

(8/9/23) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

>**About kicking off the school year with community support**

>**Connecting with students in the first days of the new school year**

>**Interventions to promote attendance before it becomes a problem**

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

For discussion and interchange:

>**About kicking off the school year with community support**

As schools open, it is a major transition time for students, their families, staff, and the community at large. Back-to-school events are a great time to bring everyone together to celebrate the beginning of the school year and appreciate the importance of local schools. Events can help create an upbeat, engaging, and supportive start and lay the foundation for ongoing positive school-family-community connections.

Here are a few examples from around the country:

>**Back to School Fair in Los Angeles** – Free backpacks, free school supplies, crafts, games, prizes

>**Dallas Mayor’s Back-to-School Fair** – “The fair is a collaborative partnership between the City of Dallas, Dallas ISD, nonprofits, corporations and community volunteers. This year, the Junior League of Dallas will head the event and recruit, train and support the more than 500 event volunteers. During the fair, Dallas students in grades Pre-K through 12 and their families will be provided with essential school supplies, valuable services and resources.”

>**New Orleans:** “It’s a Back to School for NOLA Public Schools and Agenda for Children kids and families! Presented by NOLA Public Schools, Agenda for Children, Children’s Hospital New Orleans and New Orleans East Hospital with the support of Councilmember Oliver Thomas. Get back-to-school ready with a health, wellness, and resource fair for New Orleans kids and families!

- Health services and resources for kids ages 6 months–18 years
- Free enrollment with Children’s Hospital’s ThriveKids student wellness program for any at school health needs that arise during the school year
- Free immunizations for qualifying families through the Greater New Orleans Immunization Network
- Take advantage of sports physicals, plus primary care & dental resources
- Free haircuts, school supplies, and more (while supplies last)
- Plus take advantage of resources and activities for kids and families, free food and fun including live music, snoballs, games and more!
- Free School Supplies and Haircuts while supplies last

See list of Community and School partners

Inviting Volunteers for Green Beautification Day

Another way schools can get off to a good start is to have a Beautification Event. For example, Green Elementary School in Oregon invites volunteers to help weed gardens, plant lavender and move soil, paint, and do other general upkeep. The goal is to start the upcoming school year strong with a shared commitment to creating a healthy and positive environment.

For more on engaging volunteers and the community with schools, see the following Center Quick Finds:

- >[*Community Outreach for Involvement and Support*](#)
- >[*Volunteers in schools*](#)

For discussion and interchange:

>Connecting with students during the first days of the new school year

From: [*20 Teacher-Inspired Ideas for the First Day of School Activities*](#)

Example: "...One of the key first day of school activities that I always make a point to do is to spend a few minutes one-on-one with each student. Get to know them, introduce yourself,... and encourage them. Making that personal connection on the first day is so important! You may get some teacher inspiration and insights into your students that you can use all year long! As you meet with each student take along a clipboard or sticky notes. Jot down a few memorable notes about the student. At the end of the day, gather these notes together. Reflect on your class as a whole. What makes each student unique? How can they be an integral part of your class? Take it a step further and turn these notes into words of encouragement..."

From: [*Personalizing Learning and Addressing Barriers to Learning*](#)

"...The ability to talk with rather than at a student is critical for personalizing learning. Talking with involves a true dialogue – which, of course, depends on each participant truly listening to and hearing the other. Personalized teaching is built on a base that appreciates what each student is thinking and feeling, and carrying on an ongoing dialogue with students offers the best opportunity to learn about such matters, and especially about what motivates a student.

The mechanism for carrying on dialogues often is called a conference. However, the term does not convey the full sense of what is involved.... Conferences vary in length, depending first on how much time is available and second how much time is needed by a specific student. The process is ongoing and not always formal. Some of the best dialogues are spontaneous (e.g., occur when a teacher takes time to sit down next to a student for an informal chat). Such impromptu chats become feasible when the classroom is designed to maximize use of small group and independent learning activities and cooperative and peer supported learning.

Participating in conferences can enhance a student's feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to the school's staff. Conferencing is pivotal in enhancing student engagement and reengagement in learning. Through talking with a student, a teacher can convey a sense of positive regard and gain a richer understanding of the status and bases for a student's current levels of motivation and capability. For example, dialogues yield information on motivational factors (e.g., student hopes, goals, desires, interests, attitudes, preferences, expectations, concerns) which should be considered in all planning. Dialogues also provide other information about who the student is as an individual (e.g., personal and family background and/or current life events that have relevance to current behavior and learning).

Properly conducted conferences convey positive regard, valuing of the student's perspective, and belief that the student should play a meaningful role in defining options and making decisions. Conferences also are one of the best contexts for providing feedback in a nurturing way and for conveying the staff's sincere desire to ensure equity of opportunity...."

For discussion and interchange:

>Interventions to promote attendance before it becomes a problem

For multiple reasons, attendance is a constant concern for schools. Absent students miss out on instruction. Excessive school absence is a precursor of school dropout. Truant youngsters too often get into illegal activity. Schools funded on the basis of average daily attendance have less resources. School accountability measures suffer. And on and on.

What's being done?

From: *Absenteeism: 4 Takeaways From Educators*

"...Attendance researchers agree: The job of improving attendance can't be restricted to one single school department because everyone from the bus driver to the principal affects students' engagement in school, they say.

Recognizing that dynamic, some schools have adopted comprehensive attendance strategies that include data monitoring and working with families and communities....

Unlike truancy, chronic absenteeism campaigns aim to help students avoid absences, including those that are excused for reasons like illness, rather than punishing them after they've crossed a legal threshold of poor attendance....

Connecticut officials, for example, created a home visiting program for students with poor attendance patterns. Rather than offering tough talk, trained educators assess students' needs and offering solutions....

From a teacher education officer at the University of North Dakota. "What you have to do: Build community right away in the early grades. Continue throughout middle and high school. Connect the work that students are doing in the class to their own lives, hopes, and dreams. Make sure each child knows his/her strengths and how they can use them to achieve their goals. No small task but it's the only way to make a sustainable improvement in attendance because students will WANT to be in class."

Also see

>School Attendance: Focusing on Engagement and Re-engagement

and the Center's Quick Find on *Attendance*

Addressing the attendance problem more comprehensively

From: *Absenteeism: Beyond Reporting and Beyond Another Special Initiative*

"...School attendance problems provide another indication of the need to move forward in new directions for student and learning supports. Ideas for developing more sophisticated approaches can be adapted from current efforts. But, policy and practice must now evolve so schools, families, and communities are working together to develop a system of interventions that reflect the complexity of attendance problems. The complexity demands moving to more comprehensive, multidimensional, and cohesive solutions. Focusing only on what's wrong with a particular student often is tantamount to blaming the victim and contributes to formulating punitive policies and practices...."

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

Sixth grade open house that works

Evidence Base Update of Psychosocial Treatments for Adolescents with Disruptive Behavior

Engaging and collaborating with families across multitiered systems of support

Examination of children's grief experiences through storytelling-based systemic intervention

Implementing systemic change in education

Top 20 Principles from Psychology for Prek–12 Teaching and Learning Of Students with Disabilities

The Number of Students in Special Education Has Doubled in the Past 45 Years

Education, Labor Departments Announce New Efforts to Advance Teacher Preparation Programs and Expand Registered Apprenticeships for Educators

Biden-Harris Administration Launches Investing in America Education and Workforce Development Summits to Help More Young People Access Good-Paying Jobs in Innovative Industries

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center’s Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 8/9 Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates
- 8/9 A Welcoming and Healthy Return to School
- 8/10 Working with youth to prevent racism
- 8/10 Improving rural teacher retention
- 8/15 How to build a thriving adult community across your district
- 8/15 Getting Ready for My Child's IEP Meeting
- 8/16 Addressing the teacher shortage
- 8/16 Youth psychological strength
- 8/16 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness
- 8/16 The Role of Students in School Safety Efforts
- 8/17 Addressing school refusal
- 8/17 Start the school year strong
- 8/23 Strategies for School and District Leaders
- 8/25 Wellness
- 8/29 McKinney-Vento 101: Basic Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act

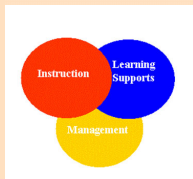
To Listserv Participants

- **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 your views** about the topics shared and about 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



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.

For information about the *National Initiative* go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

It is essential to continue to urge districts/schools to play an increasing role in helping to transform student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

Our Center has many resources online focusing on transforming student/learning supports that can be used for discussion, continuing education, and planning. As a start, see, the following brief resources:

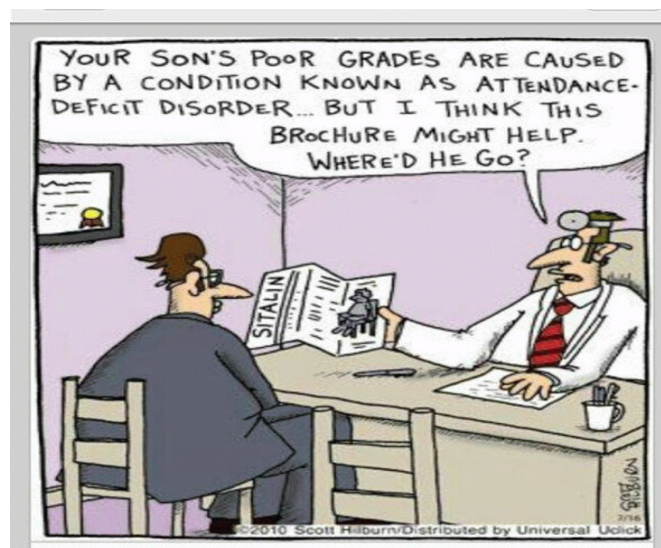
- >***Rethinking Student and Learning Supports***
- >***Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions***

The work is detailed in three free books:

- >***Improving School Improvement***
- >***Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide***
- >***Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change***

Note: We caution that, unless they are evolved from their current limitations, moves to MTSS and Community Schools will exacerbate the prevailing marginalization and fragmentation of student/learning supports in school improvement policy and practice. See

- >***Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning***
- >***Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports***



**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.

**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/>)**