

Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(September, 2025 Vol. 29 #12) – 39 Years & Counting

Featured

Which students are not adjusting well as school gets underway?

Also in this issue

>Quick links to online resources

>A Few Stories Excerpted from Various News Sources

>Comments and sharing from the field

Which students are not adjusting well as school gets underway?

As every teacher knows, some students experience difficulties adjusting to new classes, new schools, new teachers, new classmates. It is particularly poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but can't keep up.

Over the first few weeks, teachers can readily identify who has and hasn't made a good adjustment to their classroom and to the school. This is the time to proactively address any problems before they get worse. Hopefully, student/learning support staff are able to work with teachers in their classrooms to intervene before problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions.

If adjustment problems are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase.

Here are some interview strategies to consider in exploring what may be going on with the student:

- Use enhanced personal contacts to build a positive working relationship with the student and family.
- Focus first on student assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the student likes at school and in class).
- Clarify what the student is concerned about or doesn't like at school.
- Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the student embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the student picked on? rejected? alienated?)
- Explore other possible causal factors with the student and family.
- Explore what the student and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, tutor, etc.).

Based on the interview information, personalize classroom intervention strategies not only to help support students' efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance their social support network. Consider:

- emphasizing learning and enrichment options that are of current greatest interest and which the student indicates (s)he wants to and can pursue
- temporarily deemphasizing areas that are not of high interest
- designating a volunteer to help the student to engage and make transitions
- ensuring someone checks with the student frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)

- modifying classroom process and products (e.g., adjust assignments' length and time demands, provide technology, include audio-visual, arts and crafts, graphic, products)
- offer any other special assistance and accommodations the student may need
- also worth considering are strategies used for students diagnosed as ADHD or LD

To move quickly with students who are experiencing learning, behavior, and emotional problems, enlist extra hands in the classroom (e.g., student/learning support staff, aides, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors, those in the home, etc.). And engage all personnel in capacity building for enabling school adjustment.

Only after all this is done and has not worked is it time to use the school's referral processes to ask for specialized support services. If such services are needed, be certain to coordinate them with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

You can find more about this from the following Center resources:

- >[*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*](#)
- >[*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*](#)
- >[*Improving School Improvement*](#)

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Every child has unique potential, and I am determined to help create an environment where all students can reach that potential. Education is the foundation for their future, and I want to ensure that the opportunities we offer today will lead to success for generations to come.

Kathleen Wied-Vincent, School Board Member

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>**Quick Links to Online Resources**

- >>[**States Are Most Affected by Federal Education Funding Cuts**](#)
- >>[**Building schools where teachers thrive**](#)
- >>[**Facts about teens and social media**](#)
- >>[**Longitudinal Study on Correlations Between Body Image, Physical Activity, and the Subjective Well-Being Among Adolescents**](#)
- >>[**Centering Adolescents' Voices: Informing a Middle School-Based Well-Being Intervention**](#)
- >>[**What's My Role? Principals, Discipline, and Special Education**](#)
- >>[**Framework for Coherent AI Use in K-12 Education**](#)
- >>[**How Early Puberty Affects Children's Mental Health**](#)
- >>[**School Active Shooter Drills: Mitigating Risks to Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health**](#)

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We know what helps kids thrive: stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, supportive relationships and real opportunities to learn and grow. These aren't luxuries, they're basic needs, shared by all children in all communities, and meeting them is a shared responsibility.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

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

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

- >Addressing Student Mobility
- >Is Empathy Important to Student and School Success?
- >AASA survey reveals real-world impact of federal funding freeze
- >How are you heading off behavior problems?
- >Youth depression rates decline
- >About the impact of funding cuts on student learning
- >"Everyone's Busy: So Make Access to Center Resources Easier"
- >Promoting peer interactions in the classroom to enhance learning

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>

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

JUST RELEASED for 2025-2026

An Agenda for Improving Student/Learning Supports:

*A Month-by-Month Guide for Systemic Change
with Existing Resources*

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/agendapaper.pdf>

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We are not backing down. We are not retreating. We are doubling down on protecting the people who will suffer the greatest harm. We will get through these difficult days together with hard work and determination, using the skills we each have and contributing what we can.

Elizabeth G. Taylor

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

Administration releasing billions in frozen funds. The United States Department of Education has announced it will release more than \$5 billion in previously withheld grant funding to states. These funds were originally earmarked for a wide range of education initiatives like teacher training, migrant and English language programs and adult education.

Federal grant cuts put school mental health resources at risk. As public school districts prepare for a new school year, there are concerns about dwindling resources stemming from federal funding cuts, with many states sounding the alarm about grants for mental health counselors and social workers. In April, the administration, citing diversity, equity and inclusion issues, discontinued millions of dollars in mental health grants designed to help students. Department of Education spokesperson Madi Biedermann told CBS News it will "recompete and provide continuation awards," (See link to Federal Register announcement of recompetes on our Grant page)

States Hope Fired Federal Workers Will Flock to Fill Teacher Vacancies. When sweeping announcements were made earlier this year that a swath of federal workers were slated to lose their jobs in the nation's capital, neighboring state and city governments in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. began to make the best out of a tough situation. State and local leaders thought newly unemployed civil servants might be interested in shifting their professional energy ... toward teaching students in the classroom. Recruiting websites were launched specifically focused on federal workers and their skill sets. Job fairs were scheduled. .

Block granting federal education funds comes with trade-offs. The president's FY26 budget proposal, released May 30, would replace 18 federal programs collectively currently funded at \$6.5 billion with a single, new \$2 billion block grant called the "K-12 Simplified Funding Program." Among the 18 programs are ones supporting homeless students, rural schools, and after-school activities. By combining them into a block grant, Congress would shift the discretion and political challenge of choosing what to keep or cut to states and districts. The budget proposal also suggested combining multiple special education funding streams (regulated through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) into one, and eliminating several programs, including nearly a billion dollars for English learner supports.

IN overhauls school rules, eyes student success. Indiana is rolling out a series of new education laws aimed at helping students succeed in and beyond the classroom. The changes affect everything from attendance and academics to teacher pay and cybersecurity. New laws require schools to clearly define excused absences, publish attendance policies and offer better student support. High schoolers can now earn an Enrollment Honors Plus seal, combining academics, life skills and work experience. Students who earn it will be guaranteed admission to Indiana's public colleges.

New teacher shortage is hurting PA kids' academic prospects. Philadelphia and other school districts statewide are struggling to find enough certified teachers to fill vacancies, a trend that advocates for students say is diminishing the quality of kids' education. Why fewer people are becoming certified teachers in Pennsylvania is complex, but school officials, educators, and experts offered theories from inequity that leads to low salaries to long commute times and undesirable work locations in rural communities. Advocates are currently pushing state lawmakers to continue sending more money to the state's poorest schools and provide more funding for student-teacher stipends. A recent report from Penn State education researchers found that the number of teaching certificates issued by the commonwealth dropped by more than 60% between the 2010-11 and 2023-24 school years.

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All children deserve the opportunity to be their best selves as they are the framework of our future. Public education is an enormous opportunity open to all children to grow both academically as well as socially. That connection can deepen the values and sense of solidarity for everyone moving forward as a team. Lisa Fox, School Board Member

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>Comments and sharing from the field

Response to the commentary *Carnegie Foundation Transformation of High Schools: Are you Concerned about What's Missing?*

"I read your email and wanted to drop a note that I concur. I've spoken about the need to reimagine education for our students and in order to truly "transform" anything it must be systemic, involve all facets and stakeholders and be innovative, creative and aligned with our standards. To simply focus on one aspect of the educational system lacks fidelity and the authenticity to make a real, significant impact at the very level attempting to change. Let me know how to support as an elected school board member with a national network. I will be sharing this email with my colleagues across the nation as well. Aligned in this educational fight!"

Response to the commentary on the *RAND report on school screening for mental health*

"I think many small rural schools can't afford money or Human Resources to do mass screening. In addition many times that duplicates effort at identifying students in need. Not all parents want their kids to participate in screening. When I was working as a MS/HS counselor there was push back from families."

We were asked to share these resources with you

- (1) "I want to share a resource that I hope will be helpful as you work with school teams to integrate MTSS and SEL. I recently authored a chapter in a book titled Adolescent Public Mental Health. Chapter 3 is titled School Mental Health Milestones Since the Late 20th Century. It looks at adolescent mental health within the context of public education and provides a look at how SEL can be integrated within a school's MTSS process to provide mental health support for students. The book is available on the Springer website in digital or hard copy.

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-68294-0>

- (2) "I think our audiences would benefit greatly from cross-pollinating resources. Here's a short blurb you can share with your network about This Week in School Psychology:

'This Week in School Psychology delivers a free weekly digest of the latest evidence-based research in the field, summarizing newly published articles from the past seven days in accessible, plain language. Subscribers can also explore our AI-powered School Psychology Chatbot, which draws exclusively from peer-reviewed literature to help answer questions and support practice.'

Website: <https://thisweekinschoolpsychology.com/>

Chatbot demo: <https://youtu.be/-pQzbte5SBE>"

How was the first week at your new school?



Not good, they said I shouldn't come back until I adjusted my attitude.

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