

# Students & Schools: Moving Forward\*

(March, 2021 Vol. 25 #6) – 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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**



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

## >Will the Spring Slump Add to the Student Engagement Problems?

Teachers have long experienced a “Spring Slump” among students (and staff). An emerging concern is whether the situation will worsen during the pandemic.

While such a slump may have a small effect on motivated and successful students, it is likely to exacerbate the problems of those who aren't doing well (academically, emotionally, socially).

For some, the school year may just feel like it is dragging on. 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.

*Are you anticipating a drop in effort/energy/motivation and what do you think might counter such a slump?*

This is a good time to review some resources on engaging and reengaging students in instruction. See the Center's Quick Find on

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

## >A Caution About Overpathologizing Student Emotional Reactions

It is essential to keep emotional problems in perspective and not overpathologize. It is commonplace for youngsters to be emotional and at times not very happy. This is not surprising, especially for those living in economically impoverished neighborhoods where daily living and school conditions frequently are horrendous. But even youngsters with economic advantages

often report feeling alienated and lacking a sense of purpose. And the pandemic, of course, is exacerbating emotional responses.

Unhappy youngsters may "internalize" such their feelings; 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 that requires diagnosis and clinical help?

It is important to understand that individuals may display the same behavior and yet the causes may be different and vice versa. 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 (that affect only a relatively few individuals). It is the full range of causes that need to be considered before concluding that a youngster has a pathological condition.

As Ruth Benedict noted some time ago: *Normality and exceptionally (or deviance) are not absolutes; both are culturally defined by particular societies at particular times for particular purposes.*

For more, see Chapter 6 in

> *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*  
available at this time as a free resource at  
[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

Also see the Practitioner and Professional Development resources in the Center's

> Virtual Toolbox for MH in Schools  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/toolbox.htm>

and browse the

> Quick Finds' menu for other related topics <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

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*People don't know they're resilient until they meet a challenge that requires them to be resilient. A lot of young people are meeting deep challenges for the first time and they're finding themselves up for it.* Janis Whitlock

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## >Quick Links to Online Resources

*CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

*The Science Brief: Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools* (also from CDC)

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/science-and-research/transmission\\_k\\_12\\_schools.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/science-and-research/transmission_k_12_schools.html)

*COVID-19 Handbook Volume 1: Strategies for Safely Reopening Elementary and Secondary Schools* (from the U.S. Department of Education)

[https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-covid-19-handbook-volume-1-strategies-safely-reopening-elementary-and-secondary-schools?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-covid-19-handbook-volume-1-strategies-safely-reopening-elementary-and-secondary-schools?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

*Mental Health, Substance Use, and Wellbeing in Higher Education Supporting the Whole Student* (from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine)

[https://www.nap.edu/resource/26015/ReportHighlights\\_Student\\_MentalHealth\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nap.edu/resource/26015/ReportHighlights_Student_MentalHealth_FINAL.pdf)

*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>

*How Schools Can Reduce Excessive Discipline of Black Students*

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/how-schools-can-reduce-excessive-discipline-of-black-students.html>

*Fostering Connectedness in the Pandemic Era: Policy Recommendations to Support Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/policy-recommendations-to-support-social-emotional-and-academic-development-fostering-connectedness-in-the-pandemic-era/>

*Compassionate Partnerships for Youth in Foster Care: The Role of Expanded Learning*

<https://edpolicyinca.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=dc5c37ddafe5d3418812162d&id=26e98601b7&e=f90e4d7f7d>

*COVID-19 and learning loss—disparities grow and students need help*

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help>

*School Practices to Address Student Learning Loss*

[https://annenbergbrown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch\\_for\\_Recovery\\_Brief\\_1.pdf](https://annenbergbrown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_1.pdf)

*Summer program strategies to address learning loss, support emotional health*

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/districts-turn-to-summer-programming-to-help-address-learning-loss/>

*Making the Most of Parent-Teacher Conferences During Distance Learning*

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/making-most-parent-teacher-conferences-during-distance-learning>

*Modifying Education Agency Exercises and Drills in Response to the Pandemic*

[https://rems.ed.gov/docs/ModifyingExercisesFactSheet\\_508C.pdf](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/ModifyingExercisesFactSheet_508C.pdf)

*About Improving Student and Learning Supports: New Directions and New Roles for Student Support Staff*

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

*Mental Health in Schools: Good! Advocacy for Separate Agenda - Not So Good!*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/2-18-21.pdf>

*Improving lives through evidence based approaches*

<https://www.air.org/resource/improving-lives-through-evidence-based-approaches>

*Career and technical education: Preparing students for college and career success*

<https://www.air.org/resource/career-and-technical-education-preparing-students-college-and-career-success>

*The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Implement the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*

<https://theactionalliance.org/our-strategy/national-strategy-suicide-prevention/call-action>

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*From virtual to in-person, we want all kids to know that there is a caring adult on the other side of the screen or in the room who wants them to be there. Spending the first five minutes of the connection making sure students feel loved, supported and safe, and the last five minutes making sure they have what they need until the next connection, is important.*

Joe Sanfelippo, superintendent at Fall Creek School District in Wisconsin

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### **Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during (February)**

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

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

- > Sharing experiences about schooling during the pandemic
- > Meeting the needs of students during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
- > School connectedness in these challenging times
- > Reengaging Dropouts: Outreach and Re-entry Strategies as Schools Re-open
- > From a HS student: Pressure to open schools is foolish in a pandemic
- > 504 Accommodations

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>

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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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*You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think, and loved more than you'll ever know. — A.A. Milne*

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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>

### About Transforming Student & Learning Supports

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](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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*Nothing in life is to be feared; it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less. — Marie Curie*

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

**Push to reopen schools could leave out millions of students.** By early January, about a third of students in a sample of 1,200 U.S. school districts were in schools where classes had been held exclusively online since last March — many of them in cities. By last week, more than half of students were enrolled in schools where in-person learning was at least an option, according to Burbio, a data service tracking school-opening policies. <https://apnews.com/>

**The Digital Divide Has Narrowed, But 12 Million Students Are Still Disconnected.** When schools closed last March, roughly 16 million U.S. K-12 students lacked access to a working device, reliable high-speed internet or both. In the months that followed, many states and school districts mobilized, using federal CARES Act funding, broadband discounts and partnerships with private companies to connect their students and enable online learning. Those efforts have made a dent, according to an analysis from Common Sense, Boston Consulting Group and the Southern Education Foundation. As of December 2020, the number of students impacted by the digital divide has narrowed to 12 million. <https://www.edsurge.com/>

**Long Beach teachers were first in LA County to be vaccinated; then the process stalled.** The Long Beach Unified School District this week is coping with a much smaller allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses than it expected after being promised the opportunity to inoculate its employees this week. And the scramble to book the limited appointments has left some educators frustrated at a lack of organization and prioritization. The plan was that all LBUSD employees who wanted the vaccine would get it between Jan. 25 and Jan. 29. In reality, only about 1,000 doses were available for appointments, the LBUSD has approximately 12,000 employees. <https://lbpost.com/news/covid-vaccine-rollout-lbusd-problems-stalled>

**COVID-19 vaccines for teachers, a key to reopening schools, comes down to location - and luck.** Amid fraught negotiations nationwide about reopening more schools for in-person learning, especially in large districts, vaccines for teachers is now viewed as a lynchpin for getting kids back to class. But a chaotic vaccine rollout combined with a patchwork of conflicting local guidance has raised serious ethical questions about where and how teachers fall in line. And that's resulted in wildly uneven access, meaning that kids in some communities may have a chance to return to schools sooner than others because their teachers had more access to inoculations. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2021/01/29/when-teachers-get-covid-vaccines-chicago-portland-plans-vary/4298885001/>

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from Covid vaccine story

Barry Bloom, from Harvard, said deciding whether to push teachers to the front of the line boils down to ethics and what leaders think is most important for society.

"If the focus is on saving lives, as you've seen in most states, school teachers don't score at the top. If you focus on creating conditions for society to function, I would put teachers at the very top. That's a trade off that every state is having to make,"

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### **Comments and sharing from the field**

We were asked to share these resources:

(1) From the colleague who shared re-entry plans featured in 2/10 practitioner: "You can list my email address if anyone wants to contact me for additional information." [hblonsky@earthlink.net](mailto:hblonsky@earthlink.net)

(2) "I'm reaching out to let you know about a new project we're working on here at STEPS (Student Training & Education in Public Service) that I thought you'd be interested in. The goal is to encourage more people to consider joining the school psychology field where they can help make a positive impact. At the center of the initiative is a comprehensive student guidebook we created on our site that highlights online degree programs that are making it more convenient and affordable to

get the education required to join the school psychology field. I wanted to share it with you because of the great student resources you're already providing on your website.

Here's a link to the page if you'd like to take a look. *Guide to Online School Psychology Programs*: <https://www.publicservicedegrees.org/online-degrees/psychology-programs/school-psychology/>

With online learning becoming more and more popular (and necessary because of the pandemic), we wanted to make sure prospective students had information they could trust when looking into school psychology education and careers.”

(3) “Especially through a pandemic, our social workers continue to provide essential support to our communities. Studying different social work theories and social work practice models can help to bring social workers closer to their clients, and equip them with actionable insights that inform empathetic, evidence-based service. We at SocialWorkGuide.org created a guide that introduces some of the most common theories and models practiced in the field. *Social Work Theory Fundamentals* - <https://www.socialworkguide.org/resources/theories-used-in-social-work/>

Our goal is to help students and social work practitioners understand how each of these theories approaches and addresses the service strategies and policy imperatives of social work.

SocialWorkGuide.org provides online resource material, reviewed by field experts, for individuals interested in beginning or advancing their careers in social work.”

(4) In response to our question: *What changes do you see as needed in how student support professionals work at school and what are the implications for their pre- and in-service professional development?*

“I am recommending ‘Ripple Effects.’ This is an evidence based online curriculum that provides support for therapists/social workers, teachers and students. It also gives support for one to one therapy by engaging the student in online activities directed by a therapist. Performance outcomes challenge negative thoughts and beliefs to support transformational goals for social emotional learning. In working for almost twenty years ‘interrupting the cradle to the prison pipeline’ I am seeing and noting the current increased needs for both students and adults who work with students for mental health/social emotional wellness support.

A bit of the feedback we receive:

>“I discovered UCLA’s Center for MH in Schools about a year ago and have found your resources very helpful and rich with integrity. My organization is working along similar frameworks for shifting the lens about and improving the conditions for mental health to be fostered. We have a school program that is in development and we are planning on launching a pilot program soon that focuses on cultural transformation and creating ecosystems for prevention and healing.”

>“I just want to let you know that I find this resource so valuable. It always has useful, up-to-date information that is framed in the reality of our schools and where we need to work toward. Thank you for putting these resources together.”

Finally, we noted online this thoughtful letter to Georgia's parents, families, and guardians from the state Superintendent, Richard Woods; we thought it worth sharing.

<https://content.schoolinsites.com/api/documents/ba0f561c5bb148eeacdc31f2daa3a499.pdf>

“... -you have truly stepped up. Since March 2020, you have walked right alongside us as educators. You have been flexible and adopted new skills. You've had the difficult experience of watching your children face disappointment and upheaval, and you've risen to the occasion - for them.

Let me be very clear: I know it hasn't been easy. I know it has been exhausting to juggle distance learning with work and other responsibilities. I know that every day since March has been laden with impossible decisions. Just as, for your students' benefit, we would not have canceled school in the spring if there had been another choice - we would not have asked this of you if there

had been another choice. None of us anticipated or asked for this pandemic - yet I have been inspired by the tenacity of your students, and by your dedication to see them succeed, even in these circumstances none of us would have asked for.

We know the statistics, and they are as true as they have ever been. When parents and families are involved - when they are true partners - in their children's education, all students are more likely to succeed academically. Children become more invested in their studies, achievement increases, and schools function better as a whole when everyone is on the same team. But it's always more personal than that, isn't it? Especially this year.

We owe our gratitude not just to parents and families as a whole, but to the parent of a kindergartener helping them adapt to online learning.

To the grandparent talking to their child before in-person instruction begins again, explaining the ways school may be different for a while.

To the foster parent brushing up on their math skills.

To the mom or dad who put together a prom night at home, so their student wouldn't miss that special moment.

To every family member who has extended grace to their child's teacher or principal, knowing – even when it's hard – that this is new for all of us.

Thank you. You have always been your child's first teacher, but this year you have stood alongside us in unprecedented and indispensable ways.

I have never been more confident that, working together – working as a true team – we can ensure and brighter future for every child in our state.”

### **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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

### **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)**