

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

(July, 2022 Vol. 26 #10) – 36 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



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

>Another reporter called about the student mental health crisis:
Here's the caution we gave her

The heavy media blitz focusing mainly on student mental health and what schools should do about it has a downside.

We stressed the following realities:

- Students, parents, and school staff are confronted every day not just with mental health concerns but with a wide range of learning, behavior, and emotional problems. And, of course, the pandemic has increased the numbers related to all these concerns.
- The pressure for meeting the increasing mental health needs at school perpetuates the dysfunctional culture at schools of reacting to crises rather than being proactive in pursuing the long-standing imperative for districts to improve student and learning supports.
- Without intensive efforts to transform how schools address the wide range of learning, behavior, and emotional problems, the approach at most schools in providing student/learning supports (including services for mental health) will continue to be marginalized, fragmented, counterproductively competitive, and produce outcomes that are far too limited.

For more on why it is essential to think beyond prevailing approaches to mental health in schools, see

>*Time for Straight Talk about Mental Health Services and MH in Schools*
[Http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhinschools.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhinschools.pdf)

>*We won't Argue Against Adding More Counselors, BUT ... Addressing Student Mental Health Concerns Involves Much More than Increasing the Number of Mental Health Providers* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/morethan.pdf>

>*Mental Health in Schools is Not Just about More Services: It is part of a Comprehensive Approach to Student and Learning Supports* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7-1-21.pdf>

Analyses of prevailing approaches to addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems indicate limited results and redundancy in resource use. Rivalry for sparse resources also has produced counterproductive competition among support staff and with community based professionals who link with schools. And these deficiencies typically are compounded as schools strive to meet immediate demands for more services. In some schools, principals have reported that up to 25 percent of their budget is consumed in efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching. Because school budgets are always tight, cost effectiveness is a constant consideration. Some emergency pandemic funding has been provided but it is temporary, and schools are anticipating an impending fiscal cliff.

About Using the Summer to Improve Student/Learning Supports

As a Carnegie task force on education noted:

School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.

Addressing mental health concerns is part of the challenge, but the larger challenge for schools is to improve the role they play in directly confronting factors negatively affecting students' learning. These factors include a full range of pervasive and complex barriers to learning and teaching. This requires a comprehensive approach that *embeds* mental concerns rather than frames and limits the focus to mental health problems and services. And establishing a comprehensive approach requires weaving school resources together a range of community resources that involve more than health and human services.

The summer months provide an opportunity to plan better ways to redeploy existing resources to develop student/learning supports into a more effective system. The aim is to begin developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system to address barriers to student learning and promote healthy development. Planning and developing such a system is the proactive and long-term strategy for effectively embedding mental health into school improvement policy and practice.

Moving ahead involves

- rethinking student and learning supports and the roles and functions of staff providing such supports
- approaching learning, behavior, and emotional problems as interrelated concerns
- using an umbrella concept, such as addressing barriers to learning, to create a unified component the various programs and initiatives currently being implemented for that purpose (e.g., MTSS, Community Schools, integrated services, social emotional learning as a response to problems, response to intervention, trauma informed practices, suicide and substance use prevention, crisis response, special efforts to close the opportunity and achievement gaps, etc., etc., etc....)
- adopting a design and a multiyear strategic plan for developing the unified component into a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports.

Moving ahead requires establishing a leadership mechanism to do the work.

A Learning Supports Leadership Team is such a mechanism. See

- > *What is a Learning Supports Leadership Team?*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

Moving ahead requires the support from administrators.

Here are a few strategic examples:

- > *Developing a Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/superstart.pdf>
- > *Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/7steps.pdf>
- > *How School Boards Can Pursue New Directions to Help Schools Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/boardrep2022.pdf>

For more in-depth details on designing and implementing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students and families, see

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

all three books can be freely accessed at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

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

our Center is planning an online summit related to improving student/learning supports.

See: *Reversing the Fragmentation of Student/Learning Supports:
Are You Part of the Problem?
Will You be Part of the Solution?*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summer2022.pdf>

**We are seeking your input to guide planning;
please answer the items on page 3 of the above brief article.**

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Appreciating School Staff

This school year, our employees have worked together to reach and teach each and every student, partnering with families to meet students' individual needs. Our team—those who teach and those who support those who teach—is a strong, caring, and committed team. In recognition of all they have done to make a difference in the lives of our students this year, we invite our community to join us in celebrating our employees by saying “thank you.”

Dr. Calvin J. Watts, superintendent

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

Fostering healthy mental, emotional, and behavioral development in children and youth: A national agenda <https://doi.org/10.17226/25201/25201>

Pandemic learning: roadblocks, resilience, and resources
<https://www.gao.gov/blog/three-rs-pandemic-learning-roadblocks-resilience-and-resources>

A Path to Inclusiveness – Peer Support Groups as a Resource for Change
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10598405221085183>

Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers’ intentions to quit. Teaching and Teacher Education
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103425>

State Policy Levers to Address Teacher Shortages
<https://www.ecs.org/state-policy-levers-to-address-teacher-shortages/>

Development of a Youth Civic Engagement Program: Process and Pilot Testing with a Youth-Partnered Research Team <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajcp.12548>

Resolution on Policing in Schools – National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
https://www.nasponline.org/assets/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Resolution%20Policing%20in%20Schools_Final_2022.pdf

Eating Disorders Among Student Athletes <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/eating.pdf>

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A better, safer, kinder, and more equitable society is possible. The path before us may be harder than we anticipated. We may struggle, we may stumble, we may even fall. Yet we will keep getting up, we will keep moving forward. And day by day our faltering steps will become a little steadier, a little stronger, so that we can fulfill our commitment to creating a better world for our children. Iris Center, Vanderbilt University

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

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

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

- >After Texas School Shooting: What are you doing to prevent the next one?
- >As violence spikes, Chicago Schools are taking the need to provide activities for students ‘very seriously’
- >About Guiding Discussions to Improve Student/Learning Supports
- >Will the Class of 2022 need supports to succeed as they move forward?
- >Should guns be a topic for classroom discussion -- and ACTION?
- >About input as we plan a national online summit focused on unifying student/learning supports with mental health concerns fully embedded
- >What can school boards do to improve student/learning supports?
- >About Limiting the Focus at Schools to the “Youth Mental Health Crisis”
- >Students Persevere; Teachers Ask for Support

If you missed the resources and news in the previous editions of the Community of Practice, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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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So often you find that the students you're trying to inspire are the ones that end up inspiring you.

Vicky Davis

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>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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Insomnia sharpens your math skills because you spend all night calculating how much sleep you'll get if you're able to "fall asleep right now." Anonymous

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

Teenagers help each other tackle anxiety and depression. Youth-focused Leadership Launch saw students struggling, so they organized a mental wellness event. From poetry and rock painting to improv and martial arts, event activities were designed to appeal to introverted and outgoing teens alike. In workshops and small groups, kids shared stories of trying to fit in a new foster family, trying to get along with a step-dad or step-mom, or trying to reconcile with a brother or sister. <https://www.heraldnet.com/news/teenagers-help-each-other-tackle-anxiety-and-depression/>

Red-hot summer job market awaits US teens. Teens are in an unusually commanding position — at least those among them who want a job. Researchers at Drexel University's Center for Labor Markets and Policy predicted in a report last month that an average of 33% of youths ages 16 to 19 will be employed each month from June through August this year, the highest such rate since 34% in the summer of 2007. For teens who do want to work and have their choice of jobs,

economists and other analysts welcome the reversal in fortune. Summertime jobs give young people experience and make it more likely they will work later in life, the Drexel researchers say. Entry-level jobs also give teens the opportunity to learn how to handle money and to mingle with colleagues and customers from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/business/a-red-hot-job-market-awaits-us-teens-while-employers-sweat/>

Kids pick up books and bikes for a summertime of freedom. At the Friends of Literacy “Books and Bikes,” more than 100 kids showed up to the church’s parking lot to choose a book and get fitted for a bike. Safety – offered in a fun, kid-friendly way – was very much at the forefront. The Epilepsy Foundation of East Tennessee provided helmets and took great care to ensure proper fit for each and every child. <https://www.knoxnews.com/story/shopper-news/2022/05/23/>

Falling enrollment means choices for Georgia school district. District officials are warning that declining enrollment means the Bibb County school system will need to close schools to save money in coming years.... Despite the fiscal clouds, the board is holding the tax rate steady and giving salary increases to teachers and other certified staff of \$3,000 or 4%, whichever is greater. The state is providing only enough money for \$2,000 raises, but many districts statewide are choosing to go above that. The district is giving raises of 4% to 6% to employees such as bus drivers, bus monitors, cafeteria workers, crossing guards and hall monitors. The board voted unanimously Tuesday to eliminate nine vacant assistant principal positions to start cutting costs.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-macon-georgia-government-and-politics-d15724158369ffd3803efbd023bac005>

Divided Minneapolis school board approves budget cuts, including to arts programs. A divided Minneapolis school board on Tuesday night approved its budget for the 2022-2023 school year amid intense pushback from the teachers union, students and parents over cuts to arts education and other programs. Each department's budget was reduced by 5%, meaning many vacant positions will go dark. While the overall pool of money allocated to schools went up by 1%, many schools are facing reductions because of lower enrollment projections. Those cuts are hitting especially hard in arts programs like dance, theater and music.

<https://www.startribune.com/divided-minneapolis-school-board-approves-budget-cuts-including-to-arts-programs/600182308/>

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It's time to just hit the ground running again because we are strong, we're resilient. We persevere through a lot. The pandemic is probably one of the greatest storms that our high schoolers have had to face in a long time, and we did it.... My peers can do anything they put their minds to because they survived this. So all the next steps in life are going to be a piece of cake.

Graduating senior, Tashina Red Hawk

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Let Us Know:

About what ideas are being proposed 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

Comments and sharing from the field

>**Response to:** *A Caution About How the Feds Think About Student/Learning Supports and Mental Health* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/5-26-22.pdf>

There is a continuing push to make all schools free standing or multi school academies with no real link or accountability to the local wider communities in which they are set. Very poor links to the public health agencies which and episodic purchased bolt on training for staff and students from private health trainers. No systemic approach that will give ongoing support give agency of young people and a future and hope. In addition the success measures of schools do not embrace social and mental health.. and often those most impacted are excluded from mainstream by invitation or otherwise and invited to join alternate provisions.. the schools meet their performance targets ...and students loose the plot!! We need to ensure what we truly value from education is what is measured by inspection regimes.

>**Response to:** *After Texas School Shooting: What are you doing to prevent the next one?* [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practitioner\(6-8-2022\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practitioner(6-8-2022).pdf)

The statements in response to the root causes of school shootings was a powerful message. I would like to share with my counseling team to see if we can provide extended sharing with others throughout the county. Thank you

>**Appreciation:**

I have enjoyed your emails for years and want to continue with my new address, as I will be retiring from my school psychologist position in one week. 45 years in education and psych is enough to work, but I don't want to stop learning! Thanks

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

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