Students & Schools: Moving Forward

Featured

What's Being Done for Students Who Have Not Adjusted to the New School Year?

INVEST NOW . . .OR PAY LATER!

Talking About New School Year Adjustment Problems:
An Update from Hawai`i

Also in this issue for Continuing Education
>**Quick links to online resources**
>**A Few Stories Excerpted from Various News Sources**
>**Comments and sharing from the field**

What's Being Done for Students Who Have Not Adjusted to the New School Year?

INVEST NOW . . .OR PAY LATER!

After a couple of weeks into the new school year, teachers are aware which students haven't made a good adjustment in class and to the school. The first month is the time to be proactive in meeting these students where there are. If adjustment problems are not addressed quickly, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase.

This is the time to find ways 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.

As soon as problems are identified, take steps to increase personal contacts that allow for building a positive working relationship with the youngster and family. In doing so,

- 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.).

Based on what has been learned about students' school adjustment problems, here are some basic classroom strategies to consider:

- 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)

- 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.

> To accomplish the above:
>
> Enhance use of aides, 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. 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.

What If the Above Strategies Don't Work?

- Talk to others at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability, request additional staff development on working with such youngsters).

- As a last resort 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.

@#@#@##   Student on first day of new school year:

I wish it was next week. By then I would know everybody.

@#@#@##

****

Below are a few links to strategies for supporting transitions and enhancing engagement in learning:

>*Support for Transitions*

>*Enabling Learning in the Classroom*

>*Engaging and Re-engaging Students*

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

>*Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcoming*

>*Classroom Focused Enabling*

>*Motivation*

>*Response to Intervention*

****

Talking About New School Year Adjustment Problems: An Update from Hawai`i

Superintendent Keith Hayashi visited the three Lahaina campuses along with key legislators and Hawai'i State Department of Education leadership. While the three campuses sustained wind damage, the overall structure of campus buildings and classrooms are in good condition. Lahaina school administration teams are eager to resume teaching and learning for those who are ready and able to access it, and the Department is committed to ensuring that this is done as quickly and safely as possible. Crews are currently at the campus sites, cleaning debris and testing both air and water quality in the coming days. Reopening dates will be determined once campuses are confirmed as safe for students and staff. ...

  The Hawai'i State Department of Education launched a support hotline for families and staff of the Lahaina public schools impacted by the wildfires....

  Starting Monday, Aug. 28, staff from King Kamehameha III Elementary, Princess Nahi'ena'ena Elementary, Lahaina Intermediate and Lahainaluna High should expect to report to a centralized off-site location. The goal is to help staff transition back to work — providing access to mental health training and services, and discussions surrounding next steps. "I want to again reassure our Lahaina employees that your well-being remains our priority," Superintendent Keith Hayashi said.

FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL
FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

>Quick Links to Online Resources

Flourishing Classrooms: Applying a Systems-Informed Approach to Positive Education

Profiles of Resilience from Early to Middle Childhood

Foster care, kinship care, and the transition to adulthood

Transforming Educational Systems Toward Continuous Improvement

Collaborating With Youth-Serving Organizations to Enhance School Emergency Operations Plans

Back to School Mental Health Tool Kit

Tools for Supporting Emotional Wellbeing in Children and Youth: English

Tools for Supporting Emotional Wellbeing in Children and Youth: Spanish

A research update on social-emotional learning in schools

Trauma-Informed Care: Challenges to Developing and Implementing Performance Partnership Pilots to Serve Children

How Schools Can Support Neurodiverse Students

Addressing Discrimination Supports Youth Suicide Prevention Efforts

The Landscape of School-Based Mental Health Services

@#@#@##

What we need are people who can think not just outside the box—but who aren't even imagining a box. And one of the ways you can learn to do that, I believe, is, is through play – or these informal-learning kind of environments where kids are reaching beyond what they already know how to do, and using their imagination and creativity. Mara Mahmood, psychologist

@#@#@##

Here's what was discussed in the *Community of Practice* during August
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm
Note: *All community of practice editions contain Links to relevant shared resources*.

>Enhancing a positive school climate this school year begins with welcoming
>About the Role of School Engagement in Preventing School Dropout
>About kicking off the school year with community support
>Connecting with students in the first days of the new school year
>Interventions to promote attendance before it becomes a problem
>Seeking family input to to improve student success
>About threat assessment
>Strengthening social connections among peers
>TikTok as a public health tool?

If you missed the resources and news in previous issues of the Community of Practice, see
https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

****

>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

****

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

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

@#@#@#

At first it was a teacher shortage. Then there was a teacher shortage crisis. Then it was a teacher shortage catastrophe, and it just escalates.

Mark Klaisner
president of the Illinois Association of
Regional Superintendents of Schools

@#@#@#

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

It is essential to continue to urge districts/schools to play an increasing role in helping to transform student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

Our Center has many resources online focusing on transforming student/learning supports that can be used for discussion, continuing education, and planning. As a start, see, the following brief resources:

>*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports*

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

The work is detailed in three free books:

>*Improving School Improvement*

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

>*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

Note: We caution that, unless they are evolved from their current limitations, moves to MTSS and Community Schools will exacerbate the prevailing marginalization and fragmentation of student/learning supports in school improvement policy and practice. See

>*Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning*
>*Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports*

6
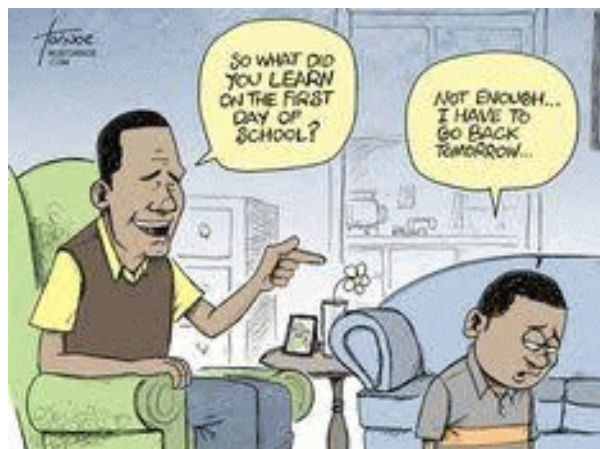
>A Few News Stories (excerpted from various news sources)

U.S. Department of Education Strengthens Guidance to Improve Equal Educational Opportunity for Children with Disabilities. The updated guidance will ensure states have the information needed to build robust general supervision systems. Such systems should ensure statewide accountability that swiftly identifies and corrects noncompliance, increases accountability through the collection of timely and accurate data, and ensures the full implementation of IDEA to improve functional outcomes, and early intervention and educational results for children with disabilities.

'Fiscal cliff' approaching for some districts. For many school districts in California, the flush years of budget windfalls are decidedly over. Declining enrollment, expiring Covid funds, inflation and ballooning staff costs have combined to lead some districts — particularly those in urban areas — to make painful budget cuts. Layoffs are likely as districts grapple with these uncertainties. Already, some districts are laying off teachers, aides and other staff hired with one-time federal Covid relief funds.

Chicago opens school enrollment center for migrant children and families. Recently arrived migrant families will get help with enrolling in school, receiving free school supplies, signing up for public benefits, and getting vaccinated at a new "welcome center" run by Chicago Public Schools and the city. More than 10,000 migrants have arrived in Chicago since August. Roughly half are staying in temporary shelters, including police stations. Hundreds of school-aged children are among the new arrivals, though the school district has not shared exact numbers. Helping these families find permanent housing and easing children into local public schools are key challenges.

Portland Parks & Recreation commits to centering underserved communities. To meet the community's needs, Portland Parks is piloting a variety of programs and structural changes. Some of the progress includes building parks in urban areas, reducing costs for programs and facilities, developing more inclusive spaces and programs, lowering carbon emissions and maintaining community gardens with meal distribution services.

@#@#@#

The boys and I lived in the car for a while. I didn't tell anyone at the school because I thought they would take the children away. Mother told to school mental health provider

@#@#@#

Comments and sharing from the field
Responses to the Center's 8/2 School Practitioner
Enhancing a positive school climate this school year begins with welcoming;
About the Role of School Engagement in Preventing School Dropout

(1) *I'm hosting a recorded session with school staff to discuss your article about welcoming students.*

(2) *I am trying to formulate a policy agenda for the schools that would enhance both the academic and social inclusion objectives of public education. So, I look forward to reviewing the various resources you sent. Your work is always inspiring and helpful!*

Response to Center's 8/3 message *Thinking Outside the Box to Enhance MH in Schools*

You so often confirm for me that all wisdom has not been lost! Today is one of those days.

Response to the Center's 7/19 School Practitioner *A closer look at mandatory reporting*

> *Your article was forwarded to me on "mandatory reporting" and how we can best serve by pivoting to "mandatory supporting". I did not have words to use this type of support that is needed for all children and for the population I currently serve: Displaced children and their families. Please add me to your listserve. I will be sharing this article with my liaisons.*

Response to the Center's 7/13 message *We now are beginning to see districts are hitting the fiscal cliff and are laying off student support staff*

> *The entire concept of District's Community Schools resonates from the exact integration as shown in ESSEA's diagram, of collaborating interagency partnership and community-based organizations. The diagram does not show the existing school site, central office approvals, and other walls/barriers like a parent's need to access technology more. Scrutiny of local and district policies that are really just barriers to success must be looked at as well. The answer is not additional staff, it is additional services that allow anonymity and personalized support for individual mental health, social health, and emotional health needs. It is including the availability of IEP and 504 plan assessments during the summer as critical credit recovery services...it is credit recovery programs at "all school sites for all grades." We no longer can afford to neglect the increased need for services throwing more people at the expanding problem. We must begin to integrate technology like the renowned Ripple Effects, and the appropriate grade-level acceleration software born, bred, and previously used in our District, to weave our existing services and success around each individual student's needs. I look forward to our success.*

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