

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

(November, 2021 Vol. 26 #2) – 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



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

>Opening the Classroom Door to Enhance Student/Learning Supports

Opening the doors is essential to enhancing in-classroom collaboration to improve classroom instruction and learning and enhance equity of opportunity. Such collaboration enables the incorporation of practices that engage and accommodate students who are not doing well and those with special needs.

As former teacher Claudia Graziano related the following in an *Edutopia* article:

“New teachers, however naive and idealistic, often know before they enter the profession that the salaries are paltry, the class sizes large, and the supplies scant. What they don't know is how little support . . . they can expect once the door is closed and the textbooks are opened.”

The point seems evident: Teachers need a system of supports in the classroom and schoolwide to help, especially when students are not responding effectively to instruction. Teachers cannot and should not be expected to go it alone. This means classrooms and schools need to enable an open-door policy, albeit one that keeps schools safe.

Even with concerns about COVID, it is feasible and, indeed essential, to open the classroom door to invite in various workers with a view to enhancing student support, staff development, and positive outcomes for all. The objectives include increasing co-teaching and team teaching and teachers collaborating with student/learning support staff in the classroom, as well as bringing in volunteers and mentors to work in targeted ways to enhance social and academic support.

The crux of the matter is to enhance in-class collaborations. Collaboration and teaming are key to facilitating personalized instruction and special assistance, creating a stimulating and manageable learning environment, and generally addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Opening the doors

also provides opportunities to broaden the range of enrichment activities by inviting in community colleagues and volunteers who can further enhance engagement and learning by contributing their special knowledge, skills, and talents.

Of particular importance, collaboration provides an avenue to improving personalized on-the-job professional development for teachers and for student/learning support staff (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses). Preparation programs for professional support personnel generally do not prepare them to work in classrooms; teachers' preparation programs do not teach them how to collaborate with and learn from support staff. There is much for these professionals to learn from each other. For example, student/learning support have specialized expertise. Their training prepares them to provide targeted direct assistance and support to students and their families. Currently, they tend to offer what they know through consultation with colleagues which is viewed by them as a form of collaboration. However, effective collaboration with teachers involves much more than consultation and making recommendations. It encompasses learning from teachers about classroom teaching and then working with teachers in their classrooms to improve how classroom design and practices can more effectively address learning, behavior, and emotional problems. And this can happen in a natural way and on a daily basis when they are regularly teamed in classrooms (and their personnel preparation programs encompass an emphasis on such teaming and mutual learning).

For more on improving how classrooms can personalized instruction and provide special assistance when students need it, see Part II in *Improving School Improvement* available at this time as a free resource at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html .

A Note About the Role of Technology

When schools closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology became indispensable. And this led some advocates of enhancing equity of opportunity to suggest transforming public education on a technological foundation.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeanneallen/2020/03/13/how-technological-innovation-in-education-is-taking-on-covid-19/#22ea6a2a7bc7>

The problem with *overemphasizing* technology as a solution to educational inequities is that it *overrelies* on the belief that directly delivering instruction is sufficient. That is, the approach woefully ignores the need to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students (and families).

Advanced technology *does offer tools* for improving almost every facet of efforts to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development. Technology is expanding, exponentially; the possibilities seem endless. Building on technology as tools for aiding all students, classrooms especially need to be more versatile in working effectively with students who are not quite as ready as others in terms of their motivational readiness and current capabilities.

Clearly, even before COVID-19, a brave new world has emerged. There is much for all of us to learn about advanced technological applications. We all need to grasp the big picture and develop a plan and an agenda for integrating such applications into the daily efforts to enhance the development, learning and general well-being of all students.

For a general overview of the use of technology in teaching and learning, see <https://www.ed.gov/oii-news/use-technology-teaching-and-learning>

For examples of using interactive technology to assist in addressing barriers to learning, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/technol.pdf>

>Using some of the relief funds to catalyze system improvements to better address learning, behavior, and emotional problems

The influx of relief funds presents opportunities to improve how a district's schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. While short-term relief funding often is used primarily to respond to immediate problems, it is wise also to use some of the funds as a catalyst for making fundamental longer-range system improvements that can help the many (and not just a few) students experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Specifically, districts can use some of the pandemic relief funding to

- unify student and learning supports into a cohesive component and
- move forward with developing the component into a comprehensive and equitable system.

In a previous communication (<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/10-6-21.pdf>), we highlighted how to get started as follows:

(1) Establish a Learning Supports Leadership Team (See *What is a learning supports leadership team?* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Report/resource_oriented_teams.pdf)

(2) Have the team

(a) map existing resources for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students

Every school has resources devoted to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. But in most schools, the efforts are fragmented and marginalized and there are significant gaps with respect to what's needed. Schools that do such mapping are able to use it as a basis for evaluating the current state of development, doing a gap analysis, and setting priorities for moving forward.

To help with mapping, here are two aids that not only identify existing resources, but do so in a way that organizes planning to improve a school's system of student/learning supports and clarifies critical system gaps:

>Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>

>An Aid for Initial Listing of Current Resources at a School for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/listingresources.pdf>

(b) analyze what's working and what needs strengthening and identify critical gaps

(c) develop a set of prioritized recommendations for moving toward a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports

Such a system is essential for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and enabling all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school. It encompasses resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and cognitive supports in the classroom and schoolwide. Properly designed and implemented, such a system can reduce opportunity and achievement gaps. (See resources for system development listed on the next page.)

(d) present the recommendations for approval

(3) As soon as a set of proposed improvements are approved, establish a workgroup to develop a strategic action plan that details the who, what, and when of the steps for moving forward.

(4) Assign the Learning Supports Leadership Team to guide implementation of the strategic plan.

A note ABOUT MTSS

With the widespread adoption of tiered systems of support, it is essential to use the tier concept as a starting point rather than as the answer in building a unified, comprehensive, and equitable approach to student/learning supports. This involves

- a significant elaboration of the tiers of an intervention continuum as commonly conceived

and

- the addition of the cross-cutting domain categories of student/learning supports that more fully account for the many daily interventions schools must pursue to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

Each of these matters is covered in Chapter 12 (Rethinking Schoolwide Student/Learning Supports) in the free book from the Center entitled: *Improving School Improvement* - access by going to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

“ I am a faculty member in a school counseling master's program. I used your text and the matrix/mapping tool for analyzing learning supports and reducing barriers to learning for supports as an assignment for students in both the School Administration and School Counseling programs. Students found this tool to be extremely useful in conceptualizing a holistic and comprehensive approach.”

Additional Resources Introducing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

For a brief introductory document, see

> *Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf>

Other brief intros can be found in Section A of the Center's *System Change Toolkit*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

The *System Change Toolkit* also has several guidance documents. For example:

> *Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superstart.pdf>

> *Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf>

> *Leadership at a School Site for Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentssupport/toolkit/aidd.pdf>

For a detailed presentation, see the free books that can be accessed on the Center's website

> *Improving School Improvement*

> *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

> *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

All 3 can be accessed at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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“Despite the adversity we have faced, I am more optimistic about the future of education than ever before. I have seen teachers face unprecedented challenges with determination, creativity, and love for their students. I have seen families come together to support the education of their children. I have seen education leaders make tough decisions knowing that they will not be popular, but they are putting students’ needs first! I have seen students flourish. Their resilience is our inspiration “

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

The Readiness, Resilience and Recovery Tool: An Emerging Approach to Enhance Readiness Amidst Disruption <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs43477-021-00011-6>

Adolescence Amid a Pandemic: Short- and Long-Term Implications
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jora.12671>

Supporting Teen Mental Health: Back to School During a Pandemic
<https://www.learnhowtobecome.org/career-resource-center/teen-mental-health-guide/>

Help for Cutting and Other Self-Injury
<https://childmind.org/article/what-drives-self-injury-and-how-to-treat-it/>

Cultural Adaptations to Youth Mental Health Interventions: A Systematic Review
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10826-021-02058-3>

Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health during COVID-19 Era (U.S. Department of Education)
<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>

Talk. They Hear You. Student Assistance Resources Guide
https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Digital_Download/PEP20-03-01-078.pdf

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (School Guide)
<https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.aspx>

Wildfire Preparedness for K-12 Schools and Institutions of Higher Education
https://rems.ed.gov/docs/WildfireFactSheet_508C.pdf

Social Determinants of Health
<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

How a Permanent Expansion of the Child Tax Credit Could Affect Poverty
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/how-permanent-expansion-child-tax-credit-could-affect-poverty>

COVID-19-Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death in the United States
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/10/06/peds.2021-053760.full.pdf>

A Guide to Anti-Racist Data Collection for: Case Workers and Other Frontline Staff
<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Our-Identities-Ourselves-Frontline-Workers-FINAL.pdf>
For the poster guide, see
<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/POSTER-Our-Identities-Ourselves-A-Guide-to-Anti-Racist-Data-Collection-for-Case-Workers-and-other-Frontline-Staff.pdf>

What research tells us about gifted education
<https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-what-research-tells-us-about-gifted-education/>

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“Even though the world is at a standstill, I got to keep on moving and progressing and evolving as a human being. Twenty years from now, I hope to tell my children that there can be good things that can come out of times of darkness.”

Alanis Broussard (age 18)
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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during October

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

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

- >How are schools currently addressing the many COVID-related problems arising for students?
- >Responses related to position statement about mental health in schools
- >How Are Immigrants/Refugees and Other Newcomers Being Transitioned-In at Local Schools?
- >At this stage in the pandemic: How Are Adolescents Coping?
- >High absenteeism calls for extensive outreach and comprehensive efforts to reengage disconnected students
- >Concerns about the pernicious impact of extramural funding for mental health services in schools

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>

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>

>Calls for grant proposals <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upcall.htm>

> job and training opportunities when available <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm>

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

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"They invite cherry-picked young people to pretend they are listening to us, but they are not. They are clearly not listening to us. Just look at the numbers. Emissions are still rising. The science doesn't lie. ..Leaders like to say, 'We can do it.' They obviously don't mean it. But we do," This is all we hear from our so-called leaders: words. Words that sound great but so far have led to no action. Our hopes and dreams drown in their empty words and promises. Of course we need constructive dialogue, but they have now had 30 years of blah, blah blah. And where has this led us?"

Greta Thunberg

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

Teachers share their stories and love of their cultures as the district pushes to help students see themselves in the adults around them. Staff members began the tradition of sharing their heritage stories and family profiles last year, said Hartford Superintendent of Schools Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, including their countries of origin, their families' journeys to the U.S. and "of course, the love. What is it they love about their heritage?" In addition to recognizing the personal stories and contributions of school community members, the initiative is also part of a larger focus on culturally responsive teaching, Torres-Rodriguez said, and making sure students can personally relate to what they're learning.

In Hartford, more than 80 languages are spoken across school communities, and 22% of children are learning English. According to district data, about 55% of Hartford Public Schools students are Hispanic or Latino, with close to 5,500 children speaking Spanish or Portuguese at home.

<https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-news-connecticut-hartford-schools-hispanic-heritage-20211004-o5iwcw63vjdslat5r3rg3xxggm-story.html>

Nationwide hiring shortage hits local schools. "We are in a terrible staff shortage situation all over the district," said 27J (CO) district spokeswoman. "Our regular operations have already been modified to use every staff person from any area to help support our work, but it's not enough." The district sent a letter to parents: "We're facing very severe staffing shortages and supply chain breakdowns that seriously threaten our ability to fully return to a normal school year," the letter said. The district said illness and pandemic protocols "have created an increase in student and staff absences." "The lack of teachers and support staff has created a liability to our classrooms, our offices and, ultimately, to our support for students. Adding to these problems, 27J also has a significant shortage in substitutes for these roles.... 27J Schools is appealing to all parents, grandparents, retirees, neighbors and friends to seriously consider stepping into these roles."

<https://coloradocommunitymedia.com/stories/27j-district-in-need-of-staff,382564>

Covid-19 Funds Help Boost School District Budget. School districts throughout the state are experiencing a fiscal windfall due to a surge in state payments linked COVID-19, but officials are warning the surplus cash is a temporary blip and not part of an ongoing change to funding. COVID-19 funds were used for allowable expenses relieving the burden on its unrestricted general fund. The district also saved money as a result of school/office closures. With most students and staff working from home as well, the district saw fewer lawsuits than in prior years.

https://www.malibutimes.com/news/article_4e0b4684-1bff-11ec-90b0-874ca30f9c61.html

Absenteeism surging since schools reopened. A month into in-person learning for most California schools, some districts are reporting soaring rates of absenteeism due to stay-at-home quarantines, fear of Covid and general disengagement from school. Stockton Unified said that so far, 39% of its students have been chronically absent, more than double the rate two years ago. The district's truancy outreach workers are visiting up to 60 homes a day, offering incentives like prizes and backpacks, to encourage students to come to school. Oakland Unified reported that almost 33% of students were chronically absent as of mid-September. Among transitional kindergartners to fifth graders, the rate was higher than 37%. Two years ago, only 14% in that

age group were chronically absent. Elk Grove Unified, outside Sacramento, reported that more than 26% of its students have been chronically absent since school started, nearly three times the rate two years ago. Thermalito Union Elementary, a 1,500-student mostly low-income rural district in Butte County, in Northern California, reported 46% of its students have been chronically absent this year, up from 8.8% two years ago.

<https://edsources.org/2021/absenteeism-surgin-since-schools-reopened/661507>

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“What keeps me up at night is all these kids losing out on high-quality instruction, falling behind, falling through the cracks. We’ve been working so hard to keep kids engaged, but it’s tough.”

Lisa Cruikshank, Thermalito Union Elementary district’s director of special projects

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Comments and sharing from the field

>Responses to *Why Schools Need to Transform Student/Learning Supports and How to Move Forward* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/10-6-21.pdf>

1. “Thank you so much for continuing to press the current ineffective system to change to a system that fully addresses the needs of students – all students. I worked in a school system where teachers of gifted students were witnessing phenomenal success. When I asked the teachers to share their teaching skills and strategies with all teachers they were delighted to do so. The results were illustrative of what we can do at Tier I for students. As the result of changing that paradigm, over 90 percent of ALL students showed academic growth, we eliminated all student pull-outs, and reduced office discipline referrals by over 64 percent. Special education teachers, general education teachers, and gifted teachers all worked together at Tier I. It can be done and it must be done. Sometimes I will illustrate the difference between a remedy and a solution to point out why remedies don’t work - because they focus only on the presenting problem (out of school suspension, for example) and not on the basic problem. This is true with students exhibiting behavioral problems, attendance problems, or academic problems – we diagnose instead of describe, and by describing behavior we can find the determinant; there is always a determinant, a basic problem. Keep up the great work and continue to help others shift their thinking and practices.
- 2.”Thank you for your excellent, timely message. I totally agree with you. And if I may, I would like to suggest an additional, critical area to be included in the interrelated concerns and approaches: overarching, comprehensive school safety planning. (Aka EOPs.) A well-thought out, well-developed comp. school safety plan considers not just response and intervention, but starts with prevention and moves through mitigation, protection, response and recovery. Intervention falls within these. Within your links here, you do mention crisis response teams. I would suggest that crisis response teams are, indeed, extremely important; however, they fall under/within a larger comprehensive school safety plan – as a component of intervention/response and recovery....”

>Response to New report: *Enhancing Student/Learning Supports in Classrooms* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/classroomredes.pdf>

“Thank you so much for sharing the many resources of the Center. We received a grant from the Indiana State Department of Education to have our Indiana University college students provide k-12 students tutoring, mentoring and social emotional supports and your messages have helped us in so many ways. With sincere appreciation.”

>Responses to the quarterly ejournal article: *Schools and Mental Health: A Position Statement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fall2021.pdf>

1. “As always, the articles and resources which you share are excellent! I found this one to be especially so. If I may, I would like to add something to the overarching theme: comprehensive school safety. This is the area in which I work most. The problem is exactly what the recent, linked, article talks about – fragmentation, a lack of understanding of how and why it is critically important, and most fundamentally, how a well done comprehensive school (district) safety plan pulls all the pieces together into a cohesive “document”. (The parentheses, here, recognize that the plan may not be a singular document, but rather a set of documents, plans, sub-plans, etc.)
As suggested throughout your work, but less often directly stated, if students and staff do not and cannot feel safe – physically, emotionally, psychologically, and academically – they can not effectively learn and teach. Thank you for continuing to share such important work!”
2. “I am a Professional Counselor in an elementary school. This was a good read, and made me think of my current practice and what I can change.”
3. “I want to let you know that I appreciate your perspectives on the issues addressed below (others too). As a frequent presenter to a variety of education related audiences in Oregon, I'm glad to read your comments about the importance of what we call 'primary prevention' strategies. My colleague and I focus on four areas - Trauma, SEL, DEIA and Mental Health and approaches that can integrate, rather than isolate, these four initiatives. Our premise is that 'buying more staff' to respond to crises is, in the long run, more costly (in dollars and suffering) and less effective than working to reduce the root cause issues themselves, before a trajectory to crisis even starts.”

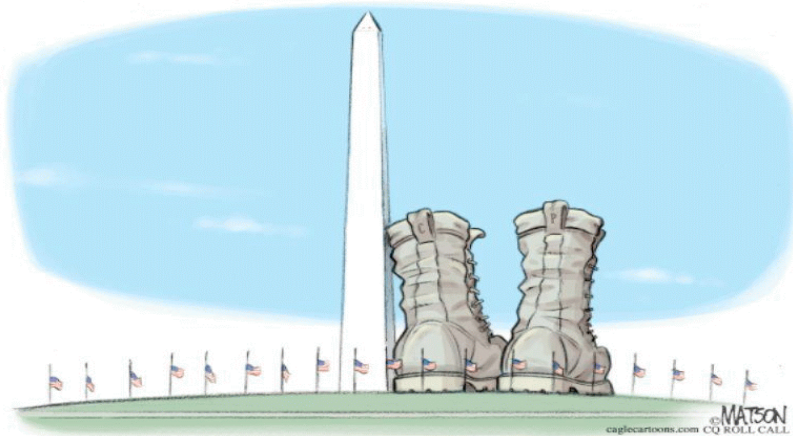
>Response to: *New Directions for School Improvement Policy*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/policynd.pdf>

“Read through the information that was just shared. It is so true about not taking the time to really discuss or review the existing school data. It is easier to continue putting the blame on students and parents not being responsible to appreciate the importance of an education. Self-reflection is hard to check and admit for many educators. One thing in our school system that has happened we are classified a Title I Schoolwide program. As you know Title I funding is based on socio economics and students at risk for the funding which is a free and reduced meal formula (40% poverty level). Although the student enrollment is more than 40% at the poverty level. Native American reservations that operate a public school is based on this funding practice. Being a rural area limits opportunities for growth and development. There are students who excel but that is not always the focus. It is easier to continue with what you always have done rather than do a complete 180 degree change. The pandemic did not help when students are considered to have lost a year learning. What happens in large metropolitan areas is not something that happens in small places on the central plains of the US. Did really like your article. It really hit home for me. Thank you. ”

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



Colin Powell 1937-2021

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