



**30 years  
& counting**

**School Practitioner  
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network  
for Sharing and Interchange**



*November 14, 2016*

**Request from a Parent**  
**>Weighing the pros and cons of a school change**

- Center Comments
- Comments from Colleagues in the Field

**Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives**

**Sharing from a Colleague About a Previous Topic**  
**>About strategies for enhancing parent/family involvement in schools**

**Featured Set of Center Resources for**  
**>ESSA planning**

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**Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested. The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.**

**For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the weekly exchange, send an email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

**For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>**

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**Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*,\* this is being sent to and forwarded by over 114,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.**

**R**quest from a Parent: "My daughter is 10+ yrs old. She is in the 5th grade in a small town elementary school. I am planning to move to a nearby city which has much better schools,. I have some hesitation about when to make a move. Will it be good to make change to a better school in a new place in the 6th grade(elementary school) or I should wait till she is ready to move to 7th grade(middle school). I am not only looking at academics, but also at extracurricular activities. If she moves after the 5th grade, she gets one year of elementary in the 6th grade in the city schools and then moves to the middle school in 7th grade I would like to know what the latest research recommends. What aspects should we keep in mind?"

**C**enter Comments: When we are asked about advice related to a specific student, we can only offer some generalities. So much depends on knowing the individual involved and the specifics of a given situation. In general, we recommend:

- *seeking out a local professional who is well-informed about the concerns raised.* Such an educational advisor can evaluate the student and the situation and help to weigh the pros and cons about changing schools/districts.
- *talking with the student about how s/he feels about a school/home change.* (e.g., Would s/he like a new school? Would s/he prefer to stay where s/he is? What does s/he think are the pros and cons?).

While every situation is unique, there is some research that might be helpful. One clear and reasonable research conclusion is that the fewer moves the better. See

>*Which children are most affected by mobility?* <https://www.nap.edu/read/12853/chapter/3>

If a school change is made, we stress the importance of supports for the transition. See our online clearinghouse Quick Find on

>*Supports for Transitions* – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm)

One of the resources there contains specific suggestions for situations where a student changes schools. See

>*Easing the Impact of Student Mobility* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/easimp.htm>

## **C**omments from a Colleague in the Field:

We shared this request with a number of colleagues and here is the first response we received:

“In NC, our middle school begins in 6<sup>th</sup> grade so I would be sure that the parent investigates the area she is considering a move to and also reaches out to potential schools to investigate their culture. In some areas, everyone in an elementary school remains together at the same middle school. While they join other elementary feeder schools at the middle school (and therefore everyone is learning new faces), some students have the comfort of developing strong bonds with students from their elementary school to bring into the challenging world of middle school. In other communities, magnet options and other special schools separate students from their familiar peers and all begin again. These options, however, are typically only available to those individuals already in the community when the lotteries and other entrance timelines can be met during the preceding school year.

Once the options are understood and the parent has been able to get some input from school officials and any contacts in the community regarding the culture, I would advise that the child is asked to provide input. While children do not control adult decisions, it sounds like there is some flexibility here on the adult side and giving the student some

input on whether he or she wants to transition early (and therefore twice) or later (and therefore only once) would be helpful. Even if the adults decide differently, the child needs to have a voice and express their anticipated challenges, worries, and opportunities. Every child is different and develops at a different pace. What does this child need in terms of skills, opportunities, and supports to thrive through this transition?

Regardless of when a student transitions at this age, it is a challenging time. We know the brain is in its highest time of growth and that the rational control center is no longer in play from around 11-15 (or until mid-20s depending on which aspect of growth you're discussing). We also know that this is the time of life when peers become a stronger social support to a child, so ensuring that there is access to build and develop those relationships is critical. Therefore, it is important as a parent to understand what to expect in terms of normal development and know when their child might need more support."

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**Invitation to listserv participants:**

*What do you suggest to help families making such a decision?*

**Share lessons learned. Comments. Recommendations.  
And let us know what's happening locally?**

**Send your responses to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

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**S**haring from a Colleague About a Previous Topic

**>Strategies for enhancing parent/family involvement in schools**

In response to the 10/17/16 School practitioner, we received this comment from a colleague:

"I thought getting parents involved would be the hardest thing to tackle and it has been remarkably easy for several reasons.

First I have a parent and staff member who like to organize events for families. We host a number of different kinds of events. We have a Friday care fair with a Par Course that we set up using service providers within the community. We just had a college night for 5th grade parents hosted by a counselor from each high school and we play jeopardy to see what they learned from the talk, the Home and School Club provides pizza. We hosted a family night after hours at the local public library. We host a loteria night and a multicultural night and mother/son and father/daughter dances. Different people organize each. Teachers are welcome to attend but not required. We calendar all events in August and advertise them heavily. Many of the events have food trucks or inexpensive food for sale. We have created a party atmosphere--there is music at most events. It turns out, if you plan it, they will often come. But we do very little talking at the parents. We invite them to an event and then the principal moves around the event talking to the parents, welcoming them and chatting about whatever is going on. Whatever we do, we try to make it interactive and informal. We stress that we know they can't come to everything but should come to whatever they can.

Second, the principal spends a lot of time talking to students on the playground, before and after school. The more the students feel comfortable, the more they want to come out to these events. At assemblies or at student evening performances, the principal just walks through the gym/auditorium and says hi to every family prior to its start. It is all in the tone of welcome, 'we're glad you could make it, you will enjoy this.' Just talking about whatever the students or the adults want to talk about opens an invitation for more conversations. The more we do this, the more reliably we get parents to show up. Saying hello as they stream in when they drop off and goodbye as they stream out also helps.

Everything we tell teachers to do with students, the front office staff and administrator should do with both children and parents. The message is consistent and clear--‘we're happy you are here!’

As this has established itself over time, the principal then gets to know families and can invite the parent to do more. Would you like to serve on the school site council? Would you like to help for an hour on field day? The more the principal has had these conversations, the more the parents say yes. But it starts out as an invitation--come play with us, come see what your child has done this year, come to game night or movie night or math night. Letting it be less of a big deal pays off in more attendance. These are the lessons I am still learning. It has been very rewarding for everyone.”

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## **F**eatured Set of Center Resources for **>ESSA planning**

Every state is now in the process of gathering information from a wide range of stakeholders as state planning for the Every Student Succeeds Act is developed. With specific respect to improving existing student/learning supports, we have been analyzing the likely trend in such planning. See:

*>Analyses of ESSA’s Focus on Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching –*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essaanalyses.pdf>

Two critical problems noted so far are that:

- (1) Supports for students continue to be fragmented and marginalized as states respond to sections of federal guidance.
- (2) The focus on the multitier student support (MTSS) model is not accounting for its severe limitations as a framework for student and learning supports.

The most recent resource developed for our series of policy reports and notes on ESSA offers an example of how a plan might address the above concerns. It stresses (a) an expanded policy framework in the introduction and (b) a framework for a section 5.A.2 on *support for students*. See this resource at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improveessa.pdf> .

We encourage stakeholders (especially those concerned with enhancing equity of opportunity, those concerned with addressing barriers to learning and teaching, those concerned with the waning focus on student and learning supports) to bring the above concerns and recommendations to the planning process.

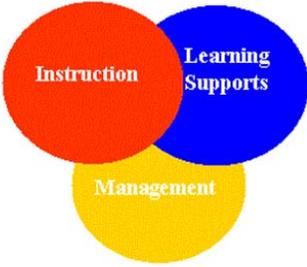
As we prepare for the Center’s January 23<sup>rd</sup> invitational National Summit on “ESSA and Learning Supports: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching to Enhance Equity of Opportunity,” we are looking for

- more information about what is happening at state and local levels with respect to ESSA planning
- examples of any planning that offers an innovative and transformative approach moving toward unifying and developing a comprehensive and equitable system of student and learning supports.

So please share what you can! Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

Also, we have sent invitations to the January summit to all state chief school officers. It will help if stakeholders concerned about the above matters communicate with and encourage them to accept the invitation.

***THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THE INTERCHANGES BECOME!***  
**Sign-up for the Listserv mailings – email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**  
**Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.**  
**We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange***  
**on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>**  
**and on *Facebook* (access from the Center’s home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> )**



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\*For information about the  
***National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports,***  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

And note that our new book detailing the prototypes and related resources is now in press.

For a preview, contact [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)