

Students & Schools: Moving Forward*

(November, 2022 Vol. 27 #2) – 36 Years & Counting

Featuring

> **Concerned about the “Crisis” related to students’ Mental Health?**

> **About the Center’s TA & Coaching**

> **Continuing education through quick links to online resources**

> **What’s happening relevant to MH in schools around the country?**

> **Comments and sharing from the field**

Enhancing How Schools Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching as Key to Effectively Responding to the Increased Concern about Students’ Mental Health

While it is evident schools must do more to address students’ mental health needs, it is essential not to overstate, overidentify, and overpathologize the state of affairs. We all need to be sure that well-meaning efforts to provide special assistance do not collude with such matters as “victim blaming,” inappropriate labeling and stigmatization, and self-fulfilling prophecies.

Use of phrases such as “it’s a crisis” call attention to a situation that warrants systemic changes at schools. It is the time to improve the situation by moving forward in efforts to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports. Such a system encompasses resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and cognitive supports in the classroom and schoolwide. Such a system is essential to addressing mental health concerns and learning loss, reducing dropout rates, narrowing the achievement and equity of opportunity gaps, and strengthening school improvement.

Designing such a system involves rethinking student and learning supports

(see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fall22.pdf>)

Schools that have adopted an MTSS framework now need to develop their student and learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

A Continuum of Interventions. MTSS highlights that a full continuum of interventions is essential, and thinking about a continuum of interventions is a good starting point for framing the nature and scope of a comprehensive system. Building on MTSS, schools can evolve the levels of such a continuum into an interrelated and *overlapping intervention subsystems* focused on

- (1) promoting development and preventing problems
- (2) responding to problems as early-after-onset as feasible
- (3) treating severe, pervasive, and chronic problems.

Each *subsystem* needs to link school and community interventions in ways that integrate, coordinate, and weave resources together.

Six Domains of Support. A truly comprehensive system of student/learning supports involves more than a continuum of interventions. Every school has resources devoted to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. But in most schools, the efforts are fragmented, marginalized, and focused on a relatively few students with major behavior, learning, and emotional problems. There is a

pressing need to coalesce the “laundry list” of fragmented programs and services found in districts and schools. This facet of the system requires organizing student/learning supports cohesively into a well-designed and delimited set of interventions that reflect a school’s efforts to provide student and learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide.

Pioneering work across the country emphasizes six domains encompassing interventions to:

- > *Enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning* (e.g., improving instruction for students who with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems and those have become disengaged from learning at school; includes a focus on prevention, early intervening, and use of strategies such as response to intervention)
- > *Support transitions* (i.e., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions)
- > *Increase home and school connections and engagement*
- > *Respond to, and where feasible, prevent crises*
- > *Increase community involvement and support* (outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers)
- > *Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.*

Ready to move forward?

Read about some first steps:

- > *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>
- > *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>

AND be certain to establish a *Learning Supports Leadership Team*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>

Two Field Associates now available to Help Meet the Increased Requests for Workshops and Coaching from the Center

Here’s how the Center provides technical assistance and coaching:

- (1) Upon request, we offer immediate technical assistance related to mental health in schools and student/learning supports – contact Ltaylor@ucla.edu
- (2) For those leaders focusing on transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching, the Center’s co-directors offer free distance coaching and technical assistance – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/coach.pdf>
- (3) Two Center field associates are available on a fee for services basis to provide workshops and coaching – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/fieldassoc.pdf>

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If you ask most teachers and parents, they'll tell you that they believe in our public schools and want to focus on what our kids and communities need. After all we've been through, those basics like reading, after-school clubs and mental health services have never been more important. ... It means bringing joy and discovery back into school... There's a lot at stake here, and teachers and school staff are doing what it takes to give students their best shot at success. Randi Weingarten

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

Reimagining school safety

https://selcenter.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/08/SEL_Reimagining-School-Safety-A-Guide-for-School-and-Communities_ADA-2.pdf

Development of a Teacher Module for a Brief, Bystander Bullying Intervention for Middle Schools

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40688-022-00413-9>

School vs. District Level Views of School Spending Inequality

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0161956X.2022.2107373?needAccess=true>

Prioritizing Strategies to Racially Diversify the K–12 Teacher Workforce

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-6.html

The Mental Health of School-Aged Youth: A Call to Action for School Nursing

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10598405221113312>

White House Cautions Schools Against 'Continuous Surveillance' of Students

<https://www.the74million.org/article/white-house-cautions-schools-against-continuous-surveillance-of-students/>

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About the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendation that doctors screen all adults patients under 65 for anxiety

... there are those who would say that this takes the focus off of where it should be, which is that some people are just living hard lives that don't need to be as hard as they are, that these are political problems, not necessarily medical problems, like people living in neighborhoods that are plagued by violence, for example, or people who are experiencing economic distress. There are those who would say these are political problems for the political system to solve and that this basically puts the onus on the individual as opposed to the systems that are supposed to address them. Michael Martin

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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during (October)

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

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

- >Can youth empowerment enhance violence prevention?
- >About Student Voice and Participation
- >How optimistic are teens about the future?
- >Is Cross-age Mentoring Effective?
- >About Reducing Bullying
- >How are various sources of funding being braided to improve/transform student/learning supports?
- >How can student/learning supports play-out in classrooms?
- >Are schools enhancing student creativity?

>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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...There were many trials in the beginning of the pandemic with trying to work together, especially in different ethnic groups.... But things turn for the better. Nowadays COVID-19 cases are slowing down, one of the biggest impacts created by us — through the vaccines, mask mandates and lockdowns, we did our part to slow the rise of those getting infected. All of this is evidence that working together truly pays off. We can now learn from the past and implement these lessons of the pandemic into our lives. Not everything is restored, and not everything is the same, but together, we created stronger communities and can furthermore strive to keep the communities we live in functioning. Adrian Villanueva, high school freshman

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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>

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

Our Center continues to emphasize the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. For an overview, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

We recently proposed an online national summit to elevate discussion about transforming student/learning supports. To determine interest in this and to guide planning, we sought input from a wide range of stakeholders. Based on the input we received (and didn't receive), it is clear that the need is not for another discussion, but for action.

As an aid for moving forward, we have developed a brief guide. See

>**Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions**
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>

Take a look and let us know what you think.

Please let us know about what ideas are being proposed for transforming how schools provide 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

HOT ISSUE

Backlash to Prevailing Support Services?

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

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The current system is not working for many children, students, families, and staff, with notable problems that existed before the pandemic made much worse during the pandemic.

U.S. Department of Education in

> *Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health*

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>

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

Educators skeptical of New Jersey's plan to 're-engineer' student mental health program.

Starting with the 2023-2024 academic year, the state's long-running school-based youth services program will be defunded and state funding set aside for that system will be moved to a regionalized "hub" model called the New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services network, or NJ4S. It will be operated by the state Department of Children and Families. But some local superintendents and school employees who have run school-based mental health programs in their buildings for years say they weren't consulted when the NJ4S system was being drawn up and the loss of funding for their current programs will devastate thousands of students.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/10/06/new-jersey-student-mental-health-program-00060280>

Hurricane Ian closes some Florida schools indefinitely.

The devastation from Hurricane Ian has left schools shuttered indefinitely in parts of Florida, leaving storm-weary families anxious for word on when and how children can get back to classrooms. As rescue and recovery operations continue in the storm's aftermath, several school systems in hard-hit counties in southwestern Florida can't say for sure when they'll reopen. Some schools are without power and still assessing the damage, as well as the impact on staff members who may have lost homes or can't return to work. Shuttered schools can worsen the hurricane's disruption for children. Recovery from natural disasters elsewhere suggests the effects on kids can be lasting, particularly in low-income communities that have a harder time bouncing back.

<https://apnews.com/article/hurricanes-education-florida-storms-natural-disasters-65729caca143510df40ab8e1ff3d4ba4>

The Price Kids Pay: Ticketed at school.

Thousands of Illinois students a year are receiving tickets at school for conduct that violates local laws. The tickets often involve behavior as minor as littering, vaping, using offensive words or gestures, or getting into a hallway scuffle. Ticketing students violates the intent of an Illinois law that prohibits schools from fining students as a form of discipline. Instead of issuing fines directly, school officials refer students to police, who write the tickets. The fines attached can be hundreds of dollars, an impossible burden for many families. An analysis also found Black students were ticketed at higher rates than their white peers.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/investigations/ct-price-kids-pay-listicle-20220506-upiu6xdf7re5bct5oi3k2t67mi-list.html>

Express Pilot Will Expand Student Ridership Options with County Bus Passes.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is launching a pilot program with the four counties to expand subsidized county bus passes for high schoolers in grades 9-12. The pilot program — called EXPRESS, which stands for Expanding Ridership to Educate Students in Schools — aims

to help mitigate the impacts of the national school bus driver shortage. Expanding free bus transportation services to all high school students under the EXPRESS program also stands to benefit more than 21,000 students — or 47% of high school students — who are currently ineligible because they live within the walk zone of their school campus. The goal is to increase high school student ridership on county bus services so that underutilized school buses can be reassigned to restore canceled and consolidated routes.

<http://www.hawaiifreepress.com/Articles-Main/ID/35054/Free-County-Bus-Passes-Answer-to-School-Bus-Driver-Shortage>

Psych Evals, Taxes Among Hacked LAUSD Data Posted To Dark Web.

After data hacked from the Los Angeles Unified School District was posted on the dark web, Superintendent Alberto Carvalho stood firm on his refusal to pay ransom demanded by an international hacking syndicate, while the district opened a hotline for parents and staffers concerned about their personal information. The Los Angeles Times reported it had reviewed screenshots of the released data, which appeared to show some Social Security numbers. The online technical news organization WebCrunch reported that the data released also appeared to contain information such as tax forms, passport details, contracts, legal documents, financial reports that include banking information, health and psychological assessments of students, including COVID-19 test data, and "previous conviction reports."

<https://patch.com/california/los-angeles/psych-evals-taxes-among-hacked-laUSD-data-posted-dark-web>

Antidepressants Work Better Than Sugar Pills Only 15 Percent of the Time.

Evidence is mounting that doctors are vastly overprescribing SSRIs. Although there is widespread agreement that SSRIs help some people with severe depression, these patients are a small minority of people who take the drugs. Only about 15 percent derive any more benefit from the drugs than they would a sugar pill, one recent study found. In addition, withdrawal symptoms for long-term users may be more severe than previously thought—sometimes worse than the original disorder.

<https://www.newsweek.com/2022/09/30/antidepressants-work-better-sugar-pills-only-15-percent-time-1744656.html>

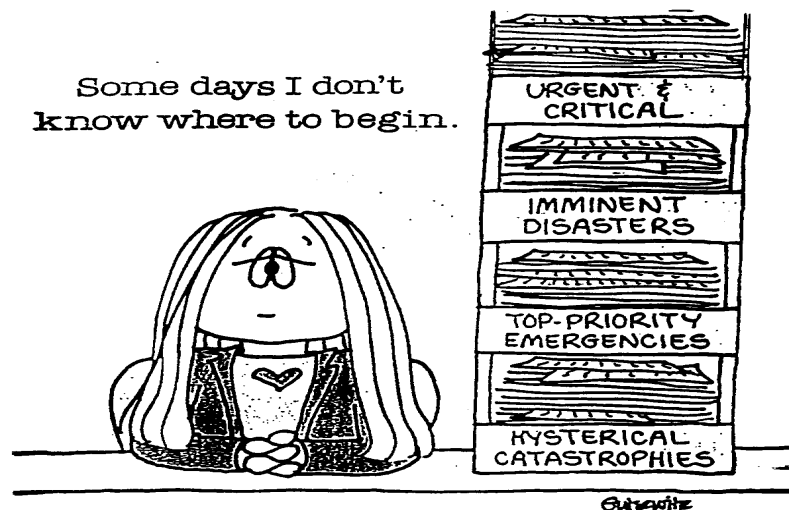
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from the above news story

The drug companies convinced us that if you're sad, you should go to your doctor and seek treatment. They've made us all believe that normal aspects of the human condition are a medical illness called major depressive disorder—that normal reactions to difficult situations are a chemical brain problem that needs a medical solution. They convinced people antidepressants are very 'mild' drugs that are very easy to stop. None of this is true.

Mark Horowitz

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Comments and sharing from the field

We were asked to share the following:

“The National Health Education Standards have been updated during 2021-22 by a group led by six national organizations. The National Consensus for School Health Education was formed by the American School Health Association, Eta Sigma Gamma, Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education, National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), and the Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education. The original Standards were developed in 1995 and most recently updated in 2007. Nearly all of the original authors and authoring organizations were involved in the Consensus process that led to the 2022 revision. The new resource is described in the attached release. All materials may be found at <http://www.schoolhealtheducation.org> . We would be pleased if you could share this resource with your networks and through your newsletter. The materials are free to use and adapt with attribution. Information about acceptable use is on the web site.”

Feedback from a school board Chairman on 10/11/22 practitioner on peer mentoring

“Thanks for the info! We have taken this to a new level. We actually hire our students through an advisor and call them Professional Student aides. A lack of resources during COVID precipitated this move. We are in the second year with 37 students hired. It has not only filled slots where we were short but also had the results you were talking about. It has also given the students we hired an opportunity to experience teaching as a possible career goal and we all know we need to encourage more young people to consider teaching as a career. Thanks for your newsletter!”

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