

# Students & Schools: Moving Forward\*

(December, 2021 Vol. 26 #3) – 35 Years & Counting

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*\*Concerned about addressing barriers to student learning and teaching & re-engaging disconnected students? about equity of opportunity? about whole child development? about school climate? All that and more is our focus.*



**We encourage you to forward this to others. If this has been forwarded and you want to receive it directly, contact: [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**



**For more on resources from our national Center, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>**

## > **Minimizing Stress Reactions & Preventing “Burnout”**

### *How much of a problem is this?*

“My school started in mid-August. I am burned out. My academic classes are extremely hard and my teachers did not give a single moment to breathe, especially coming out of a whole year-and-a-half of online school. I’m now a junior, and the friends I made in person as a freshman are now a bit different. We are still a group but it is clear that everyone is more stressed, serious, and unhappy than before the pandemic. ...Though school seemed like it would be a positive breath of fresh air on the first day, my opinion has certainly changed, and I miss being stress free online.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/16/learning/what-students-are-saying-about-what-its-like-to-be-back-in-school.html>

“...According to a 2021 survey of 2,690 members of the National Education Association, 32% said the pandemic drove them to plan to leave the profession earlier than expected. Another survey by the RAND Corp. said the pandemic exacerbated attrition, burnout and stress on teachers, who were almost twice as likely as other employed adults to feel frequent job-related stress and almost three times more likely to experience depression.”

<https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2021-09-22/covid-19-creates-dire-us-shortage-of-teachers-school-staff>

“...Nationally, nearly half—45 percent—of principals said that the pandemic has prompted them to start thinking about leaving the profession or sped up their plans to do so, according to a poll released last year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

<https://scalawagmagazine.org/2021/08/pandemic-teaching-burnout/>

“Almost on a regular basis, I hear from a superintendent indicating that they can’t take it anymore and bail out,” said Dan Domenech, the president of AASA, the School Superintendents’ Association. “It’s a combination of stress on the job and being confronted with a no-win situation, when half of parents want their kids in school and the other half want them at home.”

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/has-covid-19-led-to-a-mass-exodus-of-superintendents/2021/05>

### ***What being done address the problems?***

From: *Former Utah governor has tips for building a stronger post-pandemic teacher force*

<https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-former-utah-governor-has-tips-for-building-a-stronger-post-pandemic-teacher-force/>

“...as we reopen schools, policymakers must meet the needs of teachers in order to prevent burnout and increase retention. I urge state policymakers to talk with educators and education leaders in their states to learn how they can best address the concerns teachers have for their physical and mental health, financial stability and ability to meet the needs of their students. ...

Research indicates that providing teachers with the information and support they need to make difficult choices improves their confidence in the decisions they make and likely helps them feel better about their work and about themselves.... we must work in collaboration with our teachers to meet their unique needs and provide supports that will prevent burnout and increase teacher retention rates. If we don't, we risk losing the education system's front-line heroes in the battle to recover from the pandemic.”

From: *It's a New Era for Mental Health at Work*

<https://hbr.org/2021/10/its-a-new-era-for-mental-health-at-work>

“...More employees are leaving their jobs for mental health reasons, including those caused by workplace factors like overwhelming and unsustainable work... Until recently, the conversation has primarily centered on preexisting mental health conditions and the related stigma. Increasingly, the focus is on work's effect on everyone's mental health.... Employers that have supported their employees with the pandemic, racial injustices, return-to-office planning, and/or mental health overall have better mental health and engagement outcomes.... Promoting autonomy, establishing boundaries, and creating norms around communications, responsiveness, and urgency can go a long way toward building a mentally healthy culture. ... Finally, a culture of connection is key — from regular check-ins that make time for the question, ‘How are you?’ to healthy working relationships to meaningful interactions among teams. ...”

### ***What does research tell us?***

From: *Rousing our motivation*

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/10/feature-workers-motivation>

“...The upheaval of the working world since March 2020 has no precedent in living memory.... The impact of the pandemic on workers is also clear through the lens of self-determination theory... Research into self-determination theory finds that three main psychological needs support optimal motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness ... The most motivationally beneficial leadership style is one that encourages employees to manage their own workflows and solve their own problems. This style is called leader autonomy support, and it's characterized by a manager who encourages their employees to self-initiate tasks, to share their own perspectives, and to make their own choices, while still stepping in to support them when needed.... leader autonomy support fosters employees' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness within the workplace, which boosts autonomous work motivation. This self-derived motivation, in turn, is linked to feelings of well-being and engagement as well as declines in distress and improvements in positive behaviors at work...”

### **Center Comments:**

The behavior referred to as burnout is a psychological phenomenon. As noted above, one way to understand the problem is in terms of three psychological needs that theorists posit as major intrinsic motivational determinants of behavior. These are the need to feel competent, the need to feel self-determining, and the need to feel interpersonally connected. From this perspective, burnout can be viewed as among the negative outcomes that result when these needs are threatened and thwarted.

As with so many problems, it is easiest to view burnout as a personal condition. and, as in many other instances, this would be the least effective way to understand what must be done over the long-run to address the matter. The problem is multifaceted and complex. while stress-reduction activities often are prescribed, they are unlikely to be a sufficient remedy for the widespread draining of motivation. reducing environmental stressors and enhancing job supports are more to the point, but again, alone these are insufficient strategies.

The solution requires reculturing schools in ways that minimize the undermining and maximize the enhancement of intrinsic motivation. This involves policies and practices that ensure a daily focus on (1) promoting staff and student well-being and (2) addressing barriers to teaching and learning.

#### *About Promoting Well-Being and Preventing Burnout*

School-based programs should include the following key elements:

- Inducting newcomers into the school culture in a welcoming and socially supportive way.
- Opening classroom doors and creating appropriate teams of staff and students who support, nurture, and learn from each other every day.
- Personalized staff development and support, including:
  - >Structure that provides personalized support and guidance;
  - >Instruction designed to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving.
- Restructuring school governance to enable shared decision-making.

#### *About Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching*

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. The aim is to develop a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable Student/Learning Support System. See Part III: “New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching” in *Improving School Improvement* at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

For specific resources related to minimizing stress reactions and preventing student and staff “burnout,” see the Center’s Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Burnout* at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/burnout.htm>

The Quick Find provides easy access to a variety of online resources from our center and elsewhere. See, for example:

>*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Burnout/burn1.pdf>

For more on improving student/learning supports, see the **National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

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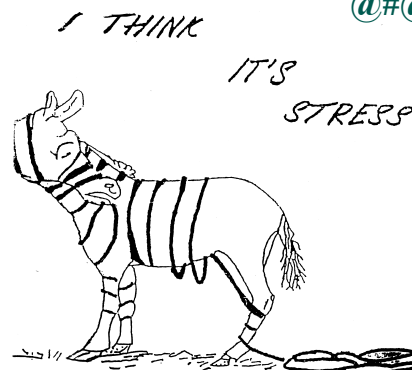
... although the job demands of teaching may cause stress, research indicated that effective stress management leads to resilient teachers who remain effective despite challenges.

Laura Sokal and colleagues

And, from the perspective of addressing barriers to learning and teaching, our Center would add that improving student/learning supports is an essential part of stress management. So Let Us Know about what ideas are being proposed for transforming such supports.

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](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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## >Quick Links to Online Resources

Self-Care Strategies for Educators During the Coronavirus Crisis:  
[https://selcenter.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/Self\\_Care\\_Strategies\\_for\\_Educators\\_During\\_the\\_Coronavirus\\_Crisis.pdf](https://selcenter.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/Self_Care_Strategies_for_Educators_During_the_Coronavirus_Crisis.pdf)

The Effects of Job Demands and Resources on School Counselor Burnout: Self-Efficacy as a Mediator <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcad.12375?af=R>

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Quality of Life: A Longitudinal Study from before and during the Health Crisis <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8038473/>

Factors Contributing to Teacher Burnout During COVID-19  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0013189X211004138>

Teachers' attitudes toward change, efficacy, and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666374020300169>

How Cooperative Learning Can Benefit Students This Year  
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-cooperative-learning-can-benefit-students-year>

How Kids Can Overcome the Awkwardness of Asking for Help  
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-kids-can-overcome-awkwardness-asking-help>

What Are the Best Strategies for Small-Group Instruction?  
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-what-are-the-best-strategies-for-small-group-instruction/2021/11>

LGBTQ Youth & Family Resources To Decrease Mental Health Risks & Promote Well-Being  
<https://lgbtqfamilyacceptance.org/>  
Leveraging Integrated Student Support to Identify and Address COVID-19-Related Needs for Students, Families, and Teachers. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211058473>

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*Public education is the singular institution in the United States of America that says, come to us and we will treat you all on equal terms.*

Derek W. Black

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

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

- >The problem of engaging (and reengaging) students
- >What are students saying after the first months of school?
- >Masks at schools are natural opportunities to promote social and emotional development & mental health
- >Promoting collaboration between management and "teacher" unions to enhance school improvement
- >About Increasing School Attendance
- >Establishing a New School Mental Health Unit **OR** Fully Embedding Mental Health into Ongoing Efforts to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching?
- >About alternative schools
- >About the impact of the shortage of substitute teachers

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

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

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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>

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On working with student teachers:

It's a gift to have coachable aspiring teachers in our classrooms. They want to make a difference and positively transform lives. It brings about a renewal on the part of our mentor teachers and it's refreshing for administrators to see that energy.

Tobi Flair (the recruiting specialist for St. Charles Parish Public Schools)

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

**Nationwide School Finance Analysis Assigns 'F' Grade to 22 States, Calls on Congress to Incentivize Funding Reforms.** Citing the dramatic deficits and inequities in how states fund their local schools, Making the Grade 2021 makes a compelling case for leveraging federal spending power to incentivize state school finance reform. As this year's report shows, millions of students across the United States attend schools that lack the essential resources needed for children to succeed and thrive. In many states, particularly across the South and West, per-pupil funding trails the national average by thousands of dollars. Furthermore, most states – even those with otherwise average or above-average per-pupil funding levels – fail to provide the additional funding necessary for students in high-poverty schools. Despite the bleak conditions nationwide, some states have successfully reformed their school funding systems in recent years. California overhauled its system by investing \$18 billion in new funding for students who have historically been deprived of adequate school resources, including low-income students, English learners, and homeless and foster students.

[https://edlawcenter.org/assets/MTG%202021/2021\\_ELC\\_Making%20the%20Grade%20Press%20Release.pdf](https://edlawcenter.org/assets/MTG%202021/2021_ELC_Making%20the%20Grade%20Press%20Release.pdf)

**Staffing Shortages.** Colorado schools are facing such significant staffing shortages that Denver Public Schools will move three schools to remote-learning this week, while another three districts in the metro area are canceling classes altogether. School Districts have faced a number of challenges in returning to school during the coronavirus pandemic, including a shortage of substitutes, school nurses and bus drivers. Schools have also faced supply chain disruption, leading them to reduce food options during lunchtime. The staffing shortages are leading to class cancellations in other parts of the U.S., including Seattle, reported The Seattle Times.

<https://www.denverpost.com/2021/11/09/denver-schools-staffing-shortages/>

**Pandemic leads to sharp drop in school enrollment.** The number of students being educated in American schools dropped by nearly 3 million in the last year to the lowest share in more than two decades as the coronavirus pandemic sent families looking for new arrangements. ... Just 40 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in school in 2020, the first time since 1996 that fewer than half of those children went to school....The data does not show where the unenrolled children went, though there are other signs that more parents than ever are homeschooling their kids. But it does show that millions of children were no longer enrolled in preschool, elementary

or secondary schools, either public or private, in October 2020. An estimated 4.7 million 3- and 4-year-olds are not enrolled in school, and 2.5 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are not in school. <https://thehill.com/>

**Transfers to private schools, suburban districts, homeschooling spur enrollment drop.** Chicago Public Schools suffered its 10th consecutive year of falling enrollment, now down to 330,000. ... The enrollment drop this year included 17,888 students leaving Chicago for out-of-city public or private schools; 3,129 children moving to Chicago private schools; and 1,393 opting for homeschooling. Another 3,408 were marked “did not arrive,” meaning they hadn’t shown up by the 20th day of school and CPS didn’t have information on their whereabouts. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/education/2021/10/27/22748428/chicago-public-schools-enrollment-declines-fewer-students-funding-implications-pedro-martinez>

**Justice Department Addresses Violent Threats Against School Officials and Teachers.** Citing an increase in harassment, intimidation and threats of violence against school board members, teachers and workers in our nation’s public schools, today Attorney General Merrick B. Garland directed the FBI and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices to meet in the next 30 days with federal, state, Tribal, territorial and local law enforcement leaders to discuss strategies for addressing this disturbing trend.... Those efforts are expected to include the creation of a task force, consisting of representatives from the department’s Criminal Division, National Security Division, Civil Rights Division, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, the FBI, the Community Relations Service and the Office of Justice Programs,.... The Justice Department will also create specialized training and guidance for local school boards and school administrators. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-addresses-violent-threats-against-school-officials-and-teachers>

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*Our efforts as educators must go beyond literacy, math, history, science, and other core subjects to include helping students to build the social, emotional, and behavioral skills they will need to fully access and participate in learning and make the most of their potential and future opportunities. Amid the pandemic, we know that our students have experienced so much. We can't unlock students' potential unless we also address the needs they bring with them to the classroom each day. As educators, it's our responsibility to ensure that we are helping to provide students with a strong social and emotional foundation so that they also can excel academically.* Miguel Cardona

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## **We Get Comments**

Here is the type of comments we received with respect to the Center report entitled: *About Connecting Students with the Right Forms of Mental Health Assistance* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/connect.pdf>

*Thank you for this very clearly stated document. I will share it with my colleagues and supervisees as we continue to work together in this valuable endeavor.*

And, we are pleased to receive indications that are resources are widely used and helpful:

*Thank you for all the information you provide. There is so much great information. I am trying to restructure my organization that almost fell in so it's hard but the information you provide is spot on.*

*The last few student support posts have been very helpful and interesting to read. Thank you for all that you do!*

## **Invitation to Listserv Participants:**

**Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.**

Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto: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 <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu) or [adelman@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:adelman@psych.ucla.edu)**

**Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**