

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

(March, 2022 Vol. 26 #5) – 36 Years & Counting

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**Concerned about addressing barriers to student learning and teaching & reengaging 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>

>Helping students (& staff) stay motivated through the second semester slump

We're growing, slowly but surely, more impatient and grumpy as the year progresses.
Amanda Gray's reflection on spring slump

Even before the pandemic, a common phenomenon in schools was the *spring slump*.

It happens in the weeks before and after a school's spring break. Productivity slows, and drops in attendance are common. Some students feel worn out; some are bored by the routines at school; some are having academic and personal problems. Approaching summer, the thought of being free of school fills the heads of others. "Senioritis" kicks in for many as high school graduation nears. ("Four years of high school is half a year too long," says one senior. "I'm already accepted for college," says another.) And the ongoing impact of the pandemic continues to add a wild card to the situation.

Weather also seems to play a role. Depending on place and time, it's either too cold, or as Amanda Maksymiw notes, "The sun is shining, flowers are blooming and the warm temperatures are making everyone want to venture outdoors. Suddenly, work seems a bit less interesting than the possibilities that lie on the other side of the glass."

<https://www.fuze.com/blog/avoiding-spring-slump-5-ways-motivate-your-teams>

And as Miriam Plotinsky notes, it's not just the students:

Around this time of year, teachers are particularly prone to burnout, more so than in May or June. When Presidents' Day hits in the frigid darkness of February, teachers are looking at about a six-week stretch of school until spring break, which doesn't sound too horrible until we think about some of the other factors. For starters, testing often takes over in the spring months, and that alone adds pressure to the already fast-paced world of instruction. With up-and-down weather patterns, viruses tend to run rampant, and now that we face this year's addition of Covid-19 worries, anxiety is at a premium.

<https://www.educationworld.com/teachers/springtime-slump-we-can-do-it>

Addressing “spring slump” is part of the ongoing discussion of motivation, and especially intrinsic motivation, as critical to all facets of school engagement.

To enhance engagement, it is essential to pay particular attention to countering negative feelings and thoughts about school by increasing interactions that exude warmth and empathy. At the same time, it is important to remember that participants need to feel in control of their lives, competent in what they are doing, and positively related to significant others at school. Any threats to these feelings need to be countered. And to recapture interest and attention, a dose of novelty usually helps.

All this is more likely to occur when instruction is personalized (i.e., matched to each student’s motivation and capabilities), and special assistance is added whenever necessary.

For more on this, see Parts I and II in

>*Improving School Improvement* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf>

With specific respect to staff, the ongoing pressures of the pandemic can be expected to cause more than the usual number to “slump” and even to “burnout.” It certainly is time to heed the NEA’s call for *Getting Serious About Teacher Burnout*

<https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/getting-serious-about-teacher-burnout>

Excerpt:

... schools can and should support educator well-being ...

That means fewer wellness one-offs.

"I think these are well-intentioned, but this is about more than one-day trainings, free chair massages, breathing exercises and Casual Fridays," says Doris Santoro. "Those are all good, but it is not what educators need to reduce burnout and improve morale or their long-term well-being."

Educators will feel more supported by school leaders—and therefore more likely to remain in the profession—who prioritize decreasing administrative paperwork and who protect their time to do what they believe is best for their students.

"This is about support and autonomy," says Santoro....

"They should be asking educators, 'what is the most time-consuming part of your job, what tasks aren't as important and what are the systems that we can put in place so you can do the work that you think matters most?'"

For more on addressing staff slump and burnout by countering time constraints, see

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/19/09/gift-teacher-time>

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/value-of-a-teachers-time-jose-vilson>

<https://www.timeandlearning.org/sites/default/files/resources/timeforteachers.pdf>

For more on burnout, see

>*Understanding and Minimizing Staff Burnout*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/burnout/burn1.pdf>

Already struggling, state and local public education employment fell by nearly 5% overall since the beginning of the pandemic — and by almost 7% among just K-12 teachers — according to a recent Economic Policy Institute report. And in January, a National Education Association poll revealed that more than half of the members in the nation’s largest teachers union are considering leaving teaching sooner than they had originally planned. In addition, about 90% of members called burnout a “serious problem.”

<https://tn.chalkbeat.org/2022/2/18/22941304/miguel-cardona-teacher-shortage-education-school-superintendent-association-retention-recruitment>

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Spring, a time of high stakes testing in schools ... you know, **covid testing!**

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

Rebalancing: Children first

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/rebalancing-children-first/>

A New Federal Equity Agenda for Dual Language Learners and English Learners

<https://tcf.org/content/report/new-federal-equity-agenda-dual-language-learners-english-learners/>

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Controversy, Developmental Mechanisms, and Multiple Levels of Analysis

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29220204/>

Service, Activism, and Friendships in High School: A Longitudinal Social Network Analysis

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-021-01549-2>

Toxic stress in children and youth: Exploring the role of community-based programming to support health and well-being in the United States

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/10990860/2022/36/1>

Preventing youth hate crimes and bullying initiative

<https://ojdp.ojp.gov/programs/preventing-youth-hate-crimes-bullying-initiative>

Strategies and interventions to reduce suicide

<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/26471/strategies-and-interventions-to-reduce-suicide-proceedings-of-a-workshop>

Structural Supports to Promote Teacher Well-being

https://annenbergbrown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_19.pdf

LGBTQ Youth & Family Resources To Decrease Mental Health Risks & Promote Well-Being

<https://lgbtqfamilyacceptance.org/>

Health Care Considerations for Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ Indigenous Communities

<https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/publication/health-care-considerations-for-two-spirit-and-lgbtqia-indigenous-communities/>

An Applied Research Agenda on Black Children and Families to Advance Practices and Policies That Promote Their Well-Being

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/an-applied-research-agenda-on-black-children-and-families-to-advance-practices-and-policies-that-promote-their-well-being>

10 Ways the Biden Administration Can Advance Equity for Young Learners Today

<https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/10actions-equity-now-021622.pdf>

For Black Educators, Equity Starts with Resisting Harsh Discipline

<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/for-black-educators-equity-starts-with-resisting-harsh-discipline>

Heterogeneity in COVID-19 pandemic-induced lifestyle stressors predicts future mental health in adults and children in the US and UK

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34401891/>

*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>

Improving Student/Learning Supports Requires Reworking the Operational Infrastructure

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/reworkinfra.pdf>

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From a retired accountant now working as a substitute teacher

"It's fun. I like it but it can be stressful at times. They're eager to learn but there are days when 28 kids have 28 agendas while you're trying to stick to yours. It's also a lot of responsibility for what you get paid. You have to be aware of a variety of situations. You're a mother. You're a hand holder. You're a counselor and a nurse."

Mary Mataczynski

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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during February

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

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

- >About how teens can help each another during this time of crisis
- >US Department of Education statements about using the relief funds
- >What to do about the pandemic's impact on the mental health of student and school staff
- >Secretary Cardona's Vision for Education
- >Call for Papers: Causes and consequences of emerging violent extremism in the U.S. and implications for school safety, student mental health, families, and communities
- >What about using mental health paraprofessionals in schools?
- >Excerpt from New GOA Report:

School Districts in Socially Vulnerable Communities Faced Heightened Challenges after Recent Natural Disasters

If you missed the resources and news in the Special Editions of the Community of Practice prepared in relation to the crisis, 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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We will work so that all schools truly can be hubs of their communities, where students and families are connected to the resources and services they need. You see, we are all on the same team and we serve the same families. If a child is hungry, lacks stable housing, or lives in unhealthy conditions, their bandwidth for learning will be diminished.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

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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>

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Let Us Know:

About what ideas are being proposed for transforming schools as they re-open.

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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Tomorrow's problems can't be solved with yesterday's designs

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

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

Schools are starting to spend Covid relief dollars. Here's what they're prioritizing. Some themes are beginning to emerge in how school districts across the country will spend the \$122 billion. FutureEd analyzed a database of the spending plans for about 2,500 school districts to assess how they would spend the federal Covid relief. The think tank found that more than half of the districts in the data sample planned to use the funds to hire or reward teachers, guidance counselors and academic specialists. About half planned to spend the aid on summer programs.

More than half also planned to use the federal aid to improve school climate systems, with heating, ventilation and air conditioning a top-three priority in every region. School districts have until late 2024 to spend the money.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/schools-are-starting-spend-covid-relief-dollars-prioritizing-rcna14640>

Program helps paraprofessionals become teachers. University of Nevada, Las Vegas's paraprofessional pathways project launched this fall to help support staff and instructional aides to become a licensed teacher in as little as one year. The program covers tuition and fees for participants. The program is expected to cost about \$9 million and is funded by UNLV, the Clark County School District and state grants. In addition to providing more teachers for local public schools, the program also aims to diversify the pool of educators so they're more representative of the students they serve. Senate Bill 352, which passed during the state's 2021 legislative session, allows a paraprofessional to complete accelerated student teaching while keeping their current job.

<https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/education/unlv-program-helps-paraprofessionals-become-teachers-2530213/>

Graduation rates dip across US as pandemic stalls progress. An analysis shows high school graduation rates dipped in at least 20 states after the first full school year disrupted by the pandemic. High school graduation rates dipped in at least 20 states after the first full school year disrupted by the pandemic, suggesting the coronavirus may have ended nearly two decades of nationwide progress toward getting more students diplomas, an analysis shows. The drops came despite at least some states and educators loosening standards to help struggling students. Some fear that the next several graduating classes could be even more affected.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/graduation-rates-dip-us-pandemic-stalls-progress-82437958>

New Mexico is short on substitute teachers. The governor asked the National Guard and state employees for help. As school districts across the country scramble to find substitute teachers to fill in for instructors out sick with covid-19, New Mexico is tapping into unconventional resources for help: the National Guard and state employees. The initiative, which is the first in the nation, encourages government workers and National Guard members to volunteer to become licensed substitute teachers. Superintendents in Texas and Michigan have asked parents to volunteer as substitutes. In Vermont, school board members have filled in as custodial workers, and in Georgia, a school principal has been helping out in the cafeteria.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/01/20/new-mexico-national-guard-substitute-teachers/>

Arizona Lifts 120-Day Cap for Substitute Teachers Amid Pressure From School Districts. The Arizona Board of Education voted on Monday to loosen the state's rules so substitute teachers can more easily fill vacant positions as part of a nationwide shortage exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The board decided that substitutes can teach at the same school for as long as is necessary to get a full-time teacher hired, removing a previous 120-day limit to how long they could teach in one school. It also declared that emergency teaching certifications will be valid for two years instead of one, so substitutes don't have to renew them as often.
<https://www.newsweek.com/arizona-lifts-120-day-cap-substitute-teachers-amid-pressure-school-districts-1672828>

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From the above story on graduation rates

We do have to be concerned that grad rates are down and that some number of kids that earned a diploma, they've learned less than prior years. What we're going to have to learn in the future is, how great is the concern?

Robert Balfanz

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Comments and sharing from the field

Response to 2/3/22 report *We won't Argue Against Adding More Counselors, BUT ...*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/morethan.pdf>

1. A superintendent commented that

I agree wholeheartedly with your assessment and conclusions. My district is one of 9 in our state currently participating in one of three Project AWARE grants. Our district and two others are in year four of the five-year grant, which focuses primarily on implementing MTSS for improved student behavior and mental health outcomes. We have developed Mental Health Intervention Teams at each site, and we are now in the process of integrating those teams with our site Guiding Coalitions, which were developed in our implementation of Professional Learning Communities best practices.... Thank you again for sharing your work. This is profoundly important work to focus on given the circumstances we are in today. I will tell you that one of our state legislators has proposed a bill for our legislative session, which starts next week, that would eliminate SEL from our schools. This effort (occurring in many states) to somehow tie SEL to Critical Race Theory and characterize schools as indoctrinating our students into something evil is so insidious and beyond comprehension. I will do my best and fight to prevent that from happening in my state.

2. A social worker noted:

I would ask that when statements are made about mental health support you include school social workers, who for many have clinical licenses and provide a lot of mental health in their day to day job. An untinted front with professionals is best.

3. ... My research focuses on young children's social-emotional development, and the recent trend of emphasizing social-emotional development seems to be a double-edged sword. Some mental health programs work in a punitive direction. For instance, a student with "behavior problems" will be screened for "poor mental health" and be advised to be "fixed". There has been a growing concern of

students now having one more "course work" they have to excel at: social-emotional learning. I have read an anecdote that a preschool's social-emotional program director brought parents in for their child's bad behavior and low social-emotional skill. That preschooler has been punished (secluded) for being "angry" and then told to "feel happy" for other children and teachers. We know that is not the desired way to support young children's mental health.

I often feel like now they are even going to "fix" children's minds, which devastates me. How can we ensure the quality of mental health support programs at schools in a supportive and constructive way? I hope to find a way in education setting on my end.

Sharing re: 2/17/22 email: *Planning to Apply for a Full Service Community Schools' grant?*

Thank you for this valuable information. I found it quite fascinating. I was actually the principal who piloted the first New York City Public Community Learning School in Brooklyn, New York a few years ago. The program was quite successful and so beneficial to our Coney Island Community. We met the needs of the "whole child." Continue your great work!

Appreciations

I just wanted to send a quick thank you for all that you have done regarding students' mental health. I know growing up I have faced barriers throughout my learning because of mental issues and disorders I have, so to see someone such as yourself working to understand these issues is amazing. ... I just wanted to let you know I appreciate your work!

...thanks for what you have done over the years to promote systemic approaches to student support. We have learned through our research what a difference it makes for kids and teachers. Your work has certainly been an inspiration for me and my colleagues....

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