

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

August, 2019 (Vol. 23 #11) – 33 Years & Counting

What's Here

Are Transition Supports in Place to Ensure Student Adjustment?

Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

About transforming student/learning supports

Comments, requests, information, questions from the field

and more

**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



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

Are Transition Supports in Place to Ensure Student Adjustment?

Transition to a new school situation can be both exciting and stressful, and sometimes a bit scary. This is true not only for youngsters, but parents, and school staff.

Many handle the changes without significant problems. Others need schools to do more to make the transition successful. And, even those who handle the transition can benefit from more proactive practices designed to make them feel welcome, well-oriented, and supported. Such practices are an indispensable facet of creating a sense of community and enhancing a positive school climate.

Those concerned with school improvement and school climate must ensure a school has an effective welcoming program and ways to provide ongoing social and learning supports. The following brief survey was designed to help enhance school planning at the start of the year.

Q. *What practices for establishing a welcoming and supportive school climate are at the site?*

- 1. Welcoming** – Are the greetings, materials, and environment all positive and inviting?
- 2. Guiding and supportive communications** – Do the orientations, introductory tours, and presentations convey positive messages about the year ahead and ways to connect with staff and others stakeholders?
- 3. Social supports** – Peer buddies for students and families? Mentors?
- 4. Special assistance if needed** – Help registering? In class adjustment supports?

Some students and families need more of the above if they are to make a successful transition.

Here are a few transition matters to think deeply about:

- Does the information provided at the beginning of the year emphasize WELCOME and provide a positive picture of the year ahead? To the degree feasible, is such material

communicated in the languages of those likely to enroll at the school? (The aim is to facilitate positive connections between family and school and introduce students and families to school activities in which they will be interested.)

- Has the office staff been trained and provided with appropriate resources so they can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere to everyone who enters the school?
- Are individual students and their families invited to a personal *Welcome Conference* that helps clarify their concerns and interests and answers their questions?
- Are there processes for identifying those who are not making a successful transition and then immediately providing special assistance?

In general, a perception of community is shaped by daily experiences and is engendered when all involved feel welcomed, supported, nurtured, respected, liked, connected to others, and feel they are valued members who contribute to the collective identity, destiny, and vision. This is an essential facet of enhancing school climate.

For more in-depth discussion of and resources for supporting successful transitions, see the following Quick Find:

>*Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcoming*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

Here are a few relevant Center developed resources:

- >>*Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/transitions/transitions.pdf>
- >>*Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/transitionsninthgrade.pdf>
- >>*Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students and Their Families*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/welcomingstrategies.pdf>
- >>*Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/welcome/welcome.pdf>
- >>*About School Adjustment* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjust2.pdf>
- >>*Back-to-School Anxiety* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/backtoschanx.pdf>
- >>*Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>

Did you miss the following discussions?

These were explored in July as part of the *School Practitioner Community of Practice*.
See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

- *Will the College Admissions Scandal Impact Students With Disabilities?
Concerns about Special Accommodations*
- *Working relationship problems: A constant concern at all levels of schooling*
- *Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools*
- *What are good follow-up plans for schools after a crisis event?*
 - >What's the plan to help students, families, and staff after a crisis?
 - >Are crisis plans being improved based on Lessons Learned by Principals?
- *Providing support to reduce student anxiety*

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Isn't it a bit unnerving that doctors call what they do "practice"?
George Carlin

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Quick Links to Resources from Across the Country

A few relevant resources, reports, and journal publications

The relationship between school climate and mental and emotional well-being over the transition from primary to secondary school

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4615665/>

Adverse childhood experiences and protective factors with school engagement

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/07/04/peds.2018-2945>

Certain groups of students attend alternative schools in greater proportions than they do other schools <https://www.gao.gov/reports/GAO-19-373/>

Positive mental health and academic achievement in elementary school (2019). M. O'Connor, D. Cloney, A. Kvalsvig & S. Goldfield. *Education Researcher* 48, 205-216. <http://er.aera.net>

Resilience in children exposed to violence: A meta-analysis of protective factors across ecological contexts (2019). K. Yule, J. Houston, J. Grych. Published online. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00293-1>

Adolescent mental health program components and behavior risk reduction: A meta-analysis. *Pediatrics* (2019). S. Skeen, et al. online at

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/06/27/peds.2018-3488>

Fostering middle school students' autonomy to support motivation and engagement (2019). K.M. Alley, *Middle School Journal*, 50, 5-14,

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00940771.2019.1603801>

>For more resources, see our website

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

>For info on upcoming conferences, initiatives, workshops

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

>For info on webinars

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

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From above article on positive mental health:

The mental health field has traditionally focused on psychological ill-health, such as symptoms of anxiety or depression...an unintended consequence of this focus has been a paradigm of disorder without a corresponding concept of health.

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About Transforming Student and Learning Supports

As noted above, transforming how schools provide supports for transitions is an essential facet of school improvement. This matter is receiving increasing attention. See the following excerpt from "Transition Time" <https://www.educationworld.com/teachers/transition-time-any-move-new-grade-challenge>

Any move to a new grade is a challenge, but particularly the major transition years.

The end of a school year and the beginning of another are exciting times in schools and classrooms, but increasingly researchers are finding they are also important for students in both their perceptions about school long term and their performance. And it is particularly important when students are moving on to a different school. So, for instance, the move from kindergarten to first grade, into middle school or high school and even on to college are key times when students often need support and many students develop patterns that stick...

"Transition to a new school can be very disruptive to learning and interpersonal

relationships,” says Linda Taylor, [Center] co-director at UCLA. “When transitions go poorly, learning, behavior, and emotional problems can arise and be exacerbated. All this contributes to eventual dropping out of school.”...

So, given all of that, what should schools do to help with students at any age transition well? Here are some tips that apply to most any important transition period.

Set up connections. It is important for schools to communicate with each other about the students that are moving, and some are better at it than others. Typically it should be taking place at a time that tends to be busy for schools (often when testing is occurring) and it can seem like a lower priority than other work that needs to be done. But it is critical. Schools should develop a process where key people at each school can individually discuss each student’s performance, supports needed, and (in privacy with counselors, in some cases) personal and social concerns....”

Of course, transforming student/learning supports involves much more. Here an excerpt describing how the Community and Youth Collaborative Institute in Ohio formulated the Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (OCCMSI) as “a school improvement planning process to help schools identify and address the non-academic barriers that impede many students’ path to academic success.”

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Family-and-Community-Engagement/Models-for-Family-and-Community-Engagement/Health-and-Social-Services.pdf.aspx>

Health and social services are designed to address and prevent these non-academic barriers. They are often defined by who owns and operates them (Adelman & Taylor, 1998).

School-owned and -operated services include student support professionals such as school counselors, psychologists, social workers and behavioral specialists. Community-owned and -operated services involve the providers and services that are located in the community....Figure 8.1 provides an overview of an expansive continuum of care related to the delivery of health and social services in schools (Adelman & Taylor, 1998; 2000a; 2000b; Browne, Gafni, Roberts, Byrne, & Majumdar, 2004). The continuum begins with primary prevention, health promotion, and youth development strategies targeted at the entire student population. It involves early intervention services directed toward targeted youth through the use of student assistance teams, school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other support staff. It also includes more intensive interventions for youth with more critical problems and needs, and thus rely on important linkages to outside social and health service providers located in the community (particularly in relation to coordinated case management, accommodation plans, and individualized instruction).

Note that Figure 8.1 provides a dual inventory of school-owned and -operated and community owned and -operated services; the aim is to maximize resources and avoid duplication. The key is to coordinate school-owned and -operated and community-owned and -operated services. It also is important to ensure the services offered at school are the ones students need in order to succeed in school. These services are the ones that target the various non-academic barriers to learning students bring with them to school.

For an update of Figure 8.1 and more about transforming student/learning supports in ways that build on and expand MTSS, see

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide* --
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

>*Improving School Improvement*
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Let Us Know:

(1) About any state legislators you think we should contact

(2) About efforts you know about focused on transforming student/learning 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

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Patience is something you admire in the driver behind you, but not in the one ahead.

Bill McGlashen

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

> job and training opportunities
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm>

News from around the country related to addressing barriers

As thousands of third-graders prep for reading retest, districts and literacy coaches work to remove barriers. In May, the Mississippi Department of Education announced 8,941 students failed the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program in English Language Arts assessment, known casually as the “third-grade gate.” The test is a key part of the Literacy Based Promotion Act, which requires all third-graders to pass a reading test to determine whether they are ready to move on to the fourth grade.

This year 74.5 percent of students hit that mark on the first try. Students who did not pass on their first try had two more attempts over the summer. After the second attempt, the pass rate jumped to 82 percent. While a marked improvement, that means the remaining 6,000 students have just one more chance, or they can be held back. Districts are working hard to remediate their students in time. But they are working against several barriers, including teacher shortages, low parental engagement, language gaps and even vision problems. The state has assigned 80 literacy coaches to 182 school districts struggling the most with proficiency. These coaches spend a few days a week in the districts assisting teachers in instruction and modeling lessons. Recently, the department announced \$3 million for summer reading grants in 24 school districts to help struggling readers.
<https://mississippitoday.org/>

Schools can replace officers with counselors. Five Arizona East Valley school districts will now have to decide whether grant money they now use to pay for security officers should be diverted to hiring counselors or social workers. The state Superintendent of Public Schools has advised that Chandler Unified, Tempe Union, Mesa Public Schools, Tempe Elementary and Kyrene can reexamine their use of School Safety Program grants they now get for school resource officers. School officials across the state had hoped that the \$20 million appropriation would help them address the worst counselor-student ratio in the nation. Arizona’s student-to-counselor ratio is 905-to-1 — well above the national average of 455-to-1 and the recommended ratio of 250-to-1. Throughout late last year and early this year, students appeared before numerous school boards urging them to hire more counselors and social workers. Some knew students who had taken their lives — or attempted to — and said they could have been helped if counselors were on their campuses. They expressed frustration that the counselors that were at their schools were overwhelmed not only by their huge caseload but also by responsibilities that had nothing to do with student emotional and mental well-being. They also argued that counselors and social workers were more effective than SROs in preventing violence in schools because they were better equipped to address the problems that can provoke a troubled student into attacking classmates.
http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/news/schools-can-replace-officers-with-counselors/article_b55b1866-9f72-11e9-84b3-4f8aa0fd8bd4.html

OR Students Can Now Take 'Mental Health Days' Home From School. Oregon will allow students to take “mental health days” just as they would sick days, expanding the reasons for excused school absences to include mental or behavioral health under a new law that experts say is one of the first of its kind in the U.S. <https://time.com/5631238/oregon-students-mental-health-days/>

Schools struggle with unfunded mandates: Many causes worthy, but there is only so much money and time available. By law, Indiana teachers require regular training in such areas as suicide prevention, child abuse and neglect, CPR, bullying prevention and human trafficking. In the 2019 General Assembly, a new law passed, which takes effect July 1, 2020, that requires seizure awareness training for all employees who have direct, ongoing contact with children. The training is to take place upon employment and at least once every five years. While the various training requirements address important needs, the state laws often are passed without added resources to pay for the training or programs required, something often referred to as “unfunded mandates.” Some government officials are aware of the challenges posed by increasing unfunded mandates. In the last legislative session, HEA 1400 requested an education summer study committee look at unfunded mandates and required teacher training. <https://www.tribstar.com/news/local%e2%80%94news/schools-struggle-with-unfunded-mandates/article%e2%80%9494054f37f5-a786-5787-ae06-18fb7696da9a.html>

For fourth straight year, Texas special education “needs assistance,” feds say. TEA said the designation is due to low student test scores on a national standardized test. The federal designation is based on a mix of participation and standardized test results from students with disabilities including autism, dyslexia, speech impairments and emotional disorders. The metric also weighs the percentage of children with disabilities who dropped out of school and those who graduated with a standard high school diploma. Texas lawmakers allocated more money in the state budget for students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, including additional funds for each student with dyslexia. Of 5.4 million public school children in Texas, some 532,000 students received special education services in the 2018-2019 school year. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/politics/texas/article/For-fourth-straight-year-Texas-special-education-14070637.php>

Mississippi loses hundreds of teachers due to licensing issue, showing bigger problem. One of the largest school districts in Mississippi is losing more than 200 teachers over the summer because they did not fulfill the requirements of an alternative license program — a route to qualification many states and schools have turned to as the country faces a major teacher shortage. There is a shortage of about 100,000 teachers nationwide,... filling a vacant position costs \$21,000 on average. Experts agree that these alternate licenses are not a solution, but a Band-Aid for school districts that are overwhelmed by the number of vacant or emptying teaching positions. The best solution is to address teacher pay and district support systems for educators, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/mississippi-loses-hundreds-of-teachers-due-to-licensing-issue-showing-bigger-problem/ar-AADof5g>

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From the above Mississippi news story:

What we see in the research is that teachers who are entering without completing their full licenses are two to three more times more likely to leave than teachers fully prepared. This just adds to this ongoing churn that undermines kids' learning.

Emma Garcia

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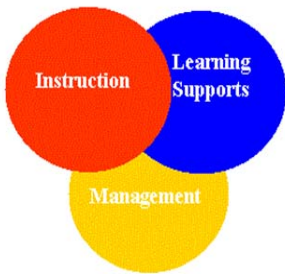
Comments and sharing from the field

Each day we continue to receive and respond to many requests for TA and coaching.

And we regularly hear appreciations from those concerned with improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students (e.g., >We appreciate your support and access to these valuable resources. >Thanks for all you do to promote mental health. >You are the best! I hope you and the program are thriving. >Thank you, again, for your excellent resources and work. I feel like we are in a network of people who care deeply about children and who want them to have the best conditions for success.).

Need help? Have something to share? LET US HEAR FROM YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*Information is online about the



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

Also online are two free books

Improving School Improvement

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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 or adelman@psych.ucla.edu

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu