

# Students & Schools: Moving Forward\*

(April, 2023 Vol. 27 #7) – 37 Years & Counting

Another horrific event: See

[\*Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers\*](#)

## Featured

***Making Transitions to a New Grade/New School Successful***

Also in this issue

>[\*Quick links to online resources\*](#)

>[\*A Few Stories Excerpted from Various News Sources\*](#)

>[\*Comments and sharing from the field\*](#)

## ***Helping Students and Families Plan Transitions to a New Grade/New School***

*Making a transition to a new school causes anxiety in students and can challenge the coping skills of many adolescents, especially those at risk. Typically the move to a new school includes changes in school climate and size, peer relationships, academic expectations, and degree of departmentalization among peers.*

Cauley, & Jovanovich

Transitions arise related to each new step in formal education and in moving to and from special programs and to post school living and work. For those making such transitions, well-designed support during the period of transition can make a great difference in their lives. From the first grade-to-grade transition to the move to middle school and high school and every other move to a new school, and post high school, all call for well-conceived ways to support transitions. And for a good number of students (and families), transitions from one grade to the next and/or to a new school can be especially difficult and stressful.

Schools, working together with students and families, anticipate the changes ahead by planning goodbyes, orientations, welcoming, and hopefully ways to provide social supports and, when needed, special academic assistance. Minimally, there is a need to anticipate transition concerns and assist students and their families in the move to next teachers and setting. Ideally, efforts are made to facilitate positive expectations and the beginnings of a strong working relationship. For example, plans stress ways to

- provide closure related to what the student is leaving behind
- enhance articulation between the old and the new
- welcome newcomers and ensure they have the type of social support that facilitates positive acceptance and adjustment in the new setting
- assess transition success
- implement timely corrective interventions when transitions are not successful

Properly designed and implemented, the efforts should prevent transition problems and increase positive attitudes toward school and learning.

To gain a perspective on how schools handle this facet of *Supports for Transitions*, we asked several of the school districts we worked with what they had in place to assist students as they moved from one level of schooling to the next. Their responses are included in:

>[\*Transitions to and from Elementary, Middle, and High School\*](#)

Also see:

- >[\*Transition Time\*](#)
- >[\*Transition From Grade To Grade\*](#)
- >[\*Helping Children Transition Into a New School Environment\*](#)
- >[\*Tips for Teachers Transitioning to a New Grade Level\*](#)
- >[\*Easing the Transition to High School: Research and Best Practices Designed to Support High School Learning\*](#)
- >[\*Supporting Middle School Student Transition to High School: Best Practices from Middle School Principals\*](#)
- >[\*Toward Ensuring a Smooth Transition into High School. Issue Brief\*](#)
- >[\*Transition to first grade\*](#)
- >[\*Welcoming students to middle school\*](#)
- >[\*Transition to high school\*](#)
- >[\*School transitions: Beginning of the end or a new beginning?\*](#)

Also see our Center Quick Finds:

- >[\*Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcome\*](#)
- >[\*Transition to College\*](#)

### **About the Support for Transitions as a Learning Supports Domain**

In addition to changing schools and changing grades, students are regularly confronted with a range of other minor and major transitory demands. Such transitions are ever present and usually are *not* a daily focus of institutionalized efforts to support students. Every transition can exacerbate problems or be used as a natural opportunity to promote positive learning and attitudes and reduce behavior and emotional problems.

Schools need to build their capacity to address transitions proactively and, in the process, to be guided by their goals for enhancing personal and social functioning. This is the focus of *Supports for Transitions* which is one of the six domains of learning supports delineated in the prototype for a **unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching**.

The domain encompasses assisting students and families as they negotiate the many transitions encountered daily and throughout the school year, such as initial entry or reentry into school, school and grade changes, getting to school each day, daily transitions (e.g., before school, breaks, lunch, afterschool), program transitions, accessing special assistance, and so forth. See the **Support for Transitions self-study survey** for specific examples.

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*One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks.*

Jack Penn

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**>Quick Links to Online Resources**

**Addressing the Long-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children and Families**

**The Fiscal Consequences of Private School Vouchers**

**Tax Avoidance Continues to Fuel School Privatization Efforts**

**State Agencies Did Not Always Ensure That Children Missing From Foster Care Were Reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in Accordance With Federal Requirements**

**Common Problems, Common Solutions Rural Toolkit**

**Absenteeism and Truancy in California Schools**

**Considerations for Trauma-Informed Child Care and Early Education Systems**

***Links to Many More Resources***

*If you need resources on a specific topic, you will find the Center's Quick Finds helpful. See the Quick Find menu of over 130 topics relevant to the Center's mission at <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm> (e.g., anxiety and stress, attendance, barriers to learning, bullying). Each Quick Find has links to online resources developed by the Center and from a variety of other sources.*

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**Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during March**

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

Note: All community of practice editions contain Links to relevant shared resources.

- >Some indicators of youth risk behavior show encouraging trends
- >About mental health in schools as a platform for transforming student/learning supports
- >Can mentoring expand support for adolescents who are depressed?
- >Looking to improve the school's role in enhancing mental health?
- >Can the impact of social determinants on child and adolescent mental be altered?
- >Lessons learned from pioneering efforts to transform student and learning supports
- >Some schools are being closed: Supporting students and families in making transitions
- >Teaching about social justice as an approach to commemorating Cesar Chavez
- >Enhancing Home Involvement in School & "Things Teachers Should Never Do in a Parent Meeting"

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*You never change things by fighting the existing reality.  
To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.*

R. Buckminster Fuller

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>How the center responded to the Coronavirus crisis  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/centercorona.pdf>

>For more resources in general, see our website  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

>For info on the status of upcoming conferences  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

>For info on webinars  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

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*Kids need people in their corner, especially when they might not have anybody else. I'm not scared of the problems in and around education. I'm here to stay and am prepared to do what's right and to do what's necessary for the next generation.*

Marina Lagattuta

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>Calls for grant proposals  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upcall.htm>

> job and training opportunities  
when available  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm>

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

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 to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)



**>A Few News Stories** (excerpted from various news sources)

**The broken business of feeding America's schoolchildren.** Cafeteria costs are devouring K-12 budgets as more food providers leave districts in the lurch, forcing administrators to take drastic measures to keep students properly fed. Food providers that many of the nation's public school students rely on for meals are increasingly charging more than administrators can afford. While inflation is inching down, food prices at primary and secondary schools were up more than 300% in January from the year before, federal data shows. That figure reflects the expiration of pandemic-era aid to schools. One district is now partnering with an area nonprofit to source fresh foods from local vendors. The district believes that this likely save money as well."

**'A form of resistance': More Black families are choosing to homeschool their children.** According to census data, the number of Black households homeschooling their children jumped from 3.3.% at the start of the pandemic in 2020 to 16.1% by the fall of that year. That jump was the largest of any racial group. Meanwhile, the proportion of homeschooled children in the US overall nearly doubled from 2.8% before the pandemic to 5.4% in the 2020-21 school year, according to the US Department of Education. Black families are developing learning routines that fit their children's needs and forming homeschooling co-op groups with other families to teach their children together.

**National Teacher Shortage: What is it, and why is it happening?** Across the country, hundreds of thousands of classroom teachers are dropping out of school. The U.S. Government Accountability Office analysis reported 233,000 fewer public school teachers in 2021 compared with 2019. And, it noted that teacher shortages are most acute in western states, rural and urban areas, and high-poverty communities, and in subject areas like foreign language, science and special education. Negative perceptions of the teaching profession and a "perceived lack of support for current teachers are among key recruitment and retention challenges," the GAO found. Across the country, many teachers say they feel stressed and burned out. Many report a lack of support from parents or state leaders, struggles with student discipline and stagnant salaries; they feel angry over high-stakes testing and heightened political tensions around matters of equity and diversity.

**Purpose of Education Survey.** In a survey on the "Purpose of Education" conducted by Populace Insights the group noted: from 2020-2022 the top two priorities for Americans in education remained the same: (1) Students develop practical skills (e.g. manage personal finances, prepare a meal, make an appointment) and (2) Students are able to think critically to problem solve and make decisions. Overall, Americans want students who can think for themselves, a practical education and individualized education.

**Grant funds youth outdoor education.** A partnership between Adkins Arboretum and ShoreRivers has received funding from Maryland Department of Natural Resources to provide environmental education programming for Caroline County Public Schools students. The project will support the county's second grade life science unit by engaging second-graders in a "Bees, Seeds, and Healthy Streams" field experience at the Arboretum. Each of the nearly 500 second-graders in the county will participate in a meaningful outdoor field experience. Following the field experience, the students will conduct a native plant/pollinator count in their schoolyard and plant native seed balls to improve schoolyard habitat and attract pollinators. The program also includes professional development for second grade teachers to familiarize them with the "Bees, Seeds, and Healthy Streams" component of their science unit.

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Spring is nature's way of saying "let's party." Robin Williams

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## Comments and sharing from the field

Response to 2/24/23 commentary: *Mental Health in Schools: We Never Argue Against the Need for Additional Federal Support, BUT ...*

“ Long time reader/observer of your work. So appreciate your capturing this challenge in this post. It's the complexity of need and the disintegration of our systems that make trauma and other issues more difficult.”

Response to 3/9/23 commentary: *What did Scholastic, Inc. have to do with Introducing Educators to a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports?*

“Would it be okay if I translate excerpts (mostly from Modules 2 &5) of this brief into Korean and share them with my clients who struggle between their children and the schools?”

I work as a case manager at a local CBO and mostly serve Korean immigrants. I facilitate a parenting workshop ("Parenting with Empathy and Respect"), and some parents have shared that they have to compromise their relationships with their kids to accommodate the school's demands (which are not always developmentally appropriate and mostly based on behaviorism). This brings about more conflicts between parents and children, diminishes the intrinsic motivation of children, and leads to school rejection. Then, the school imposes more intense behavior controls, and you know how this goes. This is happening in elementary school, where students' positive school experiences matter more than lit/math scores...I'm not trying to divide teachers and parents. However, I think a lot of parents -- especially the ones in underserved/marginalized groups -- lack resources. In that sense, I would like to help them feel better and prevent them from impairing their relationships with their children to follow the schools' behavior control strategies (behavior chart, punishment, consequences, and etc.).”

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

***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 <https://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)**