

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

March, 2019 (Vol. 23 #6) – 33 Years & Counting

What's Here

Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

A special focus on

Spring as an especially high risk time for students

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>



Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

A few relevant special reports and journal publications

- > *Screening for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): Cautions and suggestions*
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213417302715>
- > *The link between school attendance and good health*
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/01/24/peds.2018-3648>
- > *Digest of education statistics (published 1/19)*
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018070>
- > *Supporting families impacted by incarceration*
https://cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/wp-content/uploads/FII-Experts-Report_508.pdf
- > *What are states doing to help schools address barriers to learning and teaching?*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm>
- > “Youth perceptions of what is helpful during the middle school transition and correlates of transition difficulty.” (2019). P. Fite, A. Frazer, M. DiPierro, & M. Abel. *Children & Schools*, 41 (1), 55–64. <https://academic.oup.com/cs/article/41/1/55/5196223>
- > “Making the shift to a co-teaching model of instruction: considering relational trust as a Precursor to collaboration” (2019). M. Vostal, K. LaVenias, & C. Horner. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 22(1), 83–94.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1555458918796876>
- > “School disorder and dropping out: The intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity” (2019). A. Peguero, G. Merrin, J. Hong, & K. Johnson. *Youth & Society*, 51(2), 193–218.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0044118X16668059>
- > *Bringing empirically supported prototypes/practices to schools* (Power point presentation)
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/powerpoint/translationalresearch.ppt>

>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>

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Three things are essential to good decision making in education: good data, thoughtful analysis and compassionate understanding. – Ivory A. Toldson

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A special focus on

Spring as an especially high risk time for students

(1) Helping students stay motivated through the second semester slump

*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. (Excerpt from *Spring Slump* – by Amanda Gray in Notre Dame's *The Observer*)*

While a second semester 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.

This a critical time for school staff to discuss: ***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 semester?***

Thoughts from a colleague: "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, see the Center's online clearinghouse Quick Find on *motivation*:
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

(2) Minimizing stress related to high stakes achievement testing so all students do their best

It was March, and school wide test preparation had begun in every third through fifth grade classroom. The teacher was a first year teacher participating in a study of the impact of high stakes testing on instruction. As I walked through her door, I could tell her attitude was different from that of my previous observation.... The stress of being required to use practice tests as the bulk of her reading instruction for seven full weeks before the actual test was given was proving to be frustrating for her.... (Excerpt from "You Teach for Me; I've Had it!" A First-year Teacher's Cry for Help" by Dixie Massey, *Action in Teacher Education*, 28, 73-86.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01626620.2006.10463421>)

As the above description implies, the stress throughout a school (on students and staff) is high as the dates for testing approach. Preparing students to do their best on achievement tests starts with minimizing stress and enhancing both coping and motivation. This especially involves reducing avoidance motivation by enhancing motivational readiness and task capabilities.

(3) Addressing possible emotional problems

It is essential to keep emotional problems in perspective and not overpathologize. In any school, there are young people who are not very happy. This is quite understandable among those living in economically impoverished neighborhoods where daily living and school conditions frequently are difficult. But even youngsters with economic advantages too often report feeling alienated and lacking a sense of purpose.

Youngsters who are unhappy usually act on such feelings. Some "internalize;" some "act out;" and some respond in both ways at different times. The variations can make matters a bit confusing. Is the youngster just sad? Is s/he depressed? Is this a case of ADHD? Individuals may display the same behavior and yet the causes may be different and vice versa. And, matters are further muddled by the reality that the causes vary.

The causes of negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors range from environmental/system deficits to relatively minor group and individual vulnerabilities on to major biological disabilities.

(Fortunately, a relatively few students have true disabilities.) It is the full range of causes that account for the large number of children and adolescents reported as having psychosocial, MH, or developmental problems.

Some Center Resources to help with Spring Slump, testing concerns, and emotional support:

- > *Student Burnout* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentburnout.pdf>
- > *Engaging and Re-engaging families when a student is not doing well* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/familyengage.pdf>
- > *Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalizeI.pdf>
- > *About Supporting Those Who Seem Depressed* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dep.pdf>
- > *Test Anxiety* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/testanx.pdf>

For a broader and more detailed picture, see

Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

**I hear you skipped school
and stayed home to watch TV!**



**No I didn't, and
I have the movie
stubs to prove it.**



**Three General Topics discussed in
February's School Practitioner Community of Practice**
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

- > **Strike highlights the importance of student support staff**
- > **Organizing a high school mental health group**
- > **Risk factors for bullying and school violence**

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We can either continue on this course of chaos, or we can travel on the pathway toward true community. If we're going to stabilize and strengthen our nation and world, then we can no longer wait on another Martin Luther King Jr. It's time for you to be a King. Rev. Bernice King.

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About Transforming Student and Learning Supports



>As we have reported, the rationale and legislative prototype for moving school improvement policy to a three component approach have now been sent to education committee members in all state legislatures, as well as to almost every state board of education and chief state school officer. (See boxed info at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>.) We will be following up this initial contact with them over the coming month.

>Here's an example of a follow-up by a colleague to her legislative representative in Iowa:

"I am a constituent who is very interested in the future of Iowa schools. Now retired, I worked for the state Department of Education for several

years and was an educator for many years before that.

I understand that you received a message from my friends at UCLA yesterday, Drs. Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor. They have a life-time of research devoted to the well-being of students that has proven effective at increasing student attendance, performance and overall achievement for both students at risk AND those already doing well. (Some similar research on achievement was conducted here in our state. Positive results are available at the Department of Education.)

Schools advocate for more money for anti-bullying, character education, safe schools, substance abuse prevention, smaller class size and a host of other worthy initiatives that are not academic, but impact academics. And, schools struggle to provide such supports for students because they see the need. They understand that once students feel safe and have their needs met, they can learn at a higher rate than those who are hungry, bullied, homeless, etc.

The problem is that these programs and services are marginalized in the school improvement process. In other words, they are treated as "extras" and not central to the learning process. Drs. Adelman and Taylor's research supports a school improvement model that is inclusive of all these initiatives as well as academic performance and general school management.

To incorporate this process requires a policy shift in school improvement that is encouraged at the federal level and could be spearheaded in our state by the Education Committee. I know that the Department of Education has staff focused on this research and I'm told that AEA counterparts are also working to that end. Other than initial workshops for educators by these staff, I can't imagine this policy shift requiring additional state funds since it promotes the use of existing monies in a more efficient manner (based on data) and ties efforts into existing community resources.

I would very much like to visit with you further about "learning supports" and answer your questions about how this policy shift could improve student achievement for all our children and youth."

>Retired Superintendent Merrienne Dyer presented at the National ESEA Conference in Kansas City. Based on our Center's work, she discussed Learning Supports as a "pathway" for providing mental health and social-emotional supports. She focused on the organizational and operational structures that support mental health in schools and explored strategies for families, communities, and schools to align and integrate supports. A particular emphasis was on secondary trauma for adults who serve students coming from trauma or with mental health challenges and strategies to support teachers and school staff. <https://www.esenetwork.org/sched/E19/session/mental-health-supports-a-school-and-community-system>

>From: The Benefits of Differentiated Instruction for At-Risk Learners (2017) by Freeman & Lim in the *International Journal of Education and Social Science*, 4, 15-21.
<http://www.ijessnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2.pdf>

Keeping at-risk children in stimulating, caring classrooms helped them to stop acting out, learn and share their unique talents to other classmates.... It is for this reason that [schools are encouraged] to consider making innovative changes to classroom instruction (DeAngelis, 2012, pg. 46). This includes changing teaching methods to help teachers handle at-risk students. Instead of placing at-risk students with one teacher, the classroom should have support personnel to handle behavior issues, boredom and reading proficiency. Support personnel could be in the form of counselors, instructional aides and retired teachers....

For more, see

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

Let Us Know about:

(1) Any presentations made on this topic

(2) 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

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We were interested to see how our work was perceived in a recent “Commentary on school mental health movement” by Jennifer Ulie-Wells

<https://www.scribd.com/document/320673003/commentary-on-school-mental-health-movement>

“...The UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools is the oldest and most comprehensive School Mental Health Center in the nation. Their foundational theory and practices have arguably influenced all of the current school mental health practices across the country. ... They continue to launch initiatives that have, interestingly, evolved over time. The initiative in 2015 was the first of it’s kind that I was able to find in which the UCLA Center created to call to action to lobby and advocate with governmental agencies.... UCLA was the only one that has an active call to action to unite professionals passionate to demand policy change. After 50 years, perhaps, they are getting more frustrated by the wait for change. With all that has been accomplished in the last 50years, I eagerly look forward to what the next 50 years will bring.”

We want to assure everyone that we counter our frustration by actively moving forward.

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>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

1.3 Million Homeless Students: New Federal Data Show a 70 Percent Jump in K-12 Homelessness Over Past Decade, With Big Implications for Academic Performance. Utilizing data from 44 states, the report shows that students who experienced homelessness during the 2016-17 school year had a graduation rate of 64 percent — compared with a 77.6 percent graduation rate among other low-income students, and a national average of 84.1 percent.
<https://www.the74million.org/1-3-million-homeless-students-new-federal-data-show-a-70-percent-jump-in-k-12-homelessness-over-past-decade-with-big-implications-for-academic-performance/>

High-quality Tennessee principals less likely to serve poor and low-achieving students. A study by Vanderbilt looked at four factors in how principals are sorted into school. The study looked at the distribution of principals in schools with high student poverty, low student achievement, a high percentage of students of color, and at the school location. The findings concluded that:

>Principal quality is unevenly distributed in Tennessee, with experienced and higher rated

principals concentrated in schools with fewer students in poverty, low-achieving students and students of color.

>And hiring and turnover drive uneven principal quality across the state, given that schools with higher rates of poverty, low achievement and students of color are more likely to hire inexperienced or ineffective principals and to experience greater principal turnover.

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2019/02/01/tennessee-principals-quality-poor-students-vanderbilt-study/2730455002/>

Climate Survey is First Step in Long Term District Strategic Planning. The DeSoto Independent School District (TX) is conducting an anonymous School Climate Survey to gather information about the experiences of DeSoto ISD students, staff and parents. The 2019 Climate Survey includes questions about school discipline, student support, student engagement, and safety conditions in each of the schools. The information will be used to guide educational practices and programs that support safe and orderly school learning communities. The district's 2020 Strategic Plan focuses on individualized learning, quality teachers, equal access and relationships in an effort to provide a holistic and well-rounded educational experience to students and families.

<http://www.focusdailynews.com/climate-survey-is-first-step-in-long-term-desoto-isd-strategic-planning>

How the military is hoping to help Alabama's teacher shortage. Superintendent James Carter is near his wits' end trying to find qualified teachers to educate his schools in Alabama's rural Greene County. So much so that he is planning to ask for the school board's support in providing new teachers with \$2,000 sign-on bonuses. About 15 percent of its teacher positions are open. But help is in sight. Two military-led efforts are in the works to help school systems like Carter's. The first is a Department of Defense program that was established in 1993 as a means to ease transition of military service members into civilian life and has put over 20,000 veterans into classrooms nationally. Formerly administered by the Department of Education, Stillman College became the education department's first community partner in the state to handle the Troops to Teachers program. Veterans who go through the program are offered a stipend to cover the costs of education courses and licensing fees, in addition to an incentive bonus for those that sign a three-year contract in a hard-to-staff school, up to a combined \$10,000.

<https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/education/2019/01/30/military-hoping-help-alabama-staff-public-schools-maxwell-ccaf-mps-troops-to-teachers-reciprocity/2638914002/>

Half of youths with mental health disorders go untreated. Researchers estimate that 7.7 million youths ages 6 to 17, or nearly 16.5% of school-aged children, had one or more mental health disorder, but only half of them had undergone mental health treatment during the previous year. The findings in JAMA Pediatrics, based on 2016 National Survey of Children's Health data, also showed that childhood mental health problems were most prevalent in Maine and least prevalent in Hawaii, while untreated pediatric mental health conditions were most common in North Carolina and least common in D.C. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/11/health/children-teens-mental-health-untreated-study/index.html>

Marijuana in Schools. The Education Commission of the States recently published a legislative analysis about how states that permit the prescription of cannabidiol, also known as CBD, to minors are adjusting school drug policies. More than half, 17 in total, of states that have legalized medical marijuana have also OK'd the use of prescription CBD for minors. And of those 17, at least six have enacted state laws to address school drug policies and make it easier for students to use, in some cases on school property.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2019-02-08/teachers-caught-in-the-crosshairs-of-marijuana-laws-and-school-drug-free-policies>

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States are pursuing supportive policies for districts that are implementing, sustaining, and spreading social emotional learning. But unless they also address the SEL needs of teachers—especially those experiencing stress, poor working conditions, and classes with many historically underserved students—long-term, systemwide gains for students are less likely. ... Don Long

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Comments and sharing from the field

We were asked to share the following

- (1) “I’ve always resonated to your work, especially the generosity of getting useful information out to people who work with complicated kids. When I left the state Department of Education at the end of 2011, I was able to expand my work doing seminars on student mental health issues..... As part of that effort, I’m reaching out to colleagues to connect and network about my work. My seminars focus on emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges experienced by students and school professionals. I always push for collaboration between schools, families, and mental health, and I focus on prevention, accommodations, and strengths. ...I am always open to suggestions and would appreciate your sharing my information with anyone you think might be interested in the work that I do. Mike Paget mcpaget@gmail.com
- (2) “My name is Karen Nehemiah, and I am a third-year student in the school psychology program at New Mexico State University. I am recruiting first-generation college students who identify as an ethnic minority to participate in my study. I would greatly appreciate if you could post this email ... to reach potential participants. My research focuses on exploring the lived experiences of first-generation college students and how their family, friends, teachers, community, language, and culture affect them in college. My hope is to expand upon the literature about first-generation college students and explore the strengths and challenges such students face. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at New Mexico State University (IRB # 15884). If a student is interested, they can directly contact me via email (knehemia@nmsu.edu) or call/text me at (915-443-2974). The interview will be approximately 1-2 hours and can be done over the phone or on Skype. Participation is voluntary, and students can withdraw at any time.

*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



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