

# Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(July, 2025 Vol. 29 #10) – 39 Years & Counting

## **Featured**

### ***Student and Teacher Supports: Everyone has a Role to Play***

#### **Also in this issue**

**>Quick links to online resources**

**>A Few Stories Excerpted from Various News Sources**

**>Comments and sharing from the field**

### ***Student and Teacher Supports: Everyone has a Role to Play***

**GIVEN:** At some time or another, most students bring problems with them to school that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach. In some places, many youngsters bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, limited English language skills, violent neighborhoods, inadequate health care, and lack of opportunities.

Such problems are exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school. In some locales, the reality often is that many students are not succeeding. And, in most schools in these locales, teachers are ill-prepared to address the problems in a potent manner. Thus, when a student is not doing well, the trend increasingly is to refer them directly for counseling or for assessment in hopes of referral for special help – perhaps even special education.

**MAKING THINGS BETTER:** As the move toward using a multi-tiered system of support and response to intervention strategies stress, when a teacher encounters difficulty in working with a youngster, the first step should be to see whether there are ways to address the problem within the classroom and perhaps with added home involvement. To this end, it is essential to equip teachers and student and learning supports staff with a range of ways to enable the learning of such students.

Think in terms of planning staff development for teachers and student/learning supports personnel with a view to promoting a caring, supportive, and effective context for student learning. To these ends, researchers suggest

- adopting an intrinsic motivational orientation focused on enhancing feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to significant others
- increasing staff capacity to develop and use a range of strategies and skills for successfully coping with challenges/problems – taking an active, flexible, and persistent stance and viewing a challenge as something that can be worked on, overcome, changed, or resolved in some way.

Examples of practices:

- > teaming collaboratively in the classroom with support staff and volunteers
- > establishing classroom infrastructure that transforms big classrooms into smaller units
- > personalizing interventions and specialized assistance
- > moving away from overreliance on extrinsics to an emphasis on intrinsic motivation
- > preventing problems, as feasible, and addressing problems as soon as they arise
- > establishing a comprehensive system of learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide

Note: **About Resilience and Schools:** One of the most important research findings related to good outcomes for children and youth is understanding that by enhancing protective factors or buffers, risks can be reduced and barriers overcome. This, of course, applies to adults as well. Indeed, it is unlikely that a school that does not promote resilience for staff can promote it for students. That point was made many years ago by the National Education Association:

“...Resilience applies to everyone at school. Identify at least one protective factor that exists for school staff. How can faculty and administration maximize the benefit of that protective factor to enhance your own resilience? ... Are mistakes, bad decisions, discipline problems, difficulties with academic performance or crises always signs of failure? Or, could they also be ‘teachable moments?’... If you believe that nothing you do will make much of a difference, then coming to work at school each day becomes something you have to do, rather than something you want to do.”

#### EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY:

- teachers can do more to address interfering factors and to work with others in doing so
- support staff can work more closely with teachers and other staff (and to do so in classrooms as much as is feasible), as well as focusing on how to work more productively with district and community resources to enhance practices for prevention and for responding quickly when common problems arise
- administrators can do more to lead the way by expanding policy, enhancing operational infrastructure, and redeploying resources to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching
- students can do more to support peers and learn to prevent and minimize problems
- those at home (and the local community) can be engaged in problem solving student and school problems

#### **Have you Heard About the Youth Mental Health Corps**

“This program, which launched a year ago, places young adults as mental health navigators in schools and community organizations. These navigators provide peer-to-peer support, connect young people and families to resources, and serve as trusted guides who understand firsthand the challenges faced by today’s youth.”

For more on how schools can enhance how they address barriers to learning and teaching, see the many free Center resources (go to <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>). For examples, see

- >*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*
- >*Classroom based learning supports*
- >*Enhancing Classroom Teachers? Capacity to Successfully Engage All Students in Learning: It’s the Foundation of Learning Supports*
- >*Teachers Can’t Do it Alone!.*
- >*Prereferral Interventions*

@#@#@##

*The decisions being made now will shape the resources and opportunities available to our students, and we are fully engaged in understanding and preparing for any changes that may come.* — Christopher R. Hoffman, Superintendent

@#@#@##

## >Quick Links to Online Resources

- >>Embedding Inclusionary Practices in School Problem-Solving Meetings
- >>Restoring Decency to the Care of Undomiciled Foster Youth
- >>Student health and wellness at the state level
- >>Adolescent Social Media Use and Emotional Intelligence: A Systematic Review
- >>The Tension between Money and Culture: Inequality, Economic Capital, Cultural Capital, and High School Students' Educational Achievements from a Comparative Perspective
- >>Self-Paced Blended Learning: A Resource Roundup

### Here's what was discussed in the *Community of Practice* during June

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

- >Summer learning: Service learning engages students with their community
- >Providing student supports over the summer break
- >How will education cuts impact students? (Part 2)
- >How are schools facilitating factors that promote resilience?
- >School improvement: Moving into the age of Implementation Science
- >About the Difficulty in Disseminating New Approaches
- >Appreciations for what has been accomplished

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>

\*\*\*\*\*

@#@#@#

*We can't just expect just the multilingual learner teachers to be responsible for the teaching of multilingual learners. Teaching multilingual learners is the responsibility of all teachers.*

Luciana C. de Oliveira, Associate Dean, Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education

@#@#@#

>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](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

@#@#@##

*Adolescence is often likened to a rollercoaster—a thrilling ride filled with unpredictable highs, sudden drops, and daring twists and turns. For some teenagers,...these struggles can amplify the turbulence of adolescence, making the ride feel overwhelming not just for the teens experiencing it, but also for the families and caregivers supporting them. ....”*

Misty C. Richards and Justin Schreiber

@#@#@##

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

**Back to school fair.** Dallas Mayor Eric L. Johnson, Dallas ISD Associate Superintendent Dr. Mark Ramirez, and Junior League of Dallas President Tandra Allen recently announced the 29th Annual Dallas Mayor’s Back to School Fair. The Fair will take place on August 1. The Fair is a collaborative effort between the City of Dallas, Dallas ISD, nonprofits, corporations, and community volunteers. Each year, it serves more than 10,000 economically disadvantaged students from Pre-K to Grade 12 and their families. For nearly 30 years, the fair has been a one-stop shop for school supplies, valuable services, and community resources. Dallas students and their families will receive school supplies and have access to immunizations, dental screenings, vision exams, and other health and social services provided by more than 100 vendors

**Unified basketball builds bonds and breaks down barriers.** Draper Park Middle School (UT) unified basketball team provides an opportunity for students with and without intellectual disabilities play together. The team was participating in the Canyons School District’s middle school unified basketball tournament. Canyons School District Assistant Superintendent McKay Robinson appreciates the value of unified sports. “Unified Sports are the absolute best,” he said. “They aren’t just about the game; they’re about breaking

barriers, building friendships and teaching every student the true meaning of inclusion and teamwork.” The coach, special education teacher Morgan Collins, believes unified sports provide students with a chance to develop both sports and social skills. The opportunities extend beyond the court, with the school’s Buddy Club offering a chance for students to sign up and eat lunch with peers.

**Seventh-graders chronicle pivotal older adults in their lives.** The project develops from a letter each student writes to a grandparent or a special adult to explain the project and ask to interview them. Once that interview happens, they interview another family member, then learn about the overall periods in history their grandparents have lived in and try to incorporate some of that history into their written biographical drafts. Next, each creates an “about the author” card about themselves, and makes a visual aid for their showcase presentation. Some bring family recipes, others share small heirlooms, and there’s a scavenger hunt for families.

**Richmond Public Schools to hire 55 additional multilingual teachers.** Richmond(VA) public school system needs to hire 55 multilingual teachers to meet the state’s enhanced student-to-teacher ratios in classrooms by the start of the 2025–26 school year. A 2024 state law mandates lower student–teacher ratios for English language learners. The new ratios are directly tied to student proficiency levels. That means districts like Richmond Public Schools — which serve a high number of low-proficiency students — must hire more multilingual teachers than other districts. The district will need to offer professional development and additional training during the summer break to continue their mission for working with multilingual learners. The vision is to close literacy gaps, improve graduation rates and incorporate language justice into everything that the district does.

@#@#@#

*The success of our students is a shared journey, and the Mayor’s Back to School Fair is where our entire Dallas community comes together to ignite the spark for a bright future filled with learning and opportunity.* — Dr. Mark Ramirez, Dallas ISD Associate Superintendent

@#@#@#

## >Comments and sharing from the field

Responses to 5/22 email **“71 % of Superintendents say they are concerned about the impact mental health issues are having at schools”**

>“Have you guys read the Anxious Generation book? As an educator, I feel any SEL/Mental Health supports need to be coupled with addressing the addiction to tech/screens.... Thanks for all of these links.... I look forward to exploring these in the coming weeks....”

>”I am concerned about the mental health of the school staff. So many teachers suffering from anxiety and other health issues. How can they help students build resilience and self care when they don't have the skills themselves?”

Response to 5/29 email **“Don’t stop with MTSS”**

> “When you say: End the marginalization of student/learning supports in school improvement policy, can you please elaborate on what you mean?”

Center response: Glad you asked. We cover the problem of marginalization in all the referenced resources we cited. For a quick discussion see pages 7-9 in: Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions  
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>

If that doesn’t clarify the matter, let us know and we’ll try to be clearer.

Thanks again for asking and we hope that you see the need for transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

>“I have subscribed to your incredibly informative and helpful emails for many years. I have accessed and utilized the resources as a school Principal, Director of Federal Programs, Director of Special Programs and Chief of Schools. I have pushed the information to others, including our school counselors. Now, I am retiring after 40 years of public education. In my retirement, I am pursuing special education advocacy with what I believe is "the right lens." So many advocates are professional antagonists pushing parents to argue for argument's sake and overlooking student needs. With the hats I have worn in education coupled with parenting two children with special needs, I will be able to guide and support and hopefully unite families and schools in prescriptive support of the students...”

Response to 6/5 email **“Artificial Intelligence and Improving Student Supports”**

>”I am writing to you today as a regional officer for the our state Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators. In November we are hosting our annual conference.... I think the topic of AI and student support is very pertinent. Please give consideration to the call for proposals and let me know if this is something that is of interest to you.” (In response, Center staff provided contact information to researchers at the universities in her state who are focusing on artificial intelligence in schools.)

#### **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](mailto: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](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 <https://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)