

ENEWS & Resources for School Improvement*

October, 2018 (Vol. 23 #1) – 32 Years & Counting

***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>

What's Here

Resources from Across the Country

This month's special topic
>Enhancing Student Engagement

Transforming student/learning supports – Updates

Comments, requests, information, questions from the field
and more

Resources from Across the Country

- >Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>
- >Transitions and alignment from preschool to kindergarten
<https://www.ecs.org/transitions-and-alignment-from-preschool-to-kindergarten/>
- >Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it
https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf
- >Is the federal government short changing special education students?
<https://www.ecs.org/is-the-federal-government-short-changing-special-education-students/>

A few relevant journal publications and special reports

- >Beyond a deficiencies approach: Towards a more integral representation of the everyday life of children growing up in contexts of poverty (2018). A. Sarti, C. Dedding, & J.F. Bunders. *Qualitative Social Work*. (Online) <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1473325018768391>
- >Clarifying the social roots of the disproportionate classification of racial minorities and males with learning disabilities (2018) D. Shifrer. *The Sociological Quarterly* (online) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00380253.2018.1479198>
- >Shared decision-making in youth mental health care: Using the evidence to plan treatments collaboratively (2018) D. Langer & A. Jensen-Doss. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 47, 821-831. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15374416.2016.1247358>

>upcoming conferences, initiatives, workshops
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

>webinars
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

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We need to pay attention to all the inequality in our society that makes kids have different levels of preparation when they start school and that makes it difficult for teachers to decide why one kid is struggling to learn while another is not.

Dara Shifrer

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This Month's Special Topic –

Enhancing Student Engagement

Even for those who have made a reasonably good adjustment to a new school and a new classroom, a month into a school year may see positive motivation subside. Many behavior, learning, and emotional problems arise at this time. The key to minimizing such problems is to proactively focus on enhancing and maintaining student engagement.

Question for school staff: When was the last time there was professional development focused on:

- (1) increasing staff understanding of the motivational bases for enhancing school engagement and
- (2) implementing new ways to enhance school engagement and minimize problems arising from low or negative motivation?

Some points that may need covering:

Engagement begins with ensuring motivational readiness. Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness. Motivation is a key antecedent condition in any learning situation. Readiness is understood in terms of offering stimulating and supportive environments where learning can be perceived as vivid, valued, and attainable. It is a prerequisite to student attention, involvement, and performance. Poor motivational readiness may be a cause of poor learning and a factor maintaining learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Thus, the need for strategies that can produce a high level of motivational readiness (and reduce avoidance motivation and reactance) so students are mobilized to participate.

Engagement is both a process and an outcome concern. Individuals may value learning something, but may not be motivated to pursue the processes used. Many students are motivated to learn when they first encounter a topic but do not maintain that motivation. Processes must elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that students stay mobilized. Programs must be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation so that what is learned is not limited to immediate lessons and is applied in the world beyond the schoolhouse door.

Engagement often involves countering negative motivation. Negative motivation and avoidance reactions and any conditions likely to generate them must be circumvented or at least minimized. Of particular concern are activities students perceive as unchallenging, uninteresting, overdemanding, or overwhelming. Most people react against structures that seriously limit their range of options or that are overcontrolling and coercive. Examples of conditions that can have a negative impact on a person's motivation are sparse resources, excessive rules, and a restrictive day-in, day-out emphasis on drill and remediation.

Focusing on intrinsic motivation. Staff development needs to ensure understanding of how to design classroom and schoolwide experiences that (1) maximize feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to significant others and (2) minimize threats to such feelings. Examples of what may need emphasis are ways to ensure that teachers (and students) are supportive; learning opportunities include challenging and authentic tasks and real choice; structure that supports and guides rather than overrelies on strategies to control students. It is particularly important to move practices away from overreliance on extrinsic rewards and other interventions that produce negative psychological reactions and related behavior problems.

The point is to enhance stable, positive, intrinsic attitudes that mobilize ongoing pursuit of desired ends, throughout the school, and away from school. Developing intrinsic attitudes is basic to increasing the type of motivated practice (e.g., reading for pleasure) that is essential for mastering and assimilating what has just been learned.

Response to intervention (RtI) & personalized instruction. The increasing focus on response to intervention provides a great opportunity to develop a personalized approach that enhances student engagement. Personalized instruction involves ensuring there is a broad range of real options with respect to content and processes (including a personalized structure to facilitate learning). With real options comes real opportunities for involving learners in decision making. Engaging processes also include nonthreatening ways to provide information about learning and performance.

Overcoming avoidance motivation. School staff not only need to try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also to avoid practices that decrease it. Although students may learn a specific lesson at school (e.g., some basic skills), they may have little or no interest in using the new knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. Increasing such interest requires procedures that can reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies. With behavior, learning, and emotional problems, it is especially important to identify and minimize experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation. Of particular concern is the need to avoid overreliance on extrinsics to entice and reward since such strategies can decrease intrinsic motivation.

Students experiencing problems at school usually have extremely negative perceptions of and avoidance tendencies toward teachers and activities that look like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach must be made if such students are to change these perceptions. Ultimately, success may depend on the degree to which the students view the adults at school and in the classroom as supportive, rather than indifferent or controlling and the program as personally valuable and obtainable.

Resources for Staff Development Related to Enhancing Student Engagement

See the Center Quick Find on *Motivation, Engagement, Re-engagement*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

For some brief readings see

- >*About Motivation* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/motivation.pdf>
- >*Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School*
<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>
- >*School Engagement, Disengagement, Learning Supports, & School Climate*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schooleng.pdf>

For a power point presentation that can be readily adapted, see *Intrinsic Motivation: Engaging and Re-engaging Students, Families, & Staff*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/rebuild/rfl/sessiv.ppt>

For a set of four continuing education modules, see *Engaging and Re-engaging Students and Families* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagei.pdf>

Recent Topical Exchanges in the School Practitioner Community of Practice

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

- >About how engagement in learning reduces student problems
- >Agencies working in schools
- >What can be done to reverse the trend for students positive experiences and attitudes to drop sharply over their years in school?
- >About state school discipline policies student problems
- >Addressing underlying causes of attendance problems
- >Improving school climate by making the new school year a welcoming experience and a fresh new start
- >Measuring social emotional learning: Findings suggest a problem for accountability
- >Limited budgets make for difficult choices about priorities

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I feel really, really passionate about the fact that a lot of my kids who are mostly in poverty-type situations go to school because school is their solace, school is their place where they get to go and feel safe. And I just thought I need to come and say something because these kids don't have a voice.

Karen Sullins, in testimony to the Federal Commission on School Safety

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Transforming Student and Learning Supports – Updates

In a recent note, we stressed why the safe schools call for more mental health in schools needs to be embedded in efforts to transform student and learning supports

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/9-9-18.pdf>

The general point is that the emphasis on school safety provides a good jumping-off place for moving forward with such a transformation. With this in mind, see below for the recent discussion from the *National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments* about helping new students feel welcome, safe, and supported. (Excerpt from online presentation at <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/voices-field/your-opinion-what-most-effective-way-support-new-students-school>)

As a new school year begins many students will be changing schools. Often the change is due to advancing grades, but students may also be switching schools for a host of other reasons ... Switching schools for a reason other than grade advancement is referred to as student mobility and students who experience mobility may have unique needs that make it difficult for them to adjust to a new school... In order for these students to successfully adapt, it is important that the schools they are entering help them feel welcome, safe, and supported (Adelman & Taylor, 2015a)....

What can be done? Like many efforts to improve supports and outcomes for students, schools benefit from developing a multi-tiered response in order to reduce and effectively respond to challenges created by student mobility (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2007). Universal approaches benefit all students and should be incorporated into the school or classroom. Some examples of universal practices include hanging welcome signs in and outside of the school (bonus points for using multiple languages!), sending home welcome packets, and incorporating student, staff, and teacher greeters outside of school (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, n.d.). For students identified as needing more support with transitioning, more specific responses may be necessary. Some examples of these more selective supports include reaching out to the students' families, pairing new students with peer-buddies, developing a

transition plan with new students, providing a contact person for them to ask questions or share concerns, and regularly checking in with the students to make sure they are adjusting well (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, n.d.). Administrators from the previous school can also support transitioning students by creating a student profile packet to be given to the students' new schools. Communication between schools is especially critical for students with IEPs who are transitioning.... As with anything, it is important to evaluate how well supports for mobile students are working. This can be done by tracking the progress of new students, scheduling regular meetings or phone calls with the student and their family to understand their perspective, surveying mobile students and their families, and adapting strategies based on results (Adelman & Taylor, 2015b).

Change is hard even in the best of circumstances, but with the right structures in place, schools and families can help mitigate the effects of student mobility....

Cited references:

- Adelman, H., & Taylor, T. (2015a). Chapter 5: Supports for transitions. In *Transforming student and learning supports: Developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system* (39-46). Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.
- Adelman, H., & Taylor, T. (2015b). Appendix C: Self study surveys. In *Transforming student and learning supports: Developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system* (C1-C48). Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.
- Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (n.d.). Welcoming strategies for newly arrived students and their families. Los Angeles, CA: Author
- Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2007). Welcoming and involving new students and families. Los Angeles, CA: Author.

Let Us Know:

- (1) **About any presentations on this topic**
- (2) **What you see happening to transform student and learning supports**

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 supports, we can help. Send all info to ltaylor@ucla.edu

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*Sometimes I lie awake at night, and I ask, "Where have I gone wrong?"
Then a voice says to me, "This is going to take more than one night."*

Peanuts, Charlie Brown

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

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

News from around the country related to addressing barriers

The school shootings that weren't. This spring the U.S. Education Department reported that in the 2015-2016 school year, "nearly 240 schools ... reported at least 1 incident involving a school-related shooting." The number is far higher than most other estimates. National Public Radio reached out to every one of those schools repeatedly over the course of three months and found that more than two-thirds of these reported incidents never happened. They were able to confirm just 11 reported incidents, either directly with schools or through media reports. In 161 cases, schools or districts attested that no incident took place or couldn't confirm one. This confusion comes at a time when the need for clear data on school violence has never been more pressing. At least 53 new school safety laws were passed in states in 2018. Districts are spending millions of dollars to "harden" schools with new security measures and equipment. Children are spending class time on active-shooter drills and their parents are buying bulletproof backpacks. 8/27/18

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/08/27/640323347/the-school-shootings-that-werent>

New program lets Syracuse cops alert schools when kids see traumatic crime. Cops in Syracuse are partnering with the school district to give administrators a heads up when students are victims of or witnesses to something traumatic. It's a minor new piece of communication between city administrators, but one that officials hope will help kids struggling to cope with something terrible. As it is now, teachers and staff don't usually know when a student shows up to school saddled with the fallout of a traumatic experience. Often, that trauma turns into bad behavior, which turns into discipline. Officials hope a new reporting system can nip that cycle in the bud and get students help sooner. Starting this school year, police will send the school district daily reports identifying students who were victims of or witnesses to a traumatic incident. That information will be shared with support staff and the principal at the student's school. The program is called Supporting Our Students, or SOS. 9/4/18

https://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2018/09/syracuse_schools_want_teachers_to_know_when_students_have_been_victims_of_a_crim.html#incart_river_index

ADHD diagnoses may be rising. The number of children diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the U.S. appears to have increased dramatically, a new study finds. Researchers reviewed 20 years of responses to the National Health Interview Survey, which is conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They focused on a question in the survey: "Has a doctor or health professional ever told you that (your child) had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attention-deficit disorder (ADD)?" Between 1997 and 2016, the proportion of children diagnosed with ADHD rose from 6.1 percent to 10.2 percent. Researchers found significant differences in prevalence with respect to race/ethnicity and gender. ADHD was reported in 14 percent of boys versus 6.3 percent of girls, and in 12 percent of non-Hispanic white children versus 6.1 percent of Hispanic children and 12.8 percent of non-Hispanic black kids. Experts suggested that some of the "diagnoses" might be incorrect. 8/31/18

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-adhd/adhd-diagnoses-may-be-rising-in-u-s-idUSKCN1LG21M>

Universities to tackle social ills. Harvard and the University of Michigan have formed two partnerships designed to encourage economic opportunity in Detroit and to fight the national scourge of opioid addiction. The Detroit-focused partnership pairs the Equality of Opportunity Project with the University of Michigan's Poverty Solutions initiative, the city of Detroit, and community partners. The effort draws from the Equality of Opportunity Project's work examining opportunity in America and the shifting forces that determine whether ordinary Americans succeed or fail economically. Using large sets of de-identified administrative data, the project has illustrated the decline of American economic mobility, the impact of race on children's economic prospects, and other challenges to achieving the American Dream. Researchers have explored some of the most enduring beliefs and myths about American society, from the effectiveness of social programs intended to raise children out of poverty to the relative "stickiness" of childhood socio-economic status. 9/12/18

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/09/harvard-university-of-michigan-to-tackle-social-ills-on-two-fronts/>

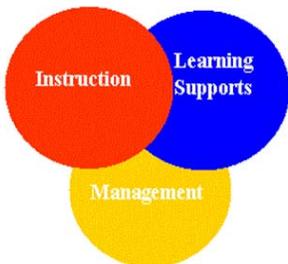
Comments and sharing from the field

(1) From the above news story: “By uniting community partners, policymakers, and top researchers in a sustained collaboration, we are creating a critical mass of expertise that has tremendous potential to achieve lasting positive impact.” University of Michigan President Mark Schlissel

(2) In response to our recent Information Resource on *Assessment in Schools: From the Perspective of Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/assessaddress.pdf>, Maurice Elias wanted to remind folks about the work entitled: *The Other Side of the Report Card: Assessing Students' Social, Emotional, and Character Development* (by Elias, Ferrito, & Moceris, 2016) published by Corwin Press. See <https://www.edutopia.org/blogs/how-do-we-measure-sel-maurice-elias>

(3) “I work as a consultant, Student Services, in a Unified School District and deal with our Health Collaborative that consists of health care providers including Mental Health Agencies, Primary and other health agencies and agencies providing resources to support students and their families including foster and homeless students. We have a comprehensive system to address the needs of our students to confronted with issues such as attendance, personal needs from hunger, clothing shelter and daily issues facing students including bullying; promoting the whole child; improving positive school climate and improving access for all students. We are working towards developing trainings for all of our staff, parents and community to address the climate of all of our schools, developing supports for the whole child and addressing the needs of all children. Therefore, any and all resources shared by the Center is a wonderful depth of resources to improve our communal ability to create healthy and safe environments. Thank you including us.”

(4) “Thanks for all the good work that you and the others at the Center at UCLA have done for schools and teachers. These resources in book form that you all just posted or otherwise made available for anyone to use, are great - like so much of your work. As a former public school teacher, and being from a family thick with public school teachers for many generations, I admire the work that you do so very much!”



*Information is online about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Also online are two free books

Improving School Improvement

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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