

Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(April, 2024 Vol. 28 #7) – 38 Years & Counting

Featured

End of the School Year Transitions are Risky Opportunities

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End of the School Year Transitions are Risky Opportunities

As the end of the school year approaches, school staff, students, and families anticipate the challenges, stressors, and opportunities ahead. A particular need that arises is planning supports for the critical transitions related to grade-to-grade transitions, moves to middle school and high school, moves to a new school, moves to and back from special programs, and for those graduating to post school living and work.

Well-designed transition supports are essential and can make a great difference in the lives of many. The call is for interventions that prepare students and their families and that follow-up to ensure the transition has been successful. Transition periods also are opportunities to reduce alienation, enhance social and emotional development, and increase positive attitudes toward and engagement at school and in classroom learning.

A comprehensive focus requires facilitative school-wide and classroom-based interventions that prevent and solve transition problems. Such interventions

- celebrate accomplishments related to what the student is leaving behind
- enhance connections between the old and the new (e.g., visits, orientations, introductions)
- welcome newcomers (students, their families, staff)
- provide the type of information and ongoing supports that promote positive acceptance and adjustment in the new setting (e.g., counseling and articulation strategies, buddy connections, ongoing two way communications)
- assess transition success
- implement timely corrective interventions when transitions are not successful

For more on this see the following Center resources

>*Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*

>*Transitions to and from Elementary, Middle, and High School*

>*Support for Transitions Self-study Survey*

>*Supports for Transitions Quick Find*

From: *Strengthening Home and School Connections in the Middle School Years*

“Early adolescence and socialization into middle school bring about big changes.... This period coincides with cognitive growth, biological development, and social and emotional development. In addition, entering middle school students must contend with changes in school context and curriculum and with higher academic expectations from teachers and families. The combination of so many changes and stressors on students often leads to academic performance decline while the long-term implications of academic performance increase.

Exacerbating the challenges that come with the transition from elementary to middle school is the decline in family engagement that also often occurs. In the elementary grades, families are encouraged to be engaged and often receive concrete information, tips, and strategies that help them monitor and support learning. They also enjoy many opportunities to interact with teachers and other families and are kept informed of changes and developments in their child’s learning and behavior. These interactions and exposure strengthen families’ knowledge about the curriculum, increase social capital, and help them become better equipped to monitor and support learning at home. Then comes the sharp contrast experienced by families as their child enters middle school. In the words of many families, everything goes quiet and dark. The fact is that middle school families are eager for information and support that can help them navigate the transition into middle school and adolescent development changes, and they want to know about age-appropriate ways to engage and support academic achievement....

The following are four effective practices and strategies that district and school leaders can use to help strengthen families’ knowledge, skills, and strategies to support learning, as well as to help middle school educators to develop the capacity and disposition to partner with families in ways that are streamlined.

- >Open Two-Way Lines of Communication. A key practice for educational leaders is to share information with families before, during, and after the transition into middle school and to use multiple channels of communication to reach every family...
- >Develop Staff Capacity and Dispositions to Support Families. Developing staff capacity involves learning new skills and abilities from experts in the field. It also involves developing or strengthening healthy core beliefs about families, which is necessary for enabling educators to recognize and remove barriers that stand in the way of families fully participating in their children’s education....
- >Develop Family Capacity to Support Student Academic and Social–Emotional Success. Another effective strategy for engaging families is to offer parents and families opportunities for learning from school and community experts and to create spaces where they can network with other families to strengthen social capital...
- >Leverage Advisory Periods in Middle School. Many schools have advisory periods in which teachers regularly meet with small cadres of students. ...

Application of these strategies in schools can help create collaborative connections between educators and families and give families a voice and the space and opportunity to grow as coaches to support student academic improvement and well-being.”

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In order to co-create school climate resources, adults must actively listen to and engage with students to build trust and meaningful relationships — helping them feel comfortable speaking up.

Julian Berkowitz-Sklar, a recent graduate of Saratoga High School and member of the Youth Advisory Team of the California Center for School Climate

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

- >School Connectedness Helps Students Thrive
- >Everyday discrimination, emotion, and daily interactions during adolescence
- >What New Research Says About Fostering a ‘Sense of Belonging’ in Classrooms
- >Effective Components of Social Emotional Learning Programs: A Meta-analysis
- >Leading to Disrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- >Exploring possibilities for child participation in guideline development
- >Student Reports of Bullying
- >Schools Lock Up Cellphones to Keep Students Focused
- >Career and Technical Education in Comprehensive High Schools: Lessons from NY City

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>Do no harm: Can school mental health interventions cause iatrogenic harm?

[Now students] come in complaining of everyday stress that previous students would never have come and mentioned to me—for example, worrying about class, having trouble falling asleep a couple of nights, being upset about a breakup. They think that everyday stress is somehow an illness or a condition that needs to be treated. Richard Friedman, Psychiatrist

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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.

- >Trying to address absenteeism? Transform student/learning supports!
- >State education guides on the use of artificial intelligence in schools
- >A teacher asks: What can teachers do to support mental health of student in classrooms?
- >Who are opportunity youth?
- >How can schools strengthen students' respect for each other?
- >What's are schools planning for the rapidly approaching summer?

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>

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"Kids are born curious about the natural world. They are always turning over rocks, jumping with two feet into mud puddles and playing with the tablecloth and fine china." Neil deGrasse Tyson

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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

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

Free motel stay program for students experiencing homelessness. A school program called Project Rest is the first program of its kind in San Diego County where public schools pay for temporary housing for students and their families experiencing short-term or long-term homelessness. Public school students who lack a fixed, regular and adequate residence can request a hotel stay by contacting their school's or district's homeless liaison. But the program is set to expire this fall. It's funded with one-time money from the American Rescue Plan Act, the source of the nation's largest pandemic aid package for schools, which will sunset this September. Advocates are working with some legislators in pushing for a one-year extension of the homelessness funds. The program has provided motel stays for more than 1,500 San Diego County families since its inception two years ago.

Massachusetts school officials ask for governor to send the National Guard to help with unruly high school. Officials have asked Gov. Maura Healey to send in the Massachusetts National Guard to stop violence and address security concerns at a troubled high school in a city south of Boston. The governor's office acknowledged the concerns about Brockton High School, where teachers reported fighting and drug use in the hallways, and verbal abuse of staff. School committee members who backed the request held a news conference Monday to press their case for help. They said National Guard personnel could be used as hall monitors or even substitute teachers.

Kids are using phones in class, even when it's against the rules. Should schools ban them all day? Around the country, educators say students routinely send Snapchat messages in class, listen to music and shop online, among countless other examples of how smartphones distract from teaching and learning. Most schools already have rules regulating student phone use, but they are enforced sporadically. A growing number of leaders at the state and federal levels have begun endorsing school cellphone bans and suggesting new ways to curb access to the devices. The next battle will be against earbuds and smartwatches. Even with phones stashed in pouches, students get caught listening to music on air pods hidden under their hair or hoodies.

Sixteen and 17-year-olds in one Vermont town will get to vote in the local elections .

Brattleboro Vermont has acted on the notion that young voters offer hope for the future, giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in local elections. Those who turn 18 by the November general election will be permitted to vote in the state's presidential primaries on Super Tuesday. Some communities in Maryland have lowered the voting age to 16 for municipal elections. The city council in Newark, New Jersey, approved a measure in January to allow that age group to vote in school board races.

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quote from article on homeless support in San Diego

"In order to get help to go to school and be successful in school, someone has to know you're experiencing homelessness. And given the shame and stigma families feel, that has to be really proactive on the schools' part." Barbara Duffield, Executive Director of

Youth Homelessness Nonprofit Schoolhouse Connection.

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>Comments and sharing from the field

Feedback on *Transforming Student/Learning Supports & Enhancing Equity of Opportunity*

"I completely agree that so many school-based efforts at providing student support are piecemeal and disjointed. I am curious if you have ever encountered evidence-based small-group instruction (i.e., cooperative or peer learning) as a mechanism to bring together the various threads of learning, community-building, and mental health.

This approach is somewhat different than those that involve psychologists, social workers, etc., in that it involves the teachers themselves and ways in which they can change their practice to advance the same goals that are often targeted by an array of these external interventions. As you note, these external programs are often not integrated with school culture/practice and thus have challenges with fidelity of implementation and sustainability...."

Response to 2/20/24 school practitioner email on School Shootings

"The NJ School Boards Association established a task force that issues a report in early 2023 that provides guidance to Boards of Education and Municipal Governing Bodies to collaboratively and in a non-political manner study the firearms safety needs of their communities. The report has one recommendation which is to read the report and determine if the community is positioned to review the potential suggestions from groups like the NRA, Moms Demand Action, Scholastic sports shooting associations, the AMA.

Processes, Programs and Practices for Safety in School, Home and Community

<https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Firearms-Safety-Task-Force-Report-2023.pdf>

Feedback on 3/14 commentary: *Instructional and Support Staffs too Often are Overwhelmed*

"We need people in every part of the country sharing your information and constantly drawing attention to segregation and community support factors as primary obstacles to success for students living in areas with high concentrations of poverty. ..."



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