Students & Schools: Moving Forward*
(May, 2022, Vol 26 #8) – *36 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.

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We encourage you to forward this to others. If this has been forwarded and you want to receive it directly, contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu
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For more on resources from our national Center, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

For Discussion & Planning

>End-of-the-Year Celebrations at All Levels: Hope, Congratulations, Safe Exuberance

The graduating class of 2022 may have faced unprecedented obstacles in their academic journey... In spite of the frustrations of online learning and various canceled school activities, this year's graduating class is coming out on the other side with a shiny new diploma — and that's definitely something to celebrate!

https://www.womansday.com/life/g32369410/funny-graduation-quotes/

The end of the school year is a time for focusing on accomplishments and emphasizing hope for the future. And it is a time for celebrations – *safe* celebrations!

For students, the process of focusing them on accomplishments and hope involves conveying to each student (and family) what the student has done positively and clarifying how this can be built on in coming years.

With respect to end of the year celebrations, each is something to cherish, and the anticipation of each represents a natural opportunity to promote social and emotional learning (e.g., enhanced understanding of self and others, increased sense of responsibility for self and others, expanded social skills).

Resources. There are many compilations of end of the school year ideas on the internet. For example see:

>26 Fun and Memorable End of the School Year Celebration Ideas
https://www.teachjunkie.com/holidays/26-fun-memorable-end-of-school-year-celebration-ideas/

>25 Fun Ways to Celebrate the End of the School Year
https://www.signupgenius.com/school/celebrate-end-of-school.cfm

>End-of-the-Year Activities & Keepsakes
https://secondaryenglishcoffeeshop.blogspot.com/2019/05/end-of-year-activities-keepsakes.html

>End of School Year Ideas https://www.pinterest.com/winterbliss3/end-of-school-year-ideas/

>End of the Year Activities for Middle & High School
https://www.pinterest.ca/addiewilliams/end-of-the-year-activities-for-middle-high-school/

>Video on End of School Year Ideas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vicr8eW76tI

>10 Great Ways To Celebrate the End of the School Year
https://www.ptotoday.com/pto-today-articles/article/6013-10-great-ways-to-celebrate-the-end-of-the-school-year

Of special concern are safe teen parties and proms. The need is to provide guidance and support and to do much more to minimize negative side effects.

> *"More than one-third of youth under the age of 21 killed in alcohol related fatalities died during the months prior to graduation season, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.*
>
> Dangerous Season for Teens: Prom and Graduation Time Increase Alcohol Fatalities
> http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/teens/a/blcc030514,htm

For a specific focus on ideas about *safe* end of year celebrations, here are examples of what's on the internet:

>Safe Proms and Project Graduations –
https://www.pinterest.com/vegasconceptsinc/safe-proms-and-project-graduations/

>Grad Night Manual – https://www.gradnight.org/grad_night_manual.php?c=1

>35 Awesome Graduation Party Ideas for High School and College
https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/g32286096/graduation-party-ideas/

>11 Ways to Have an Awesome and Safe 2021 Graduation ...
https://www.toojays.com/2021-graduation-party-ideas/

For an example from one district's prom and graduation-related plans, see
https://www.madriverschools.org/domain/797

Include students in planning. As schools plan to address ways to counter problems, it is important to include the students, and it can help to ask some recent graduates to participate in the planning.

Here's what a couple of recent grads told us about their safe end of the year student celebrations:

1) "... what my high school did toward the end of the year that was different than many other schools was the type of 'grad night' we had. Whereas many schools rent out [a local entertainment center] and have dances there and go on rides and many students get intoxicated before attending, at my school grad night was held on campus. The parents worked it and there were different activities like fake gambling, craps tables, dancing, a smoothie bar, food, and "crash room" to sleep since it went until 5am, rock climbing, a palm reader, inflatable jumper obstacle course, face painting, kareoke and much more. When I tell friends from other high schools/friends I made at college, the majority give me positive feedback saying that it sounds like a lot more fun than what they did. I think this is because instead of having the whole [entertainment center] where groups can get separated and remain in cliques ..., it was in our gym and outside in what was called "senior park;" So it remained tight knit, so to speak, making it easier to spend time with a a lot of different students and not get lost in a large area. Also, because parents worked the booths, students did not show up intoxicated. There was no re-entry allowed and because it was on campus, even if a few students did decide to drink before the event, it lessened the danger of driving on a freeway to get there because it is possible that they could simply walk over to the school. ... It was a night that I will never forget and one of my greatest memories and it was in a positive setting and a good way to have safe fun."

2) "In my own experience, I remember one of my teachers speaking in class about two weeks before prom and trying to give us some perspective on the event. She wanted us to have a good time, but also acknowledged the enormous stress that it caused for some people. My teacher encouraged us to view it as just another dance and to focus on graduating instead. She had chaperoned so many proms over the years and shared with us some of the very negative things she saw happen when students weren't using their best judgment. While trying to downplay the event may seem like being a killjoy to some, many of my friends and I found it reassuring to hear from an adult that life indeed does goes on past these high school celebrations because most students were very much caught up in a prom and end-of-the-year craze.

I think teachers and/or counselors should engage students in conversations like these months before prom to temper the frenzy that can accompany the event and possibly prevent the unwise decisions students make at prom and post-prom parties. It is of course perfectly acceptable to be happy and excited about prom, but I think there is much potential for danger when students blow it into epic proportions. Another thing that my high school did, which looking back I now view as a wise decision, was to not have a prom queen or king. The end of the year was just too filled with other anxiety-inducing events to have so much stress and energy expended on that. We simply had a homecoming king and queen in the fall, and I think that greatly reduced the tension around prom time."

And remember the importance of staff appreciation. Here's an example:

"... the staff gathered together in the high school gym to celebrate their accomplishments this year. The morning began with the Superintendent opening by recognizing the board. He continued the celebration by taking some time to speak to all staff, emphasizing their amazing efforts throughout this challenging year. He also made sure to mention that all staff should take this summer to rest and take care of themselves, and get a bit of respite. All employees wore their new staff t-shirts that say "Together We Can Do Virtually Anything." Employees that have worked in the district for anywhere from five to forty years were recognized, earning a pin with their number of years, with forty years also receiving a gift. ..."

https://www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/1/News/1527#sthash.oCqG5dIe.dpbs

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Data showed that youth who felt more connected to people at their schools had better mental health.... More must be done to ensure that schools provide a safe and supportive where all students feel connected to people who care, so that all students can fully benefit from the protections connectedness provides. — CDC Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

Sec. Cardona: This Is Our Moment to Improve Education. Here's Our Plan
https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-04-18-sec-cardona-this-is-our-moment-to-improve-education-here-s-our-plan

District Strategies to Reduce Student Absenteeism
https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_22.pdf

As chronic absenteeism skyrockets amid reopenings, how can states and districts reengage students?
https://www.k12dive.com/news/as-chronic-absenteeism-skyrockets-amid-reopenings-how-can-states-and-distr/622058/

School Attendance: Focusing on Engagement and Re-engagement
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolattend.pdf

Are Current Policies & Practices Going in the Right Direction?
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/school%20attendance%20problems.pdf

Parents' guide to 504 plans and IEPs: What they are and how they're different
https://edsource.org/2022/parents-guide-to-504-plans-and-ieps-what-they-are-and-how-theyre-different/669493

How peer tutoring can transform high school academics
https://www.the74million.org/article/how-peer-tutoring-can-transform-high-school-academics-and-benefit-both-student-teachers-and-the-classmates-theyre-helping/

"Everyone has the ability actually to do well in education. It's just the support mechanisms that you give to them..."
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106474

Flux in the Educator Labor Market: Acute Staff Shortages and Projected Superintendent Departures
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA956-9.html

State Report on the Implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act: – U.S. States and Other Jurisdictions. 2019–20 School Year
https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/StateRptImplGFSA-2019-20-508_2022.03.07.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

How can integrating music into your classroom benefit student learning and development?
https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/voices-field/how-does-music-benefit-your-classroom-or-school-community-most?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

School 'resegregation' associated with behavioral issues among Black children
https://www.healio.com/news/primary-care/20220418/school-resegregation-associated-with-behavioral-issues-among-black-children

Community schools can help superintendents transform education
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2022/04/18/community-schools-can-help-superintendents-transform-education/

Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evolvecomm.pdf

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It's really about engagement, it's about inclusion, it's about listening and empowering people to develop efforts in their own communities.

Jill Harkavy-Friedman, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during (April)
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

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

>About how some students are showing support for Ukraine
>Coping and resilience in the time of Covid-19 and structural inequities
>A colleague cautions about child behavioral health research
>A wellness agenda and enhancing a sense of community at school
>Youth have a role to play in improving school safety
>What's happening to maintain the education of Ukrainian students?
>More perspectives on school screening for student problems (e.g., emotional, learning, potential for suicide and violence)
>What we learn from kids
>Welcoming newcomers to school – and can we learn from Europe's response to Ukraine's refugee students?

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 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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The real work of supporting our students' mental health and well-being really does happen on our schools campuses and most importantly at our family dinner tables.

CA state senator Ben Allen

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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

National Initiative for Transforming Student and 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

Transforming Student/Learning Supports: What We've Learned so Far
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/spring2022.pdf

Also see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

And 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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Results!
Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work.

Thomas Edison

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Influential panel raises doubts on youth suicide screening. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force said there's not enough evidence to recommend routinely screening kids who show no obvious signs of being suicidal. The document is open for public comment until May 9, and opposing voices are already weighing in. The task force is an independent group of doctors and other experts that creates guidelines for prevention services in primary care settings, based on an analysis of research. The group's final recommendations often mirror its draft guidance. Insurance coverage decisions are often based on its advice.

https://apnews.com/article/science-health-mental-e2b3dab61e1da5dae8507f6c8a5e61db

Ukrainian children find a welcoming classroom in Berlin. Classes are being taught by two Ukrainians who fled to the German capital. The lessons, part of a volunteer initiative, will prepare the children for entering Berlin's regular school system. The classes for the refugees were put together in only two weeks with raised the funds. They are using rent-free classrooms and advertising their program on the messaging service Telegram. The teachers welcomed them in Ukrainian. They will follow their curriculum from back home and also take German language classes. The three hours of school each weekday will be followed by activities such as playacting, painting or handicrafts.

https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-migration-philanthropy-berlin-42f4e176f02c35a9f8ce1514b33d1636

New funding plan could benefit schools that overidentify students with disabilities. Some disability advocates are concerned that Tennessee's proposed new school funding formula could incentivize school districts to overidentify students with disabilities or even negatively impact what services these students receive. The Tennessee Disability Coalition raised concerns that the student-based allocations, or weights, in the new formula "as they are proposed incentivizes schools to choose a more restrictive environment for their students with disabilities."

The coalition worries that with additional state funding tied to the needs of students, schools might make decisions that make more "fiscal sense for the school" but could result in more structured or restrictive placements for individual students.

https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2022/03/14/disability-advocates-new-tennessee-school-funding-formula-negative-impact/7035362001/

Community college enrollment is down, but skilled-trades programs are booming. Since the pandemic began, more than a million students have held off from going to college, opting to work instead. Two-year public schools have been among the hardest hit — they're down about three-quarters of a million students. Skilled-trades programs are the exception. Across the country, associate's degree programs in fields like HVAC and automotive repair have seen enrollment numbers swell. The heightened demand for students with a two-year degree or a certificate in skilled trades comes at a time when many prospective students are rethinking the value of college. https://www.npr.org/2022/03/28/1086454046/2-year-skilled-trades-programs-booming

Students have been chronically absent this year, data show. Nearly half of Los Angeles Unified students — more than 200,000 children — have been chronically absent this school year, meaning they have missed at least 9% of the academic year. This more than twofold increase from pre-pandemic years reveals yet another hit to education with widespread learning disruptions even as campuses are open for in-person learning. Like almost all education hardships wrought by the pandemic, the impact of missed school is being borne most heavily by the most vulnerable student groups. For Black students the chronic absence rate is nearly 57%. For Latinos, it is 49%. For homeless students it is 68%.

https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-03-31/lausd-students-chronic-absent-amid-covid-pandemic?utm_id=51739&sfmc_id=974632

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From the above story about absentee students:

If you're seeing almost half your kids chronically absent, this isn't a little issue. It's not just a few kids here and there, this is a systems issue. It's been really hard to make sure families feel that school is a healthy and safe place. If you think kids are facing trauma the most important thing you can do is build relationships. That's where kids get engaged, but it's been really tough.

Hedy Chang, Attendance Works

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Comments and sharing from the field

1. We were asked to share the following

>"Here is my recently published article on how personal trauma affected my self reflection of supporting students in need, specifically ELL's. Not sure if it fits your sharing, but through my own struggles I have tried to voice empathy and care as the main vehicle to support students and their families. As someone in my 40's with privilege, I realized if re-learning how to hear and cope with trauma was so hard on me, how much more difficult it must be for students without those advantages and who have a stigma attached to asking for help."
https://voices.njtesol-njbe.org/annual-voices-journal-2022/reflections-learned-through-trauma/

>I hope this message finds you doing well. I'm reaching out to make you aware of my latest accomplishment. It was a 2-yr project that I wasn't sure I would survive, but I did! If you're inclined to read it, I hope you find it helpful. There's a full-blown toolkit in the book called the SELFI that I think you will find useful. Take care and let me hear from you. So much is happening with SEL.
Essentials of Social Emotional Learning (SEL): The Complete Guide for Schools and Practitioners (Essentials of Psychological Assessment)
https://www.amazon.com/dp/1119709199/ref=cm_sw_r_awdo_M506SNTW756Y5GEBCPZ8

2. Response to our post – *Mental Health in Schools: More than Providing School-Based Services*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/3-31-22.pdf

"I don't know how relevant others may find my thoughts on the matter, nor are they new or unique ideas, but when I think of mental health in school my first thought is stigma and isolation. I think we know that schools are ill equipped to handle mental illness, but inadequacy doesn't start or stop with school counselors or services. Mental health is not limited to students who suffer from diagnosable conditions, nor are lifesaving interventions isolated to the singular (and likely least used) office in the school where psychological services are provided. Mental health in schools requires a shift in school culture, initiatives and policies need to focus on school wide mental health education and literacy because suicide is the second leading cause of death for students and everyone in their lives needs to be taught to notice the signs and equipped to have a conversation. 74% of teenagers will turn to a friend for help, 25% will reach out to a teacher, and only 9% from a professional. We don't need more professionals; we need to change the conversation around mental health."

3. A colleague referred to us in a posting to his colleagues:
"Some of you may not be familiar with the fabulous work that the Center for Mental Health in Schools & Student/Learning Supports has been doing for years. There has probably never been a more important time in our local community's history to attend to the mental health needs of youth in school. I continue to be amazed by the dedicated work that my friends have been doing for decades. If you haven't already done so, bookmark http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ for cutting-edge, practical information about this crucial area in the lives of our youth, especially those most vulnerable to the disruption caused by the pandemic."

Don't forget that 4 o'clock is homework time.

*O.K., but if I don't remember,
go ahead without me!*

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

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