

Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(August, 2023 Vol. 27 #11) – 37 Years & Counting

Featured

Welcoming Strategies for All Students & Their Families

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Welcoming Strategies for All Students & Their Families

Changing schools, changing grades – are among the many transition demands with which students regularly cope. Transitions can exacerbate a student's problems or be used as a natural opportunity to promote positive learning and attitudes and reduce alienation.

Starting a new school year can be scary. And it is not uncommon for students and parents to feel unwelcome at school. The problem may begin with their first contacts. Efforts to enhance welcoming and engagement begin with making first contacts positive and attractive and taking actions to counter factors that make the setting feel uninviting.

This is the time for those concerned with school improvement to ensure effective welcoming and social supports will be in place as school begins.

Some families are not sure how to interact with the school. Four examples of ways to help them feel welcome and a part of things are to

- ensure the office staff are provided appropriate training and resources so they can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere to all who enter the school
- establish processes whereby teachers invite a student and family to a *Welcoming Conference* that helps clarify student and family interests and answers their questions
- provide workshops and follow-up assistance for teachers to help them establish welcoming procedures and materials
- connect newcomer students and families with peers who are prepared to provide social supports.

When a family comes to register, it is essential that there be a designated staff/volunteer to greet, welcome, and provide basic information.

All written material starts with *WELCOME*. The information is limited to highlighting simple orientation information, including needed documents (e.g., residence, immunizations) and how to access missing documentation. To the degree feasible, such material is made available in the languages of those likely to enroll at the school

Orienting a new student and family includes a tour, with initial introductions to teacher(s), principal, support staff, and others and information about matters such as: (a) how the school runs each day, (b) available activities for families and students that may be of interest, (c) parents and students who are ready to help them become part of the school, (d) community resources they may find helpful, and (e) ways to get off to a good start.

Beyond beginning of the year transitions, schools need to plan and implement for transitions that occur daily and throughout the year. And as with any other interventions, development of *supports for transitions* requires institutional commitment, organization, and ongoing involvement (e.g., there must be a mechanism dedicated to effective planning and implementation of specified interventions).

Providing overall supports for transitions involves school-wide and classroom-based interventions designed to enhance a full range of successful transitions and prevent transition problems. Besides activities for welcoming new arrivals (students, their families, staff), examples include ensuring ongoing social supports; counseling and articulation strategies for grade-to-grade and school-to-school transitions; transfers to and from special education; before and after-school and inter-session activities to enrich learning and provide recreation in a safe environment, and moves to college, and post school living and work.

The supports are another focus for enhancing personal and social functioning. Anticipated overall outcomes are participants' positive feelings about school, reduced alienation and enhanced motivation and increased involvement in school and learning activities. Over time, effective transition supports help improve school climate and participant well-being, improved attendance and fewer dropouts, as well as enhancing the number who make successful transitions to post high school living.

For more, see

- >[*Supports for Transitions /Grade Articulation/Welcoming*](#)
- >[*Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students and Their Families*](#)
- >[*Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*](#)
- >[*Supports for Transitions*](#)

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A new school year means new beginnings, new adventures, new friendships, and new challenges. The slate is clean and anything can happen. — Denise Witmer

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

[**Positive youth development among youth living in poverty: the role of psychological needs satisfaction**](#)

[**The Urgent Need to Update District Policies on Student Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education**](#)

[**Engaging Students as Leaders to Reimagine School Safety**](#)

[**Putting homelessness in context: The schools and neighborhoods of students experiencing homelessness**](#)

[**Utility of psychological and psychoeducational evaluation reports: A survey of teachers and school administrators**](#)

[**Don't leave students with disabilities out of California's massive community schools investment**](#)

[**Politics Is the Top Reason Superintendents Are Stressed**](#)

[**Healthy Schools Can Create More Racially Equitable Communities**](#)

[**Caring for the Caregivers: The Critical Link Between Parent and Teen Mental Health**](#)

[**Online Spaces: A Double-Edged Sword for LGBTQ Young People of Color**](#)

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For students, school safety is not a “neutral” topic; it is something they experience every day in the physical and social ways they engage with their school and the people in it. Thus, they are an essential partner for addressing challenges in school safety and contributing to efforts to reimagine what safety means and how to achieve it.

From Engaging students as leaders to reimagine school safety

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Here’s what was discussed in the *Community of Practice* during July

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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

- >Positive psychology goes to school
- >About the growing number of reports of discipline problems
- >How do students know that teachers care about them?
- >Youth thrive when the environment fits
- >Free activities for summer learning and enrichment
- >What’s the plan for strengthening relationships with families this school year?
- >Reclaiming Our Schools’ Promise and Purpose
- >A closer look at mandatory reporting

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>

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We need a policy on how to deal with Artificial Intelligence.

O.K. I’ll ask ChatGPT to write one up.

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A Few News Stories (excerpted from various news sources)

YouthWorks Creates Leadership Opportunities for Young Workers. In 2023, nearly 7,900 Baltimore City youth applied to Youth-Works to gain summer employment experience, and some 500 businesses, agencies and non-profits signed on to meet this demand. The program operates out of the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office of Employment Development and receives funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It is unique in that it guarantees every qualifying applicant between the ages of 14 to 21 at least five weeks of summer employment. When school resumes, the program will support 200 internships for high school juniors and seniors in the Baltimore City Public School system. These internships, offered in fall 2023 and spring 2024, will enable students to continue building their early career experience and critical job skills while also earning a pay-check beyond the summer break.

Kids learn science of softball, baseball. Enid (OK) fourth- through eighth-graders learned the science behind softball and baseball from Oklahoma State University student-athletes. The OSU student-athletes helped run interactive drills teaching the science behind hitting, pitching and fielding. Lyndsay Watts, assistant director of athletics for Enid Public Schools, said the workshop provided a huge value for students. “Using sports our kids already love to explain technical concepts is a great way to expand their horizons and help them understand how STEM affects their lives,” Watts said.

Why can't we stop homelessness? More people than ever are being housed — but an even higher number are falling into homelessness. Rents are out of reach for many, and millions of affordable places have disappeared. Zoning laws and local opposition make it hard to build housing for low-income renters. Pandemic aid programs that helped keep many people housed are winding down.

Paraeducators Offered Chance To Earn Special Ed Credentials As Teacher Shortage Continues. As Pennsylvania’s teacher shortage continues to worsen, the state is offering practicing paraeducators the opportunity to obtain a special education teaching certificate for free. The Pennsylvania Department of Education recently announced that \$1.5 million in grant funding is available to intermediate units to fund paraeducators — aides that help teachers in the classroom — wanting to become special education teachers.

@#@#@# From the above Pennsylvania story

One of the most efficient ways we can create a robust pipeline of high-quality educators is by allowing paraprofessionals to earn credentials while they’re already working the classroom. These individuals serve their students and their communities every day and have the skills, passion and purpose to transition seamlessly from paraprofessional to educator. – Acting

Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Khalid N. Mumin

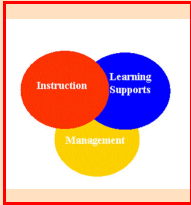
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>Comments and sharing from the field

We were asked to share the following:

“I have spent the last 25 years working to grow the community schools movement... I have just completed a book with close colleagues entitled *The Community Schools Revolution: Building Partnerships, Transforming Lives, Advancing Democracy*. Many of you have been part of that movement. I ask that you share information about our book in your community, your constituency, on social media and in any other ways that works for you. You can find the book, free at <https://www.communityschoolsrevolution.org/>

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports



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.

For information about the *National Initiative* go to <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

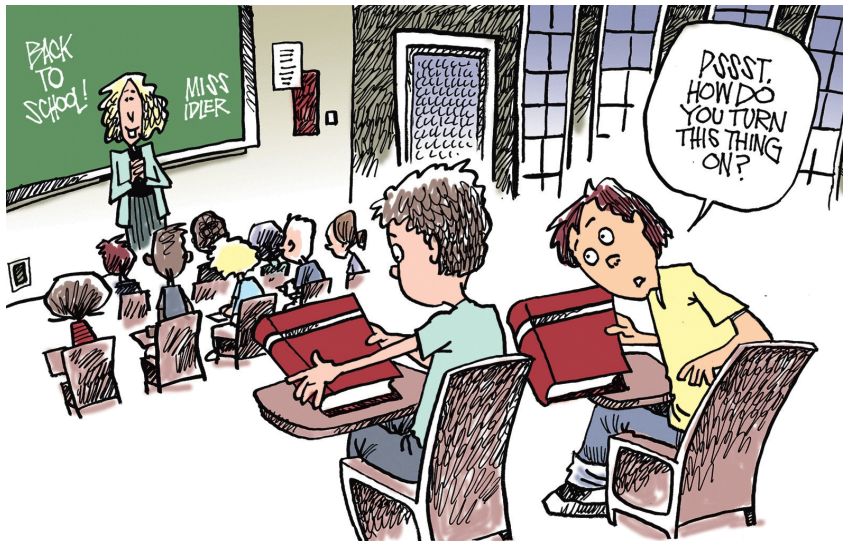
- >Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning***
- >Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports***

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