Houston-ISD-outlines-specific-proposals-for-major-12544808.php>

@#@#@#

*Teachers and school leaders need resources and support to help overcome the harmful impacts of poverty and adverse neighborhood factors. It is rare that a school can outperform its community.* Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

@#@#@#

### Comments and sharing from the field

"I am very thankful for your insight into how schools can be more proactive in prevention of mass shootings. It is a sad condition of the current culture. We as educational leaders have the knowledge and means to prevent further incidents, but honest conversation and legislative courage will be needed. We cannot throw the social emotional condition of society on the back of schools and expect poor communities to be able to resolve the issues of anger, dysfunction and disenfranchisement from the mainstream. Counseling is not a solution, just a patch. If you are serious about finding a solution, I am willing to help in any way you see fit."

### We were asked to share the following:

- (1) "We appreciate receiving your e-mails and sharing your information. The Psychology Foundation of Canada has resources to share with educators- programs from preschool to high school- components for educators, parents and students and school administrators. Would you be able to post the notice or share the news? Our web site is <http://www.psychologyfoundation.org>
- (2) "We saw your recent email about the UCLA research on ESSA and wanted to also share a new Child Trends report with you on integrated student supports (ISS). This is Child Trends' latest review of the research supporting ISS, models in which schools help to connect children to secure housing, medical care, food assistance, tutoring, and other supports. The report comes at a critical time for state education leaders working to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act. Thanks to the new federal education law, states now have access to federal formula dollars to support student health and safety for the first time since 2009. The report could help to inform how states utilize these dollars to build community schools, and implement wraparound supports, or embed ISS in school accountability as a mechanism to better serve students in struggling schools. We hope you find the report interesting and helpful!"  
<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/making-grade-progress-report-next-steps-integrated-student-supports/>

Center note about integrated student supports (ISS): See our policy notes on:  
>*Integrated Student Supports and Equity: What's Not Being Discussed?*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/integpolicy.pdf>

Also see: *Moving Beyond the Concept of Integrated Student Supports*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/movingbeyond.pdf>

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

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

\*\*\*\*\*

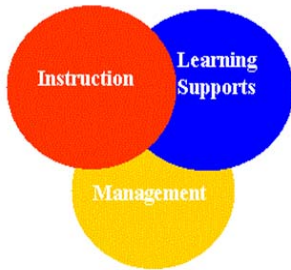
\*Information is online about the

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

**Also online is the report from the National Summit on the**

***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>



\*\*\*\*\*

**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)