

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

August, 2019 (Vol. 23 #12) – 33 Years & Counting

What's Here

***Planning to Improve School Adjustment???* INVEST NOW OR PAY LATER!**

Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

About transforming student/learning supports

Comments, requests, information, questions from the field

and more

****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>

***Planning to Improve School Adjustment???* INVEST NOW OR PAY LATER!**

Over the first few weeks of a new school year, every teacher quickly identifies students who have and students who haven't made a good adjustment to their classroom and to the school. It is especially poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but not doing well.

If adjustment problems are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase. Misbehavior often arises in reaction to learning difficulties. The first month is the time to be proactive in addressing problems before they get worse.

This is the time for teachers to invite student support staff to work with them *in their classrooms* to intervene before problems become severe and pervasive and then require referrals for out-of-class interventions.

As soon as a school adjustment problem is identified, someone needs to sit down with the student (and often with the family) to clarify what's wrong and what to do. In these conferences,

- it's good to start positively by exploring the student's *assets* (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, anything the youngster likes at school and in class).

Then, explore what the student thinks are problems at school. For example:

- Are assignments too hard? uninteresting?
- Peer problems? picked on? rejected? alienated? embarrassed over inability to do assignments?
- Other things the youngster doesn't like at school?

For some, it will be necessary to explore factors outside of school (e.g., family problems).

We approach concerns about school adjustment from the perspective of (1) supports for transitions and (2) classroom engagement and re-engagement. Keeping resilience and prevention in mind, here are some Center resources to aid planning and personnel development:

- >> *About School Adjustment* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjust2.pdf>
- >> *Back-to-School Anxiety* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/backtoschanx.pdf>
- >> *Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/transitions/transitions.pdf>
- >> *Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/transitionsninthgrade.pdf>
- >> *Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students and Their Families*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/welcomingstrategies.pdf>
- >> *Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/welcome/welcome.pdf>
- >> *Engaging and Re-engaging Students*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>
- >> *About Resilience and Schools* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resili.pdf>
- >> *Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>

For more, use the Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds. For example, see:

- > *Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcoming*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm
- > *Classroom Focused Enabling* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm>
- > *Motivation* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>
- > *Resilience/Protective Factors* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/resilience.html>
- > *Response to Intervention* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/responsetointervention.htm>

Did you miss the following discussions?

These were explored in August as part of the *School Practitioner Community of Practice*.
See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

- *Are schools contributing to the overdiagnosis of mental illness?*
- *What are the plans for addressing bullying as school begins?*
- *What are the limitations of MTSS?*
- *About grouping students with behavior problems*
- *Are schools overspecializing special assistance?*

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An education is not so much about making a living as making a person.

Tara Westover

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Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

A few relevant resources, reports, and publications

Public's attitudes toward public schools <https://pdkpoll.org/>

Discipline reform through the eyes of teachers

<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/research/discipline-reform-through-the-eyes-of-teachers>

Where do educators turn to address instructional and behavior challenges?.

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2575z9.html

Contemporary college students' reflections on their high school peer crowds (2019). *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34, 563–596. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0743558418809537>

Fostering middle school students' autonomy to support motivation and engagement (2019). *Middle School Journal*, 50, 5-14.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00940771.2019.1603801>

Understanding a vicious cycle: The relationship between student discipline and student academic outcomes (2019). *Educational Researcher*, 48, 251-262. [Http://er.aera.net](http://er.aera.net)

Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide

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

Improving school improvement http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

>For more resources, see our website

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

>For info on upcoming conferences, initiatives, workshops

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

>For info on webinars

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

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I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance.

Pablo Casals

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About Transforming Student and Learning Supports

A response from a district superintendent to our recent survey request:

In our district we are finally at the place where we are shifting our administrative structure. We are focused on creating readiness in the system and have articulated the need to add the learning supports component. Our intention this year is to clarify this new structure and begin mapping our resources. We have identified district level leadership and will be developing capacity at our schools sites.

The biggest obstacle to schools unifying and developing a comprehensive and equitable system to address such barriers is "Initiative Fatigue." When people think this is something new they actively resist the change. It has taking me significant time to demonstrate to others that reorganizing to include learning supports is not new work. It is a way to organize a system that can and should be much more effective. That said, as soon as we name something it becomes a "new thing" and common thinking is that there is not time or capacity to add anything new. To that end, we are narrowing our focus and being very clear about why we are organizing and improving our learning and teaching supports. Demonstrating - in advance of implementation - how the new system will benefit both students and teachers is critical work. Schools are notorious for jumping to implementation prior to spending the necessary time on system design and change readiness. Moving too quickly or without proper information, professional development and support will almost certainly result in failed and/or ineffective implementation.

This year we have made the Learning Supports work a district priority goal. We have both school board and administrative support and alignment. We are adding a district level lead position and continuing our readiness work that will include adjusting our support structures and beginning mapping across our schools and community.

WHO'S MOVING FORWARD? A QUICK SURVEY

Please take a few minutes to inform us about the following.

With respect to addressing barriers to learning and teaching:

- (1) If you know any efforts to unify and develop a comprehensive and systemic component to address such barriers, please tell us where.
- (2) What do you think would help enhance efforts to (a) unify and (b) develop a comprehensive and equitable system to address such barriers?
- (3) What do you consider the biggest obstacle to such efforts?

Please return responses and any other general comments about the Center's work to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also, if you are interested in moving efforts forward, let us know. We would like to help!

Thanks for your assistance with this and for all you are doing to help children.

Note: For those beginning to think about increasing the capacity of a state, district, or school with respect to developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, let us know if you want some help. Contact ltaylor@ucla.edu

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There is no one program, however much evidence there is, that will cleanly solve complex social problems. Complex problems require a comprehensive set of strategies, interventions and/or programs and practices. – Larry Pasti

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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

El Paso Students start school in wake of tragedy. Nearly 60,000 public school students in El Paso, Texas start the school year amid an air of mourning, fear and resilience. The school district has been contacting families affected by the shooting in order to connect them to support services. El Paso is a close-knit community and some students have family members who were directly involved, or know people who were at the Walmart during the attack. ... teachers and administrators were in professional development, talking through what happened, and brainstorming ways to help students. <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/12/749149890/this-is-not-going-to-be-easy-el-paso-students-start-school-in-wake-of-tragedy>

Spokane County (WA) Sheriff's Office will soon be able to watch schools' live security footage. The Spokane County Sheriff's Office could have access to live camera feeds for 10 area school districts' security systems for emergencies such as shootings as soon as this school year. Under agreements between area school districts and Spokane County, law enforcement would tap into existing security camera systems in public areas on school campuses. Deputies, dispatchers and

crime analysts would be able to view the footage and would use it to direct police or other emergency responders to the school. Critics argued that law enforcement being able to tune into what were once internal discipline issues could cause an increase in the “school to prison pipeline.” Students, especially minorities, could be referred to law enforcement when school discipline would have been better for their situation. According to the agreement, in nonemergency situations law enforcement would have to subpoena video footage or work with the school resource officer. Law enforcement also agreed to treat information it views on footage as confidential and under control of the school district, which is required by law to follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2019/aug/06/sheriffs-office-will-soon-be-able-to-watch-schools/>

Florida launches school security database. The Florida Department of Education rolled out its database of student information that’s designed to enhance school security in the wake of last year’s shooting in Parkland. ...The data is primarily for groups of law enforcement, counselors and other school staff charged with evaluating threats made by students and deciding which ones may need professional help....The data portal will include information about students’ history with law enforcement, discipline as well as any social media posts that contain “certain critical threat indicators...” Civil rights groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, Southern Poverty Law Center and several that advocate for people with disabilities or mental illnesses, sent a letter saying the database amounted to an “overly broad” attempt at “mass surveillance” of students. They said this approach could discourage kids from reporting bullying incidents or problems....

<https://www.tampabay.com/>

Texas district to begin drug testing students as young as 12. Testing (either saliva swabs or urine samples) will begin with the resumption of classes next month at Bushland Independent School District and will be required of students in grades seven through 12 who play in the band, sit on the student council, assemble a yearbook, play chess or participate in other clubs. Students who receive a permit to park at the high school also will be subjected to testing. Administrators will check for seven substances — including alcohol, marijuana, heroin and opioids.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/texas/articles/2019-07-24/texas-district-imposes-drug-testing-for-extracurricular-play>

Student apprentices team up with school system plumbers, carpenters, and masons. In a program described as a first in the state, teenagers in Prince George’s County (MD) are paired with employees from their school system for an apprenticeship designed to last several years. Their work continues through August and scales back to part time during 12th grade. After graduation, the school system plans to hire the students or place them with industry partners as they continue to train. With the program’s launch in June, the students began working full time for \$15 an hour on crews that maintain and repair the system’s more than 200 schools and offices.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/student-apprentices-team-up-with-school-systems-plumbers-carpenters-masons/2019/08/05/c95a4692-a8a6-11e9-a3a6-ab670962db05_story.html

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Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.-- Verna Myers

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Comments and sharing from the field

(1) Response to *Why is improving schools so hard?*

Take a look at “School Transformation“ by Wayne Jennings. He has ideas about what complicates the process. Perhaps getting advice from other school leaders is not the best way to start. Wayne provides the best of us with ideas, thoughts, and resources to address the future success of “all”, our ultimate goal. His unique challenge is to get us to “think” about school. The word itself can be thought about in very limiting parameters.

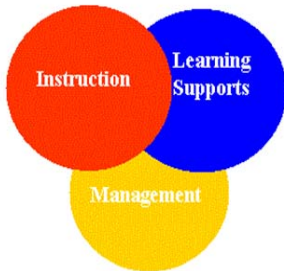
(2) A colleague shared the following about school shootings:

*I started writing *Creating Safe Schools in 2014, the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary**

school had already taken place. But the school shooting in Parkland Florida had not. According to Time Magazine, (February 22, 2018) there have been 17 school shootings in 2018 and 290 since Sandy Hook. In 2014, teachers weren't being trained and armed with guns. Children weren't having to deal with active school shooting training. Imagine the trauma of a 5 or 6-year-old having to seek shelter in order to prevent their being shot in a place where they have come to learn and be safe. Parents didn't have to deal with the daily fears that their children would not be coming home from school. (See complete discussion at: <http://www.schargel.com/category/blog/>)

And here are some appreciations from those concerned with improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students:

("I am interested in signing up for the Center's enews. I am with the state Department of Education and working across school districts on the USDOE School Climate Transformation Project and your Mental Health in Schools Center enews came highly recommended from a colleague." "I think the Center for Metal Health in Schools and Student Learning Supports does good work and provides access to good information and resources." "I enjoy reading all of the resources you have been providing for student support and helping students and families of k-12" "Keep up the wonderful work" "I don't want to miss a single issue of your newsletters. Please keep up the great work.")



*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