

## **School Practitioner Community of Practice**

(A network for sharing & exchange)

July 3, 2019

### Topics for discussion

- >**Will the College Admissions Scandal Impact Students With Disabilities?**
- >**Concerns about Special Accommodations**

### New Reports on special education:

- >**Special Education: Varied State Criteria May Contribute to Differences in Percentages of Children Served**
- >**A Student's Disability Status Depends on Where They Go to School**

### Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

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

- >Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
- >Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
- >Training and job opportunities
- >Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

This resource is from the

**Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA**

Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

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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### Topic for Discussion –

- >**Will the College Admissions Scandal Impact Students With Disabilities?**

Excerpt from a report on National Public Radio:

*Students with disabilities and disability rights advocates are among those angry — and feeling victimized — after the arrests in the college admissions and bribery scandal...Federal authorities say that those involved in the bribery scheme took advantage of testing accommodations on the SAT and ACT meant for students with disabilities. ... clients "seek extended time for their children on college*

entrance exams, which included having the children purport to have learning disabilities in order to obtain the required medical documentation," the Justice Department found....

<https://www.npr.org/2019/03/14/703006521/why-the-college-admissions-scandal-hurts-students-with-disabilities>

Excerpt from U.S. News & World Report:

*... the specific act of fraudulently obtaining a testing accommodation – a civil right for people with disabilities under federal law – prompted outcry from advocates of students with disabilities.... The scandal also reignited concerns about whether some wealthy, well-connected parents are securing testing accommodations for their children who don't have a disability as a way to eke out an advantage on college entrance exams....*

<https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2019-03-15/a-victim-in-the-college-admissions-scandal-students-with-disabilities>

Excerpt from Education Week:

*... Allegations of a complex and illegal scheme by wealthy families to get their children into top universities has students with disabilities, their families, and advocates worried about the backlash. In the indictment released last week, federal authorities charge that some students lied about having disabilities so they could get special accommodations on college admissions tests. As the details spilled out, people with disabilities took to social media to say that unsympathetic teachers, test officials and professors already make it hard on students with disabilities, particularly disabilities that are "invisible," such as dyslexia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Having accommodations and disabilities linked to a scam is devastating, they said....*

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/03/20/students-with-disabilities-fear-scandals-fallout.html>

## Topic for Discussion –

### >Concerns About Special Accommodations

Accommodations are a controversial topic. Advocates argue accommodations are essential in addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Critics argue they often are provided inappropriately, and this engenders unfair advantages to some students.

For purposes of discussion, here are examples of accommodations that university students with disabilities receive through campus offices established to support them.

(1) Classroom accommodations:

- Breaks during class
- Peer Notetaking
- Adjusted assignment deadlines in consultation
- Adjusted attendance requirements in consultation
- Disability Seating
- Clear earplugs worn as-needed
- Audio Record Lectures
- Sonocent Audio Notetaker (for information about this, see <https://sonocent.com/audio-notetaker>)
- Computer for notes in class
- Livescribe Smartpen (for information on this, see <https://www.livescribe.com/en-us/smartpen/>)

(2) Test Accommodations

- Extra Time: 50%
- Distraction-Reduced Exam Environment
- Time - compensated breaks: 5 minutes per hour
- Computer
- Voice to text system (Dragon Naturally Speaking)
- Clear earplugs worn as-needed

For some resources related to this concern, see the Center’s online clearinghouse quick finds on:

- > *Assessment and screening* – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1405\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p1405_01.htm)
- > *Misdiagnosis* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/misdiagnosis.htm>
- > *Prevention for students at risk* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/prevention.html>
- > *Response to intervention* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/responsetointervention.htm>

## Our Center’s Approach to Accommodations

We view accommodations as a natural facet of personalized instruction and special assistance. Accommodations are essential in accounting for individual differences in motivation and capabilities and so apply to all students and all aspects of pre-K through graduate education. And accounting for such differences is essential to reducing the opportunity and achievement gaps.

Center resources that discuss this include:

- > *Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning* (a Continuing Ed package) <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/personalize1.pdf>
- > *Personalizing Classroom Instruction to Account for Motivational and Developmental Differences* (a journal article) [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/19\\_personalizing\\_classroom\\_instruction.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/19_personalizing_classroom_instruction.pdf)
- > *Improving School Improvement* (an online book) [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)
- > *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide* (an online book) [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

For more on accommodations, see our online clearinghouse topic page on *Special Education* for links to resources from our Center and from others – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/idea.htm>

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**What are your views about accommodations?**

**Any questions and comments  
about other relevant matters!!**

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

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## New Reports on special education:

- (1) *Special Education: Varied State Criteria May Contribute to Differences in Percentages of Children Served* – <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-348>

Excerpt:

...Differences in states' eligibility criteria and the difficulty of identifying and evaluating some children suspected of having disabilities may contribute to differences in the percentages of children receiving special education services across states.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the primary federal special education law, requires states to have policies and procedures in place to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the state who need special education services are identified, located, and evaluated.

These policies and procedures, known as “Child Find, are generally implemented by local school districts. IDEA gives states some latitude in setting

eligibility criteria and defining disability categories.

In addition, states may determine their own processes for identifying and evaluating children. As a result, a child eligible for services in one state might be ineligible in another.... school district officials in all four states GAO visited cited challenges in properly identifying and evaluating English Learner students, as districts do not always have staff who are conversant in a child's first language and skilled in distinguishing language proficiency from disabilities.

... About 13 percent of children aged 3 through 21 enrolled in public schools received special education services in school year 2015-16.... The percentage of the population served under IDEA varies across states. For example, in fall 2016, the percentages of the population aged 6 through 21 served in individual states ranged from 6.4 percent to 15.1 percent. Concerns about the difficulties identifying and evaluating children for special education have been raised by the media, experts, and special education advocates....

(2) *A Student's Disability Status Depends on Where They Go to School* – <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/05/190529084830.htm>

Excerpt:

A new study suggests that the likelihood of a child being classified with an educational disability depends on the characteristics of their school and how distinctive they are from their peers. The study found that disability classifications do not occur reliably across schools. The study used annual child- and school-level data from 378,919 children in a large urban school district between 2006 and 2012. The study's lead author and an assistant professor of sociology said disability classifications are inconsistent and subjective. "Kids may have the same test scores and same social background, but the school they attend determines whether they'll get a disability classification," she said. Shifrer said the classifications are meant to help children but can also limit their learning opportunities or be stigmatizing. "Their peers think differently of them, their teachers think differently of them, they think differently of themselves because people interpret these as biological diagnoses," she said. "But what our study shows is that they're based on things that are socially rooted and subjective. ... No one should feel like this is a firm statement on what this child is capable of or what their trajectory should be."

The research found that students who are distinctive relative to their peers have a greater likelihood of being classified with a disability. For example, a low-achiever in a higher-achieving school is more likely to be classified as disabled than a low-achiever in a lower-achieving school. Among children with similar achievement levels, black children in schools with a lower proportion of black classmates are more likely to be classified as disabled than black children in schools with a higher proportion of black classmates. The same is true for English language learners. The study also found that children are more likely to be classified if they attend schools with a higher teacher-to-student ratio or a wealthier student body population. This may be because teachers are able to devote more time and attention to individual students and go through the special education process, or that parents in those schools are more likely to advocate for disability designations that would benefit their children....

### **Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern**

*A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Test Administration Accommodations for Students with Disabilities* –

[https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/For%20Educators/Accommodation\\_Manual\\_August\\_2018.pdf](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/For%20Educators/Accommodation_Manual_August_2018.pdf)

*Successful Collaboration between General Education and Special Education Teachers: A Case Study* – <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED579898>

*Tips for Managing Social Anxiety –*

[https://childmind.org/article/tips-managing-social-anxiety/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=READ%20MORE&utm\\_campaign=Weekly-06-25-19](https://childmind.org/article/tips-managing-social-anxiety/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=READ%20MORE&utm_campaign=Weekly-06-25-19)

*Federal funding streams and strategies to improve conditions for learning –*

<https://ccsso.org/resource-library/federal-funding-streams-and-strategies-improve-conditions-learning-resource-guide>

*How Well Do State Legislatures Focus on Improving School Efforts to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching & Re-engage Disconnected Students?*

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

*Body Image in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youngsters –*

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

*44 Children’s Books About Mental Health –*

[https://childmind.org/article/best-childrens-books-about-mental-health/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=CLICK%20HERE&utm\\_campaign=Weekly-06-04-19](https://childmind.org/article/best-childrens-books-about-mental-health/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=CLICK%20HERE&utm_campaign=Weekly-06-04-19)

*A Multilevel Investigation into Contextual Reliability in the Designation of Cognitive Health Conditions among U.S. Children (2019). By Shifrer & Fish. In *Society and Mental Health*.*

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2156869319847243>

*Strategies to Combat Bullying: Parental Responses to Bullies, Bystanders, and Victims (2019).*

*By Stives, May, Pilkinton, Bethel, & Eakin. In *Youth & Society*, 51, 358-376.*

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0044118X18756491#>

A Few Upcoming Webinars:

7/10 - Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services –

<https://nche.ed.gov/group-training/>

7/10 - Prepare Students for the Transition Out of High School –

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/webinar-series>

For other relevant webinars, see <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 enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development, and enhancing school climate.*

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**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/>)**