

# **ENEWS & Resources for School Improvement\***

September, 2018 (Vol. 22 #12) – 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](mailto: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**

**>School starts, students and families are welcomed & oriented:  
What's next?**

**Transforming student/learning supports – Updates**

**Center Resources you may have missed  
if you were away during the summer**

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

## **Resources from Across the Country**

- >Hidden in plain sight: Homeless students in America's public schools  
[http://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/2016-12/HiddeninPlainSightFullReportFINAL\\_0.pdf](http://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/2016-12/HiddeninPlainSightFullReportFINAL_0.pdf)
- >School safety and crisis planning <http://aasacental.org/school-safety/#a1>
- >Perceived need and receipt of behavioral health services at drop -in centers among homeless youth <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6773.12990>
- >District leaders engaged in school turnaround: identified challenges and espoused responses  
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0192636518786008>
- >School policies and the success of advantaged and disadvantaged students  
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/school-policies-and-the-success-of-advantaged-and-disadvantaged-students/>
- >About homeless youth <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeless.pdf>
- >Teacher bias and its impact on teacher-student relationships: The example of favoritism  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/teacherbias.pdf>
- >Sex education and mental health <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sexeduc.pdf>
- >The importance of teacher intrinsic motivation <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/teachermot.pdf>
- >About conducting crisis exercises and drills <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/drills.pdf>

## A few relevant journal publications and special reports

- >More minorities labeled 'learning disabled' because of social inequities and achievement disparities. D. Shifrer. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180821094158.htm>
- >Teacher support within an ecological model of adolescent development: Predictors of school engagement (2018). D. Quina, , J. Heerde, J. Toumbourou. *Journal of School Psychology*, 69, 1-15. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022440518300517>
- >Critical hopefulness among urban high school students (2018). B. Christens, K. Byrd, N. Peterson, & D. Lardier Jr. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 47, 1649-1662 <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs10964-018-0889-3.pdf>
- >Understanding adolescent narratives about “bullying” through an intersectional lens: Implications for youth mental health interventions. (2018). R. Haines-Saah, C. Hilario, E. Jenkins, et al. *Youth & Society*, 50, 636-658. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0044118X15621465>

>upcoming conferences, initiatives, workshops

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

>webinars

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

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*An investment in knowledge will give you the best interest.*

Benjamin Franklin

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## This Month's Special Topic

***>School starts, students and families are welcomed & oriented: What's next?***

**Now's the time to**

- **Connect New Students and Families with Social Supports**
- **Enable School Adjustment**

### **About Connecting New Students and Families with Social Supports**

Why? Because this is a critical step in engaging them and enhancing school climate. (Special attention should be paid to accounting for cultural and individual diversity and assisting those having a hard time.) Social supports are necessary to facilitating participation (addressing barriers, providing social, emotional, and academic supports).

Assist new students transitioning-in. For example, take extra time to introduce and connect students to classmates and program:

- Identify a peer "buddy" (at least for first 5 days)
- Designate additional students to introduce and invite new students to out of class school activities

Over first 3 weeks monitor student's involvement and engagement. If necessary, ask designated students to make additional efforts to help new students enter in and feel accepted by peers.

*Similar concerns and strategies apply to engaging new parents (see resources below).*

## **About Enabling School Adjustment – INVEST NOW . . .OR PAY LATER!**

Some students experience difficulties adjusting to new classes (content and standards), new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc. It is particularly poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but is disorganized and can't keep up.

Over the first few weeks, teachers realize quickly who has and hasn't made a good adjustment to the classroom and to the school. This is the time to address problems before they get worse. If adjustment problems are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase. Misbehavior often arises in reaction to learning difficulties. What appears as a school problem may be the result of problems at home.

The first month is the time to be proactive. Staff development needs to focus on the type of strategies described below. This is the time for student support staff to work with teachers in their classrooms to intervene before problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions. *Here is what teachers can do:*

### **Find out what the problem is**

Through enhanced personal contacts, start to build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.

- Focus first on assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class).
- Ask about what the youngster doesn't like at school.
- Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)
- Explore other possible causal factors.
- Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).

### **Some Basic Strategies for Strengthening the Environment to Support Student Success**

Try new strategies in the classroom – based on the best information about what is causing the problem. Enhance student engagement through (a) an emphasis on learning and enrichment options that are of current greatest interest and which the student indicates (s)he wants to and can pursue and (b) a temporary deemphasis on areas that are not of high interest.

If a student seems easily distracted, the following might be used:

- identify any specific environmental factors that distract the student and make appropriate environmental changes
- have the student work with a group with others who are task-focused
- designate a volunteer to help the student whenever s/he becomes distracted and/or starts to misbehave, and if necessary, to help the student make transitions
- allow for frequent "breaks"
- interact with the student in ways that will minimize confusion and distractions (e.g., keep conversations relatively short; talk quietly and slowly; use concrete terms; express warmth and nurturance)

If a student needs more direction, the following might be used:

- develop and provide sets of specific prompts, multisensory cues, steps, etc. using oral, written, and other guides as organizational aids related to specific learning activities, materials, and daily schedules
- ensure someone checks with the student frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)
- support student's efforts related to self-monitoring and self-evaluation and provide nurturing feedback keyed to the student's progress and next steps

If the student has difficulty finishing tasks as scheduled, the following might be used:

- modify the length and time demands of assignments and tests
- modify the nature of the process and products (e.g., allow use of technological tools and allow for oral, audio-visual, arts and crafts, graphic, and computer generated products)

To accomplish the above: Teachers need to enhance use of aides, recruit volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors, those in the home, etc. – not only to help support student efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance the student's social support network. Administrators need to encourage structured staff discussions and staff development about what teachers can do and what other staff (mentors, student support staff, resource teachers, etc.) can do to team with teachers in their classrooms to enable school adjustment.

After trying all the above, add some tutoring designed to enhance student engagement in learning and to facilitate learning of specific academic and social skills that are seen as barriers to effective classroom performance and learning.

*Only after all this is done and has not worked* is it time to use the school's referral processes to ask for additional support services. As such services are added, it, of course, becomes essential to coordinate them with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

*Similar concerns and strategies apply to assisting parents (see resources below).*

For more, use the following links to access in-depth prevention and early intervention strategies.

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### **Some Center Materials for Personnel Development to Aid in Starting a New School Year**

See the Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

For example, see:

- > *Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcoming* – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm)
- > *Classroom Focused Enabling* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm>
- > *Parent/Home Involvement and Engagement in Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm>
- > *Motivation/Engagement* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>
- > *Response to Intervention* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/responsetointervention.htm>

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### **Topics in August's School Practitioner Community of Practice**

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

- *Welcoming families and building working relationships*
- *About community agencies working with schools to address mental health problems*
- *Addressing the underlying causes of attendance problems*

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*The internet: transforming society and shaping the future through chat.*

Dave Barry

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## TRANSFORMING STUDENT AND LEARNING SUPPORTS

### (1) Boosting test scores

Excerpt from <https://edsource.org/2013/positive-school-climate-boosts-test-scores-study-says/31043>

Researchers identified some schools as consistently and significantly outperforming similar school, and dubbed this group the “beating-the-odds” schools because their test scores were better than would have been predicted, based on the students they were serving.

The key ingredient of overperforming schools? Unusually positive school climates, a measure of how connected, motivated and safe students feel at school.... The report also identified underperforming schools and found they, too, shared a trait: unusually negative school climates. School climate was more strongly associated with driving up or down test scores, relative to similar schools, than teacher experience or staff ratios, according to the study, “A Climate for Academic Success: How School Climate Distinguishes Schools That Are Beating the Achievement Odds.”....

Howard S. Adelman, co-director of the School Mental Health Project at UCLA, says a positive school climate emerges from what he calls “a unified and comprehensive system of learning supports.” A first step is often bringing together the existing team of supporters – everyone from teachers to school counselors – and developing a coordinated plan of support for students and staff. When students receive the support they need to succeed, teachers feel successful and climate improves, he said. The most lasting improvements start with state or district policies. “This has got to be dealt with at a policy level so it’s sustainable.”

### (2) What one colleague is doing to advance the initiative:

“I did a workshop on safe schools for aspiring principals and cast the topic within the larger framework of Learning Supports. I essentially presented student achievement data trends that show virtually no change over the past 7-8 years. This is across all grade levels and subject areas. Similarly, I shared statewide data from the state Youth Survey showing that 30-40% of students overall do not feel safe or supported at school. And this trend has persisted for the same amount of time.

My point to the group was that they are doing the very best with what they have but essentially nothing is changing. As one of our team mates said long ago — “you can’t teach your way out of this”. I then moved into all the fragmented and marginalized efforts to help students and asked participants to make a list of all the things going on in their own buildings. I had some guiding questions for them to talk about at their tables on how much time, how many people, what resources are spent and whether these efforts were getting them the results they wanted.

From there, I moved into comprehensive systems of supports and how this system needs to have as an ultimate goal of improving student success in school. It all seemed to work pretty well to get people thinking about what they were doing and why. When they thought about time and resources, it was a short jump to organizing a learning supports team, reviewing data and setting goals. I think I need to push them further to think about the high performing groups and why they also appear to be stagnant. When I did this, the participants really started to look at the whole picture of student learning — not just the problem areas.”

### *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](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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*The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.*

William Arthur Ward

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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*

**Federal suit says district violates rights of homeless students.** The suit says the district violated the rights of homeless students for years by delaying or preventing enrollment, failing to provide them the required transportation to school, failing to help them deal with toxic stress, shunting some into online alternative programs with no teachers and disciplining them in a discriminatory fashion. The suit is filed against state and district officials and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The suit says that the school system and officials received grants designed to help the homeless but have violated federal requirements that homeless students have “equal access to the same free, appropriate public education” as others. 8/13/18  
<https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/federal-suit-says-riverview-gardens-violates-rights-of-homeless-students/article%E2%80%9494b4bc6cea-d1c8-545a-b324-57df978f0349.html>

**Here's what Broward schools knew about Parkland shooter — details revealed by mistake.** In the year leading up to the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, killer Nikolas Cruz was stripped of the therapeutic services disabled students need, leaving him to navigate his schooling as a regular student despite mounds of evidence that he wasn't. When he asked to return to a special education campus, school officials fumbled his request. Those conclusions were revealed in a consultant's report commissioned by the Broward public school system. “Two specific instances were identified,” the report says, where school officials did not follow the requirements of Florida statute or federal laws governing students with disabilities.

- School officials misstated Cruz's options when he was faced with being removed from the school his junior year, leading him to refuse special education services.
- When Cruz asked to return to the therapeutic environment of Cross Creek School for special education students, the district “did not follow through,” the report reveals.

In part because of the errors, Cruz had no school counseling or other special education services in the 14 months leading up to the shooting, the report says. 8/4/18  
<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-florida-school-shooting-consultant-report-full-20180803-story.html#>

**Schools hope enrollment push brings students.** When school opens, Gary (IN) Community School Corp. elementary students will have longer class days, more computers and updated cafeterias. The changes are part of a push to hold onto current students and entice others to return to the district (now run by a state-appointed emergency manager). The struggling district has been mired in debt, now estimated at \$98 million. Last year, Gary had about 4,700 students while 5,466 attended charter schools and another 1,800 attended voucher-financed private schools outside the city or state. Improving the district's bottom line is largely dependent on increasing enrollment. 7/30/18  
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-gary-school-enroll-st-0801-story.html#>

**With Declining Enrollment, Milwaukee Public Schools Leaders Get Creative To Boost Student Numbers.** School districts across Wisconsin are enrolling fewer students. In Milwaukee, the drop is due in part to fewer school-aged children. But the growing popularity of the state's voucher program that helps some families pay for private schools has also played a role. The acting head of the district, has launched a first-of-its-kind student enrollment campaign for the city's schools. The principal of U.S. Grant Elementary and five other canvassers were going door-to-door, ready to extol the virtues of public schools. If there was no answer, canvassers left small MPS flyers in both English and Spanish. This year, MPS reported enrollment at less than 78,000 students. That's down from 97,000 in 2003 and translates to fewer state dollars for a district already strapped for funds. Some funding that could have gone to MPS now follows 28,000 students that use vouchers to attend private schools. 7/30/18  
<https://www.wpr.org/declining-enrollment-milwaukee-public-schools-leaders-get-creative-boost-student-numbers>

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*Most people spend more time going around problems than trying to solve them.*

Henry Ford

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## Center Resources you may have missed if you were away during the summer

*Over the summer we sent out various resources that you may have missed. You can access them (and more) from the Center's homepage – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>*

Or go directly to the following:

### >The quarterly *ejournal* for Summer 2018.

Contains excerpts from the new, free book: ***Improving School Improvement***

Contents:

Part I: Good Schools and Classrooms

Part II: Moving toward Personalized Instruction and Special Assistance

Part III: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

Part IV. Moving Forward

Online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/news.htm>

### >The July and August *ENEWS*' discussion of:

>>*Staff Development & Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Disconnected Students*

>>*Ways to proactively address regular concerns that arise over the school year*

Access at: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/enews.htm>

### >New Center Quick Find on:

>> *Immigrant Students and Mental Health*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/immigrantkids.htm>

**Also if you haven't already done so, you can access the free book on:  
*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom & Schoolwide***

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

## Comments and sharing from the field

We were asked to share the following:

(1) "I'm a school social worker from Illinois and I'm creating an online community for school social workers (and other school mental health practitioners), researchers, and teaching professors.

The goals of the community are to:

(a) create an online Community of Practice (CoP) where we have collaborative dialogue about issues pertaining to school social work and school mental health;

(b) provide the community with opportunities, tools, and resources to form smaller Communities of Practice (either in-person or online) focused on areas that matter most to them.

I'm reaching out to invite you check out what we're doing and to see if you'd want to be involved in some way. I think the work you're doing would be of great value to this community and help bridge the gap between theory and practice. Here's a link to the community:

<https://schoolsocialworkers.mn.co/>

(2) I am the current Research Lead on the BOLT Project at the University of Washington School Mental Health Assessment, Research & Training (SMART) Center. The project is spearheaded by our center Director Aaron Lyon, PhD and co-PI Elizabeth McCauley, PhD. We are looking to get our recruitment started for the BOLT project and would appreciate whatever assistance you are able to provide disseminating this information. The UCLA Center for MH in Schools is a fantastic potential outlet to identify school-based mental health clinicians who might be interested in this study and professional development opportunity. Contact: [jcoifman@uw.edu](mailto:jcoifman@uw.edu)

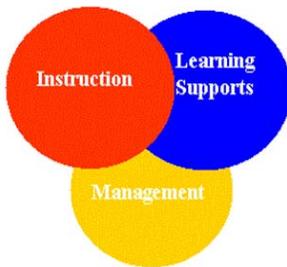
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And we were pleased to receive this comment:

*This is a far-too-brief note, but as the school year starts I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate reading the references and supportive resources from your center. They help me with preparing future principals too. Thank you -- from across the country. Your leadership in this work is appreciated.*

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\*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](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](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

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### **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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu) or [adelman@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:adelman@psych.ucla.edu)

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)