

(2/21/24) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

(1) Changing the Learning Environment to Enhance Student Engagement

(2) How should schools address gun violence?

(3) Links to a few other relevant shared resources

For discussion and interchange:

>Changing the Learning Environment to Enhance Student Engagement

Primary concerns for schools at this time are how to enhance student engagement in learning and reengage those who have become actively disengaged from schooling.

Teachers tell us that their professional development focused just a bit on enhancing student engagement and did nothing to address how to reengage disconnected students.

Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school. It is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.

Reengagement depends on use of interventions that help minimize conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximize conditions that have a positive intrinsic motivational effect.

Here are two Center resources that focus on these concerns:

>School Engagement, Disengagement, Learning Supports, & School Climate

>Quick Find on Motivation

And here's an excerpt from a recent article in a research journal:

From: **Does changing learning environments affect student motivation?**

"Self-directed learning has evolved as an adaptable educational environment, providing flexibility and individualization that meet students' psychological needs and enhances their educational experiences. In turn, these experiences significantly affect student motivation, reinforcing the crucial role of the learning environment....

The advent of adolescence often marks a continuous decline in student motivation, a trend noted in numerous studies. This downward shift in motivation tends to occur as students transition into secondary school and intensifies throughout adolescence. While elementary school children tend to be driven by intrinsic motivation, the onset of adolescence sees a significant number of them lose this intrinsic drive....

Research underscores the need to address students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and social relatedness within both self directed learning and teacher directed instruction which would counteract the observed downward trend in motivation over time by providing a balanced learning environment that optimizes student engagement and performance...."

For discussion and interchange:

>How should schools address gun violence?

Enhancing school safety is another primary and ongoing concern. However, the focus must go well-beyond plans for responding to shooters and other crises and include daily efforts to promote a healthy and caring school climate.

School climate suffers from overemphasis on “hardening” schools. Healthy and caring schools don’t wait to react to tragic events. They are proactive in working with their surrounding community to improve schools in ways that foster positive social-emotional development and prevent problems, as well as having a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of supports in place to address the many barriers to learning and teaching that are encountered each day.

Efforts to make schools safer must fully reflect our society’s commitment to equity, fairness, and justice. And, if the commitment is to be meaningful, it cannot be approached simplistically. Safe school practices must be embedded into improvements that contribute to transforming schools in ways that are more effective in closing the widespread opportunity and achievement gaps.

Here are a few Center resources that focus on these concerns:

- >[*Violence Prevention and Safe Schools*](#) (Quick Find)
- >[*About School Shootings*](#)
- >[*Improving School Improvement*](#)

Here’s are excerpts from some recent articles:

From: [**School shootings in context**](#)

“...The public tends to think that extreme cases of mass violence represent what is typical about school shootings. These events are ... discussed so extensively that they drive and influence society’s responses to these crimes. This is problematic for two reasons.

First, although there is a growing body of literature on school violence and school shootings, only a few experiments have been published evaluating different types of interventions.

Second, research, such as the findings published here, indicates that school shootings are much more varied than we might expect if considering only mass school shootings. The number of injured and killed, the locations and timing of the shootings, and the shooters’ statuses (current student or not, juvenile or adult) vary tremendously.

Another interesting challenge that policymakers must consider is that school violence does not occur in a vacuum; instead, it is impacted by similar drivers that explain the amount and type of violence occurring off school grounds. Thus, there is some value in developing a broad range of policy solutions implemented in a way that overlaps with other interventions to respond to community violence.....

There is a need for a multifaceted approach to managing threats from students and nonstudents. It would be helpful to broaden the discussions about school risks and be informed of what is occurring in the community. Schools could think about working with law enforcement and community organizations to address the broader issue of gun violence, which often originates outside school property due to interpersonal conflicts, gang-related, and other criminal activities. Such approaches speak to better assessing the threat environment and problem areas that need to be assessed. Empirically backed strategies like Project Safe Neighborhoods, multiagency community initiatives, focused deterrence, and targeted police patrols may effectively reduce violent gun incidents and potentially reduce school-related shootings...

More resources should be allocated to identify and manage potential conflicts before they escalate into violent confrontations. School threat assessment and management intends to pinpoint and address alarming behaviors, including escalating interpersonal conflicts and criminal/gang-related activity before they escalate to violence. These are promising tools for crafting actionable plans to support those at risk for violent actions. This approach delves deep into the root causes of worrisome behaviors, distinguishing genuine safety threats and formulating tailored plans for at-risk students. Such plans help to ensure they receive the necessary care and services without resorting to punitive actions like suspensions or expulsions that can exacerbate adverse life outcomes and racial disparities. ...”

From: **We Can Change This: Educators Take On Gun Violence**

There isn't one thing that will solve the epidemic of gun violence. It will take passing evidence-based gun safety measures—such as banning assault weapons, requiring waiting periods and thorough background checks, and instituting safe storage measures and red flag laws. It will take defeating bad proposals that aim to arm teachers or make it easier to carry concealed weapons. And it will take educators pushing for district-level policies that help make schools safer....

Research shows that students benefit from relationships with trusted adults at school. And the more skills students acquire in processing emotions and social interactions, the more likely they are to reach out when they need help or when a peer is in distress. Among these trusted adults are school counselors and social workers who help resolve bullying; provide intensive counseling for students in crisis; conduct threat assessments; and work with families, all of which reduces violence in schools....”

From: **'Say Something' tip line in schools flags gun violence threats**

“...the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System was started by the non-profit Sandy Hook Promise Foundation. Schools in 23 states have set up an anonymous tip line serving more than 5 million students in grades 6 through 12. The idea is to report unusual behaviors or potential acts of gun violence by other students.... A new study evaluated the tip line as it was used by North Carolina to see how successful it was at catching firearm-related threats.... Researchers found there were more than 18,000 tips submitted to the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System during the four years studied, from 2019 to 2023.... While the gun-related tips seen in the study also included concerns about bullying, interpersonal conflicts and suicide, 38% were about potential school shootings and nearly a quarter were about seeing or knowing of a weapon....

The system is more than just a phone line. It begins with training a school community, including students and staff, to identify signs of potential violence and self harm.... Crisis counselors engage with the tipster to get as much information as possible, figure out if there may be an immediate threat to anyone's safety, and then loop in relevant school staff about the level of intervention needed....”

Can you share something about how local schools are addressing the matters discussed above?

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu



>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

First-Generation College Students as Academic Learners: A Systematic Review

Not Enough Adults to Go Around: Underfunded California Schools Provide Less Support for Kids

Income inequality is associated with heightened test anxiety and lower academic achievement

A National Strategy for Preventing Substance and Opioid Use Disorders Through Evidence-Based Prevention Programming that Fosters Healthy Outcomes in Our Youth

Youth Participatory Action Research for Youth Substance Use Prevention: A Systematic Review

Tips for Communicating With Your Teen

Overscheduling kids' lives causes depression and anxiety

Unpacking California's Chronic Absence Crisis Through 2022–23: Seven Key Facts

How to Support Kids Who Are Questioning

A Few Upcoming webinars

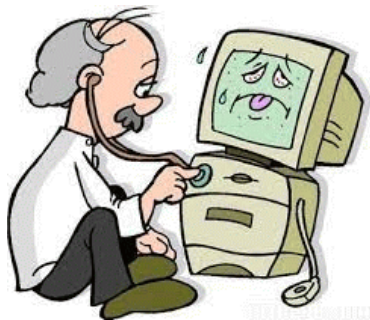
2/21 Social skills and how to build them

2/26 Multicultural orientation to therapy

2/28 Eating disorders

3/5 Navigating the high school years

3/14 Ethical concerns in counseling



***NOTE: OUR WEBSITE IS UP! However, because we are unable currently to update and edit the content, we are sending new Center resources directly attached to email.**

To Listserv Participants

- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what’s going on** to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- **For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu**
- **Looking for information?** (We usually can help.)
- **Have a suggestion for improving our efforts?** (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you!

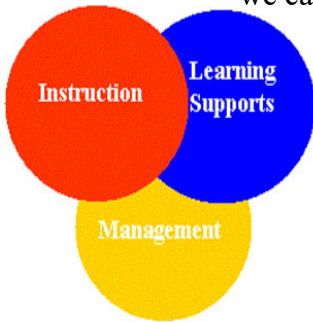
Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

Let Us Know about what ideas are being proposed for moving in new directions for transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

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 and requests to Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)



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.

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

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER

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.