

**School Practitioner Community of Practice**  
(A network for sharing & exchange)  
(February 3, 2021)

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

This resource is from the  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

*So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).*

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For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly,  
send an email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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

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**For discussion and interchange:**

**>Share experiences about schooling during the pandemic**

This community of practice *Practitioner* strives to encourage sharing and exchanges. It seems like an appropriate time to reflect on the past year of schooling. We want to encourage sharing from teachers, support staff, administrators, students, family members, and others. Let's hear the good and the bad.

As a start, here is a recent piece from a news source.

From: *Blank screens, distracted students: Michigan teachers on COVID classrooms*

<https://www.bridgemi.com/talent-education/blank-screens-distracted-students-michigan-teachers-covid-classrooms>

Bridge Michigan recently hosted a virtual roundtable with six teachers from across Michigan who led classrooms this fall from kindergarten through 12th grade. While some said the experience of teaching online has made them better teachers, they worry that the learning loss among a portion of their students during the pandemic will be felt in classrooms for years.

The roundtable offered a sobering window into the world of pandemic education faced by the state's roughly 100,000 teachers. ...

Some districts still have not reopened classrooms, while others have lurched between in-person teaching and online instruction, as COVID-19 cases rose and fell across regions of the state. Michigan health officials ordered all high schools closed from mid-November through the holiday break as Michigan cases skyrocketed, noting that the virus spread was greater in higher grades. Switching between classroom and online learning has been tough for students and teachers, according to educators who participated in the Bridge discussion.

One teacher described it as the worst experience of her professional life. Several said they were frustrated and depressed. And all agreed the COVID pandemic has exposed or expanded learning gaps among students.

### Quotes from the article

“When they get back in the classroom, they are extremely grateful,” said a middle school special education teacher. “But when we were told we had to go back to virtual, you could see them being crushed. It’s just impossible for them to get on all the Zoom [classes] and keep up with the work.”...

“The seniors are not covering as much material, because we don’t meet as frequently, but we have about 90 percent attendance, students are doing the work, they’re asking for help. They came in with a skillset that was strong already. But the freshmen are really struggling. I probably have about half the class that is not passing right now. The transition from middle to high school, it’s a big jump in rigor.”

“The motivation is just not there to even get on a Zoom. And we can’t pull them along because they aren’t even on Zoom.”

A special education teacher said she feels teachers are sometimes labeled as villains by families that see their children struggling with homebound learning. For most of the fall, she taught in-person while also talking into a camera to students enrolled online. The district switched to fully remote learning in early November when there “weren’t enough bodies” who weren’t sick or in quarantine to lead classrooms. “Parents say [schools] should be open [because] families who want a virtual option have a virtual option. But what they fail to realize is I don’t have an option. I have [fellow teachers] who have medical conditions who can’t return to work.”

The teachers participating in the Bridge roundtable acknowledged that many of the challenges were likely unavoidable during the worst pandemic in a century, and that working through them may well improve their teaching in the long run....”

**Listserv Participants:** *Please share!* [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

### **For discussion and interchange:**

#### **>Meeting the Needs of Students During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic**

As pressure mounts for schools to reopen, priorities and plans are being announced across the country for moving forward (e.g., see *Due North Minnesota’s Education Plan* <https://kstp.com/kstpImages/repository/cs/files/Due%20North%20Education%20Plan.pdf> ).

It’s good to see the increased concern for mental health and ensuring every student learns in a safe and nurturing environment.

***At the same time, we foresee three fundamental long-standing problems that will undermine the good intentions.*** These are:

- (1) ongoing marginalization and fragmentation of policies and practices addressing barriers to learning and teaching because these needs are not prioritized as a primary and essential component for accomplishing whole student development and whole school improvement
- (2) framing the nature and scope of interventions too narrowly to meet the factors interfering with the school success of too many students
- (3) failure to enhance the operational infrastructure at districts and schools to provide the essential leadership for transforming current marginalized and fragmented interventions into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports

***If policy makers and education planners really mean to meet the needs, this is a critical time to deal with these problems.***

For brief outlines about these matters, see the following recent resources:

- >*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>  
(While this brief was prepared for California, it has relevance for every state.)
- >*Have Districts and Schools Established a Leadership Team to Meet the Challenge of the Increased Number of Students Manifesting Learning, Behavior, and Emotional Problems?* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/leadership.pdf>
- >*Finding and Reengaging Students who Went Missing During the COVID Pandemic*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Findingdisconnectedstudents.pdf>

For in-depth presentations, see the following books provided by the Center at no cost:

- >*Improving School Improvement*
- >*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
- >*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*  
(all three can be accessed at - [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.htm) )

### **For discussion and interchange:**

#### **>School connectedness in these challenging times**

We received a request that reminded us about the need for an exchange related to increasing the sense of connectedness and purpose in the lives of young people.

Here's a start:

(1) From: CDC [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school\\_connectedness.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school_connectedness.htm)

“School connectedness—the belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals—is an important protective factor. Research has shown that young people who feel connected to their school are less likely to engage in many risk behaviors, including early sexual initiation, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, and violence and gang involvement.

Students who feel connected to their school are also more likely to have better academic achievement, including higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance, and stay in school longer....

[from their strategy guide]

Six strategies that teachers, administrators, other school staff, and parents can implement to increase the extent to which students feel connected to school:

- Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement, academic achievement, and staff empowerment.
- Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.
- Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.
- Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.
- Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.
- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.”

- (2) *Building Connection: A Free COVID-19 Program for Schools* -- This resource puts the challenges of connectedness into the current situation of the pandemic and has suggestions for monthly themes. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/research-initiatives/covidschools>  
*Substantial research indicates that children can weather many kinds of hardships if they have caring relationships with other children and adults. It's critical for schools to take steps to assure both that children have these relationships and that they are developing their own capacities to both connect with and care for others and to create strong, inclusive communities.... As 74 million children face this next phase of their "new normal," they risk increased social isolation, disconnection, and problem behaviors online. Our new, free program is designed to help schools respond to these needs during the global pandemic.*

Here are some additional resources related to this concern:

> *A case for school connectedness*

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr05/vol62/num07/A-Case-for-School-Connectedness.aspx>

> *School connectedness* <https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/SchoolConnectedness.pdf>

> *Social Media Use, School Connectedness, and Academic Performance Among Adolescents*  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-019-00543-6>

> *The conceptualization and construction of the Self in a Social Context—Social Connectedness Scale: A multidimensional scale for high school students* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.12.001>

> *Adolescents' Personality Traits and Positive Psychological Orientations: Relations with Emotional Distress and Life Satisfaction Mediated by School Connectedness*  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12187-019-9619-y>

### **Is this topic being discussed in your locale?**

***What's being done to help students feel connected with school, peers, teachers, student support staff?***

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

**Biden Details Plan for Reopening Schools.** Through an executive order, Biden will direct the Education Department and Department of Health and Human Services to provide guidance on how to reopen safely for in-person learning and operate in a way that allows schools to stay open.

[https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2021-01-21/biden-details-plan-for-reopening-schools?utm\\_source=ECS+Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=ff22b0a817-ED\\_CLIPS\\_01\\_22\\_2021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_1a2b00b930-ff22b0a817-53599575](https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2021-01-21/biden-details-plan-for-reopening-schools?utm_source=ECS+Subscribers&utm_campaign=ff22b0a817-ED_CLIPS_01_22_2021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1a2b00b930-ff22b0a817-53599575)

### **>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

*Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's Considerations*

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

*Back to School Planning: Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers*

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

*A National Agenda for Children's Mental Health*

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/a-national-agenda-for-childrens-mental-health>

*What lessons does special education hold for personalized learning?*

<https://hechingerreport.org/what-lessons-does-special-education-hold-for-personalized-learning>

*COVID-19 and the Educational Equity Crisis: Evidence on Learning Loss From the CORE Data Collaborative* <https://edpolicyinca.org/newsroom/covid-19-and-educational-equity-crisis>  
*How to build empathy and strengthen school community*  
<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community>  
*Center for online learning and students with disabilities*  
<http://www.centeronlinelearning.res.ku.edu/>  
*Genes, Environments, and Time: The Biology of Adversity and Resilience*  
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2021/01/21/peds.2020-1651>

### **Latest Hot Topic and Commentaries from the Center:**

- > *Impact of the Pandemic on Low-Income College Students*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm>
  - > *Restructuring Schools to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching in the COVID 19 Context and Beyond* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/restructuring.pdf>
  - > *Mental Health in Schools: Much More than Part of the System of Care Delivery System*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/12-23.pdf>
  - > *About trauma-informed, ACES, SEL, disengaged students, etc. etc.: Increased Concern, Misdirected Action* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/12-17.pdf>
  - > *As Students Return to School ... focusing on mental health concerns*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/12-10.pdf>
  - > *About budget cuts and the need to transform student/learning supports*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/budgetcov.pdf>
  - > *Finding and Reengaging Students who Went Missing During the COVID Pandemic*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Findingdisconnectedstudents.pdf>
- More commentaries at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm> and <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinit3.html>

### **A Few Upcoming Webinars**

- 2/9 – Educating your Child with Mental Health Needs: Special Education
- 2/10 – Mental Health Awareness
- 2/10 – Transforming Your Leadership And Those You Lead
- 2/11 – How Parents Can Effectively Communicate with the IEP Team
- 2/16 – Build a Positive School Culture via a Student Leadership Team
- 2/16 – Stakeholder and Family Engagement
- 2/23 – Beyond Equity - the Lens Through Which We Lead
- 2/23 – The Resiliency Journey

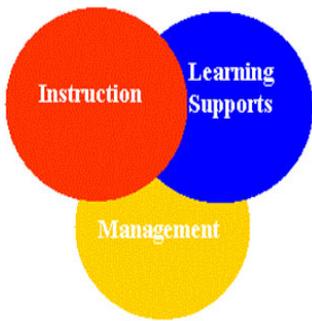
*How Learning Happens* (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.  
<https://www.edutopia.org/how-learning-happens>

Webinar recording: Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth  
<https://preventioninstitute.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4bf5a36bd9f72789255d49a&id=17f472fea9&e=b6757fd9d7>

For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts –  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>



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

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

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**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)

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

**For new sign-ups – 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/>)**