Students & Schools: Moving Forward

Featured

Enhancing Graduation Rates

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Enhancing Graduation Rates

...The graduation rates of students with disabilities (70.6 percent), English learners (71.3 percent), and low-income (81.3 percent) students....”

Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Raising High School Graduation Rates

https://new.every1graduates.org/building-a-grad-nation-progress-and-challenge-in-raising-high-school-graduation-rates-3/

“Most late high school dropouts (83%) listed a school-related (versus a family or employment related) reason for leaving. These reasons included missing too many school days, thinking it would be easier to get a GED, getting poor grades, and not liking school.”

National Center for Education Statistics, Late High Schools Dropouts

The school's role in enhancing graduate rates involves doing more related to promoting positive development and addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Special attention is required to counter school-related experiences that push students out. (School factors account for approximately two-thirds of the differences in mean school dropout rates. Available research suggests that being held back is the single strongest predictor of dropping out for both early and late dropouts. Data indicate that being held back one grade increases the risk of dropping out later by 40 to 50 percent, two grades by 90 percent.)

At this time of the school year and at every grade level, teachers and student support staff can turn things around for students who are falling further and further behind by helping students who need special assistance to “catch-up.”

Special assistance involves personalized and shared problem solving. This usually requires an indepth conference and a series of follow-ups with the student and family.
> The *content* focus is on clarifying specifics related to the student's problem(s) and formulating flexible steps to move forward.
> The *process* focus is on establishing and continuously enhancing a positive working relationship and monitoring the intervention steps closely to make immediate changes as necessary.

Special attention is paid to clarifying underlying factors interfering with school learning and performance with a view to addressing any that can be ameliorated.

There is general agreement that schools must become more proactive in preventing problems. The trend has been to wait for problems to arise and then react. Instead, schools need to:

>*Rethink classroom and schoolwide approaches in order to*
(a) enhance personalized learning by connecting with students' needs, interests, and capabilities (as informed by response to intervention) and
(b) provide students with non-traditional approaches (e.g., alternative teaching strategies) and special assistance as needed

In general, the aims are to enhance achievement **and** feelings of self-determination, competence, and positive connection with peers and school staff. The more these aims are met, the more likely learning, behavior, and emotional problems will be prevented and graduate rates will increase.

Note: About maximizing *prevention* of dropping out:
>Children at-risk need to be supported at a young age (as early as preschool).
>At every age, interventions are needed to ensure students feel competent to succeed at school. Some need one-on-one support for awhile. Special attention must be given to re-engaging those who have disengaged from classroom learning.
>Professional development of teachers and support staff must be upgraded to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to work collaboratively with a wider range of students. A particular need is to ensure that support staff know how to team with teachers in the classroom to enhance student engagement, personalized intervention, and special assistance.
>Special opportunities, accommodations, and supports usually need expanding in efforts to retain middle and high school students. These include tutoring, mentoring, service learning, career advising, and more.
>   (When older students, including potential dropouts, work with younger ones, both can improve their literacy skills. Service learning can integrate community service into the academic curriculum. Investigators have found that when rigorous study in academic disciplines is linked to serious work on real needs, students' motivation to learn increases. When teachers are rigorous about partnering with young people to design and carry out service-learning projects that are tied to curricular objectives and standards, there are academic, intellectual, civic, ethical, social, and personal benefits.*)*
>Multiple pathways are needed to provide high quality alternative career and vocational choices.
>   (The concept of multiple pathways focuses on ensuring choice among a variety of high school programs that prepare all students for both college and careers. The emphasis is on providing both academic and career foundations for advanced learning, training, and effective and responsible participation in society. Available choices reflect student interests and community strengths and opportunities. They include programs that provide real world training in areas where graduates can apply for living-wage jobs.)

For resources related to increasing graduation rates

The U.S. Department of Education Best Practices Clearinghouse released a practice guide on Dropout. Strategies presented include identifying and advocating for at-risk students, implementing programs to improve behavior and social skills, and keeping students engaged in the school environment. Online at
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dp_pg_090308.pdf

For resources for developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, see

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

For more resources related to this topic, see the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds on

>*Dropout Prevention*
>*Barriers to Learning*
>*Accommodations*

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> *Ultimately, data should serve as a guide rather than a governor, informing our decisions without eclipsing the human elements of teaching and learning. If we can strike that balance, we can create systems that honor both the complexity of children and the professional wisdom of the educators who know them best.* Sachin Pandya

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

>>**Community sports as a conduit for police–youth relationships**

>>**A Factor Analysis of Neighborhood Factors and Their Impact on Educational Outcomes**

>>**A review of sources and preliminary findings for understanding foster care re-entry services and outcomes**

>>**In the Voices of Adolescents: Co-Designing Four Curricular Components of Compassion Programs**

>>**"I Laughed Along for Years But Hated It Inside:" Understanding Nuance in Peer Teasing**

>>**Everyone Has a Story: A Simple Way to Raise Culturally Curious Kids**

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> *A good education for every American is one of the very best investments we can make in our future as a nation.* Senator Amy Klobuchar

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Here's what was discussed in the *Community of Practice* during January
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

Note: *All community of practice editions contain Links to relevant shared resources*.
>Do mentors give students hope?
>How are the different causes of behavior problems at school understood?
>Rethinking how schools address student misbehavior & disengagement
>What's been learned from efforts to address learning loss?
>Prevention yields threat reduction
>About School Climate
>What K-12 Trends to watch for in 2026
>A Bit About Resilience and Student/Learning Supports
>Protective Factors and Children's Subjective Well-being

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>For more resources in general, see our website
https://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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Families deserve safe and welcoming public schools that are relevant, engaging, and inclusive. These schools, along with thriving universities, are the bedrock of our children's future and the nation's economic, scientific, and medical success. We must strengthen—not abandon—public education.

AFT President Randi Weingarten

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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 newdirections 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

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

Education Department grants Iowa first-of-its-kind education funding waiver. U.S. Secretary of Education granted Iowa a first-of-its-kind waiver to use millions of unrestricted federal dollars on education. The over $9 million waiver over four years, will allow certain federal requirements to be dropped giving the state more flexibility in using the aid. Prior to the formal waiver request, the state submitted a Unified Allocation Plan to show how it would use its funds to improve academic outcomes for Iowa's education programs. The plan includes supporting effective educator development, English language acquisition, among other topics..

Building youth power. The Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network (VSARN), a youth-led organization focused on building anti-racist schools and communities, recently received a $3,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation. The grant will fund in-person youth gatherings across the state, supporting meetings, leadership days, and collaborative workshops throughout the summer and during out-of-school periods. Founded and run by

Vermont students, VSARN prioritizes peer collaboration, mentorship, and community-based anti-racist action. The organization has visited classrooms, organized statewide events at the State House, and drafted two student-written bills aimed at educational equity.

District opens Community Support Center. Goose Creek CISD (TX) celebrated the opening of its new Community Support Center.. The center offers a food bank, adult learning programs with computer labs, and services through the Texas Workforce Commission, including job training, employment resources, and upcoming classes for GED preparation, English as a second language and citizenship.

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From news story above:
> *This moment reflects our shared commitment to creating opportunities that empower students and strengthen families. What began as a vision has become a reality that enhances how we support our students personally and beyond the classroom. The student is our primary focus, but we know that the student is a member of a family, and we know that by supporting the family ..., that it will support the student in reaching their full fruition.*
>
> Superintendent Dr. Randal O'Brien

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>Comments and sharing from the field

>" I greatly appreciate your efforts to support schools and school districts. Many of them feel abandoned and misunderstood, so your guidance and influence are sorely needed and greatly appreciated - more than you know. We will get through these difficult times, even if it means making decisions and taking stances that push back against the policies and practices that are harming children and undermining public education."

>"I am always glad to help inform your extensive network. Your center is truly a national treasure."

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**

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 or adelman@psych.ucla.edu

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu