

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

(March, 2023 Vol. 27 #6) – 37 Years & Counting

Featured

The second semester slump: Keeping everyone motivated

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The second semester slump: Keeping everyone motivated

From: [*Springtime Slump: We Can Do It!*](#)

“When the school year begins, we’re full of energy. The same holds true toward the end of the year, when summer breezes return and a long break is in sight. In the spring, having the stamina and optimism to pull through can be a challenge....

When Presidents’ Day hits in the frigid darkness of February, teachers are looking at about a six-week stretch of school until spring break, which doesn’t sound too horrible until we think about some of the other factors. For starters, testing often takes over in the spring months, and that alone adds pressure to the already fast-paced world of instruction. With up-and-down weather patterns, viruses tend to run rampant, and now that we face this year’s addition of Covid-19 worries, anxiety is at a premium. Finally, people can be pretty tired, either from spring allergies or from just needing that break to come. How can teachers stay the course and keep morale up in the face of some pretty significant challenges to mindset and energy?

While a second semester slump may have a small effect on those who are motivated and successful, there is a sense of mounting frustration for those who aren't doing well. This is especially so for students who have learning and emotional problems.

Spring slump can lead to problems in attendance and effort. For some, it is just that the school year seems so long and their motivation lags. For others, it is clear that they aren't doing well and are unlikely to catch up. For students in their last year at a school, a version of "senioritis" hits, and they hope to coast through and survive the last few months.

Here are some adaptable ideas for teachers in dealing with student’s spring slump:

From: [*Tips as you plan for a new semester of teaching and learning*](#)

>Connect with students early and often. ... use their names and build community with and amongst them. Move around the physical classroom, and check-in with your students before, during or after class. If you notice engagement waning, help refocus students on their learning.

>Design class sessions to maximize student engagement. Plan for active learning by creating shorter and more engaging presentations. Incorporate opportunities for discussion both inside and outside the classroom, creating more space for students to meaningfully engage with course content and each other.

>Involve students in their learning. Consider opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers whether engaging in collaborative in-class activities....”

From: [*Slacking in the spring: How seniors slump*](#)

“Because teachers understand that students tend to be less enthusiastic about work towards the end of the year, many decide to change their curriculum.... Experienced teachers tend to try to get to the fun stuff or something unusual or collaborative or experiential at the end of the year.”

The emphasis on motivation calls for increasing opportunities for *discovery, inquiry, and serendipity*. The richer the learning environment, the more likely students will engage in learning and discover a variety of new interests, information, and skills. To these ends, practices such as project based learning, cooperative learning, and enrichment activities can be employed.

Project based learning (PBL) and *cooperative learning* have long been advocated not only as processes for facilitating development of a range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, but as potent ways to engage students. And, by working in teams, students can feel more connected to each other and can strengthen collaborative, social, and communication skills.

Enrichment activities too often are seen as a frill. However, for many students, such activities are key to their involvement at school. From a motivational perspective, enrichment options are not designed to teach specific information and skills, rather they are intended to encourage independent exploration, experimentation, and learning that has beneficial but serendipitous outcomes. Enrichment activities also are not designed to operate as if everything a student learns is taught by the teacher. As a general strategy, enrichment opportunities can be established by offering an attractive set of discovery and inquiry centers and facilitating students exploration.

For more on strategies for enhancing motivation, see

[*Project based learning and student engagement*](#)

[*Addressing student burnout*](#)

[*Enhancing Classroom Teachers' Capacity to Successfully Engage All Students in Learning*](#)

[*Motivation, Engagement, Re-engagement*](#)

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You will enrich your life immeasurably if you approach it with a sense of wonder and discovery, and always challenge yourself to try new things. - Nate Berkus.

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

[Lesson plan: the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria](#)

[National Coalition for Public Education](#)

[Using the Core Components of a Public Health Framework to Create a Child and Family Well-being System: Example from a National Effort, Thriving Families, Safer Children](#)

[Discovery Learning](#)

[Raise the Bar: Lead the World](#)

[“Will it Work as Well on Zoom?” A Natural Experiment During the Covid-19 Pandemic of Delivering Parenting Groups Via Video Conferencing or in Person](#)

[Elementary school children in the online world: Naming and mobilization of rights](#)

[Disorder or difference? Autism researchers face off over field's terminology](#)

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 <http://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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Raising the Bar also means boldly improving learning conditions. It means transformational shifts in how we invest in and provide mental health supports to go from a reactive school model to a proactive model that focuses on a student's overall well-being.... Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education

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

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

- > *Countering the impending tidal wave of unnecessary referrals for special assistance and special education*
- > *What's being done to increase attendance at this critical time?*
- > *What problems arise when additional mh professionals are brought into a school?*
- > *Focusing on mental health in schools from a public health perspective*
- > *Students thrive with positive experiences (and so do school staff)*
- > *New teacher blues: changing the tune*
- > *It's not all about teacher-student relationships and good instruction: Addressing problems requires a strong system of student/learning supports*

For an update on how the center is responding to the Coronavirus crisis, see <http://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
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>**

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

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

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

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

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“... the good news is that we actually have a couple of good things in our arsenal to help kids recover and ultimately thrive. One is to just remind ourselves that kids in fact, are resilient. And if we give them good instruction and good learning opportunities, many of them will be able to accelerate their learning... And then, there's really solid research saying that if kids know there's an adult that cares about them as a person, have a supportive peer group, are involved in activities helping others, and feel welcome in school, they will feel connected. And that's as close as we have to a universal prevention measure.” Robert Balfanz

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

School enrollment: Missing kids. Analysis by The Associated Press, Stanford University's Big Local News project and Stanford education professor Thomas Dee found an estimated 240,000 students in 21 states whose absences could not be accounted for. These students didn't move out of state, and they didn't sign up for private school or home-school, according to publicly available data. In short, they're missing. The missing kids represent far more than a number. The analysis highlights thousands of students who may have dropped out of school. The AP learned of students and families are avoiding school for a range of reasons. Some are still afraid of COVID-19, are homeless, or have left the country. Some students couldn't study online and found jobs instead.

Organizations Selected for Inaugural Youth Organizing and Culture Change. The Youth Organizing and Culture Change Fund announced its inaugural cohort of ten New York City-based youth-led and youth-serving organizations that will receive support to advance their work and build community at the intersection of organizing, arts, culture, and systemic social transformation. This will offer these organizations capacity building support, leadership development opportunities, and community-building efforts with artists, cultural producers, and philanthropic partners. Participants will learn, develop, and test cultural and organizing strategies that lead to systemic, transformative societal change in communities across the city.

Colorado's public school enrollment continues to fall, with declines hitting both elementary and middle schools. Public school enrollment fell for the first time in decades in 2020 as Colorado lost almost 30,000 students during the first year of the pandemic. K-12 enrollment dropped by 1,174 students in 2021. The pandemic temporarily pushed enrollment down, but the primary driver is demographic changes. Declining enrollment, which is occurring across the country, has largely been attributed to falling birth rates and high housing costs that are pushing families from districts, including Denver Public Schools. The enrollment count released by the state is used to help determine funding for districts; schools receive less money when there are fewer students. The state's two largest districts — DPS and Jeffco Public Schools — already are reckoning with the financial consequences as both are facing budget deficits.

Teens deputized as health educators. Community health groups across the country are training teens and deputizing them to serve as health educators at school, on social media and in communities where COVID vaccine fears persist. Some training programs use peer-to-peer models on campuses, while others teach teens to fan out into their communities. FACES for the Future Coalition, a public youth corps based in Oakland, is leveraging programs in California, New Mexico, Colorado and Michigan to turn students into COVID vaccine educators. And the Health Information Project in Florida, which trains high school juniors and seniors to teach freshmen about physical and emotional health, integrates COVID vaccine safety into its curriculum.

New partnership with service volunteers aims to boost teacher workforce. California will pair its service volunteer groups with the state Department of Education in an effort to bring more young people to teaching careers. The partnership includes the California Climate Action Corps, AmeriCorps, CaliforniansForAll Youth Jobs and CaliforniansForAll College Corps. More than 10,000 volunteers enrolled in those programs will get access to career fairs and information about scholarships and grants such as the Golden State Teacher Grant, which provides up to \$20,000 for prospective teachers and counselors who agree to work at high-needs schools in California for four years.

Iowa lawmakers OK public money for private school students. Any Iowa student who wants to attend a private school could use public money to pay for tuition or other expenses under a plan approved by the Legislature, making the state the third to pass a measure that allows such spending with few restrictions. Gov. Kim Reynolds, who made the private school funding measure one of her top priorities after failing to pass similar but less expansive proposals twice before, said she would sign the bill. With passage of the bill, Iowa joins West Virginia and Arizona as states that provide taxpayer money to help families pay student tuition and other expenses at private schools with few limits.

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Whether it's leading the front line of a march or pioneering innovative ways to amplify social justice issues on social media platforms, young people are the vanguard of creating the cultural changes needed in order for the citizens of our city to thrive. Youth organizers are worthy of the investment needed to continue to blaze a path forward that is equitable and just for all. Nyoka Acevedo, Coord. for Youth Organizing and Culture Change

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Comments and sharing from the field

(1) Response to 2/15/23 post *What problems arise when additional MH professionals are brought into a school?*

“Great article this month. Boy have we been hit on this one...What have been your experiences with community MH resources coming to schools? We spent Millions on ESSER funds to increase MH services to students in the schools via telehealth. The numbers are staggering compared to our costs. We have MH providers on just about every campus making about \$23-\$35 an hour, while licensed professionals in private practice make \$100-150 an hour. The telehealth model (Hazel Health) that came to our state, requires school staff to sit with our students, when they receive services. We are already running low on all staff because the funding we received goes to contracted providers and has not impacted the state worker salary other than a small bonus this past year. To top that, the high priced telehealth folks don't do related services on an IEP, don't really deescalate crisis, and are not good at managing behaviors in the schools. So technically they do not offer much. My recommendation is that they market to families and allow families to access after school and beyond. Apparently that is available, if a school remembers to refer, because the school referral is the only support. And it is just for kids, not families, so where is the evidence that working the child alone is enough? Anyway, I thought I would agree with you on this and am curious to see what others are doing.”

(2) We were asked to tell you about:

- >“Advocating for Student Healing & Health, April 17-18
School-based health and wellness programs are key to building health and education equity for California’s children and youth. The California School-Based Health Alliance’s statewide School Health Conference and Advocacy Day in Sacramento April 17-18 is an opportunity for health practitioners, educators, and advocates to connect and learn how to best support students with increased access to health care at school”
<https://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/>
- >Workshops offered on “Applying the Science of Mindfulness and Happiness” See <https://www.dailydoseofmindfulmoments.com/>

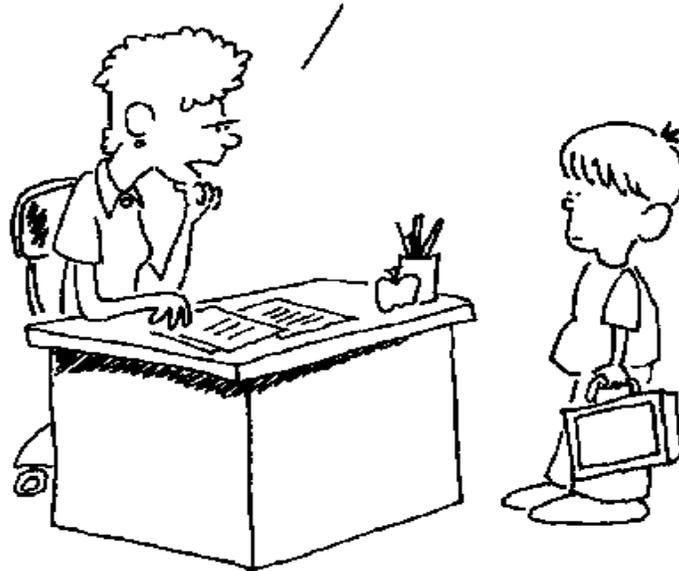
To Listserv Participants

- 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](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

I KNOW YOU LIKE LUNCH-TIME BEST,
BUT THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE
YOU'D LIKE TO DO AT SCHOOL!



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