

This resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA (36 Years & Counting)

(October, 2022 Vol. 27 #1)

Featured:

>How focused are teachers on enhancing student engagement?

Plus:

>Quick links to online resources

>A few news stories

>Comments and sharing from the field

How focused are teachers on enhancing student engagement?

Ask teachers this question:

Most days, how many of your students come to class motivationally ready and able to learn what you have planned to teach them?

You may be surprised and disturbed by the responses. In urban and rural schools serving economically disadvantaged families, teachers tell us they are lucky if 10 to 15% of their students fall into this group. In suburbia, teachers usually say 75% fit that profile.

Enhancing Student Engagement

Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.

Even for those who have made a reasonably good adjustment to a new school and a new classroom, a month or two into a school year may see positive motivation subside. Many behavior, learning, and emotional problems arise at this time.

The key to minimizing such problems is to aggressively focus on enhancing and maintaining student engagement. This calls for maximizing classroom and schoolwide experiences that

- (1) promote feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to significant others and
- (2) minimize threats to such feelings.

To these ends, this month provides a critical time to focus on increasing ways for the school to

- >avoid overreliance on extrinsics
- >emphasize intrinsic motivation
- >minimize practices that produce negative psychological reactions and unwanted behavior

Engagement and Multitiered Support System/Response to Intervention

The increasing focus on a multitiered support system and response to intervention provides a great opportunity to stress enhancing student engagement. Many instructional approaches are effective when a student is motivated to learn what is being taught. And, for students with learning, behavior, and emotional problems, motivation for classroom learning often is the primary concern.

The seeds of significant problems are planted when instruction is not a good fit. For example, learning problems generate an emotional overlay and usually behavior problems. Thus, while motivation is a fundamental concern for all students, for those with problems a nuanced classroom focus on motivation is essential.

Fundamental implications for classrooms include ensuring there are a broad range of options with respect to:

- content
- outcomes
- processes (including a personalized structure to facilitate learning)

With real options comes real opportunities for involving learners in decision making. A motivational focus also stresses development of nonthreatening ways to provide information about learning and performance.

In transforming classrooms, the following points about motivation warrant particular attention:

- >Motivational Readiness. Optimal performance and learning require motivational readiness. Readiness is understood in terms of offering stimulating and supportive environments where learning can be perceived as vivid, valued, and attainable. It is a prerequisite to student attention, involvement, and performance. Poor motivational readiness may be a cause of poor learning and a factor maintaining learning, behavior, and emotional problems. Thus, the need for strategies that can produce a high level of motivational readiness (and reduce avoidance motivation and reactance) so students are mobilized to participate.
- > Motivation as both a process and an outcome concern. Individuals may value learning something, but may not be motivated to pursue the processes used. Many students are motivated to learn when they first encounter a topic but do not maintain that motivation. Processes must elicit, enhance, and maintain motivation so that students stay mobilized. Programs must be designed to maintain, enhance, and expand intrinsic motivation so that what is learned is not limited to immediate lessons and is applied in the world beyond the schoolhouse door.
- > Countering negative motivation. Negative motivation and avoidance reactions and any conditions likely to generate them must be circumvented or at least minimized. Of particular concern are activities students perceive as unchallenging, uninteresting, overdemanding, or overwhelming. Most people react against structures that seriously limit their range of options or that are overcontrolling and coercive. Examples of conditions that can have a negative impact on a person's motivation are sparse resources, excessive rules, and a restrictive day-in, day-out emphasis on drill and remediation.

Students experiencing problems at school usually have extremely negative perceptions of and avoidance tendencies toward teachers and activities that look like "the same old thing." Major changes in approach must be made if such students are to change these perceptions. Ultimately, success may depend on the degree to which the students view the adults at school and in the classroom as supportive, rather than indifferent or controlling and the program as personally valuable and obtainable.

School staff not only need to try to increase motivation – especially intrinsic motivation – but also to avoid practices that decrease it. Although students may learn a specific lesson at school (e.g., some basic skills), they may have little or no interest in using the new knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. Increasing such interest requires procedures that can reduce negative and increase positive feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies.

With behavior, learning, and emotional problems, it is especially important to identify and minimize experiences that maintain or may increase avoidance motivation.

Of particular concern is the need to avoid overreliance on extrinsics to entice and reward since such strategies can decrease intrinsic motivation.

The point is to enhance stable, positive, intrinsic attitudes that mobilize ongoing pursuit of desired ends, throughout the school, and away from school. Developing intrinsic attitudes is basic to

increasing the type of motivated practice (reading for pleasure for example) that is essential for mastering and assimilating what has just been learned.

For staff development to improve understanding of the motivational bases for many behavior, learning, and emotional problems and what to do about them, the Center has several resources. For a quick introduction to discussions of the above topics, see any of the following:

- > *Intrinsic Motivation: Engaging and Re-engaging Students, Families, & Staff* (powerpoint) online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/rebuild/rfl/sessiv.ppt>
- > *About Motivation* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/motivation.pdf>
- > *Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School* <http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>
- > *School Engagement, Disengagement, Learning Supports, & School Climate* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schooleng.pdf>

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... If education was nothing but information transfer, then online would work perfectly. You just present the content and the kids take it. So now we learned exactly what that leaves out: School as a place for support and school as a place for relationships, and a place for inspiration ...

Anya Kamenetz

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>Quick Links to Online Resources

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

The power of connectedness: Associations between caring non-parental adult relationships, school attendance, and discipline among foster-involved youth
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740922002699>

Multisystemic Resilience: Learning from Youth in Stressed Environments
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0044118X211017335>

Understanding Strengths in Adolescent–Parent Relationships
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jora.12684>

Transforming Educational Systems
https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/7B_Transforming_Educational_Systems_Guide.pdf

Supporting Individual Willingness to Report School Safety Concerns
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1077-3.html

National Health Education Standards – 3rd Edition – Model Guidance for School Curriculum and Instruction www.schoolhealtheducation.org

Lessons From a Historic Decline in Child Poverty
<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/lessons-from-a-historic-decline-in-child-poverty>

Digital Tools and Solutions for Teen Mental Health
<https://onemindpsyberguide.org/resources/teen-app-guide/>

Rethinking Student and Learning Supports

in the Center's Quarterly ejournal
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/news.htm>

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I am a huge advocate for anti-bullying in our youth. What I have seen with the rise of social media is that children are not facing bullying on a playground, they are facing it on their cell phones.
Whitney Wolfe Herd

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Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during September
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

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

- >Can resilience and protective factors reduce stress?
- >What role can youth play in promoting positive changes at school and in the community?
- >What are other countries doing to enhance mental health in schools?
- >Community Schools and School-Community Collaboratives: How are they improving student and learning supports?
- >What are the first steps to take when students have problems?
- >What's being done about providing student/learning supports after school and when school is not in session?
- >Requests from colleagues about strengthening classrooms and reducing referrals
- >What's your reaction to the following article? The Enigma of "Real World" Mental Health Care

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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Schools are not just places where students learn to read, write and do math. Children need to socialize and build emotional skills. Teachers are now first responders addressing the pandemic generation's deficits in learning and experience. Schools need help to get through this new challenge — and, in the process, to build a better student support system for years to come.

Washington Post Editorial Board

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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>

NEW: A Brief Guide for Moving Student/Learning Supports in New Directions

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.

Our Center continues to emphasize the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. In addition to the above guide, see the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

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

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I had my patience tested... I'm negative

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

Short-staffed school districts are hiring students to serve lunch and answer phones. As the nation's labor crunch hits public education, some administrators say student-employment programs can open up career paths. A growing number of teenage students are employed by their own high schools as districts across the country struggle to fill landscaping, clerical and cafeteria jobs. Faced with high tuition and the prospect of substantial student-loan debt, many high school grads are gravitating toward trade schools or other college alternatives. Thomas Showalter, executive director of the National Youth Employment Coalition, said districts should consider ramping up their student employment efforts by connecting kids with a local training provider who might offer certifications.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/short-staffed-school-districts-are-hiring-students-serve-lunch-rcna44905>

New remote learning flexibility. Poudre School District (CO) PSD Board of Education voted to approve a resolution allowing the district to have schoolwide or districtwide remote learning days in the event of inclement weather, COVID-19 outbreaks or any event that would make in-school attendance unsafe. The district has a set number of instructional hours it must provide each year, dictated by the Colorado Department of Education. For the 2022-23 school year, districts across the state are required to provide students at least 1,080 hours of instruction. This leaves the district with roughly three days where it can be flexible on its instructional hours. The temporary remote learning option would allow the district or individual schools to stay on track in the event of a major closure like a multiday snow storm or a COVID-19 outbreak — which would keep students from having to go to school well into the summer to make up missed hours.

<https://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/local/2022/08/24/poudre-school-district-approves-flexible-remote-learning-days-for-snow-days-covid-19-closures/65418020007/>

Classroom vs. fortress: States push slew of new school safety measures. Superintendents, educators and parents are confronting a difficult and all-too-familiar challenge as classes resume: How to protect schools without turning buildings into de facto fortresses. Some districts are struggling to find the right balance amid changing political winds. Marc Zimmerman, co-principal investigator of the National Center for School Safety, said metal detectors, single points of entry and school officers should be combined with resources that properly flag students in crisis to help them before violent acts occur. The federal government’s latest emphasis on school climate and student mental health haven’t historically been part of the school safety response to tragic events. After nearly a quarter-century of American school shootings, that could change.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/27/schools-security-students-return-00053989>

It’s back to school in Ukraine — but far from normal. It was the first day of school in Ukraine on Thursday but children weren’t sharing memories of fun vacations with their families. Their stories were of surviving war. Six months of war damaged 2,400 schools across the country, including 269 that were completely destroyed. But 51% of schools in Ukraine, despite the risk, are reopening to in-person education, with an option to study online if the parents prefer. Schools in the Kyiv and Lviv regions were among those welcoming students back to classrooms, including more than 7,300 displaced students forced to flee their hometowns.

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-education-efe7f1cc5610f6605c5256c8c5323e47>

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The most important part of our schools has always been the teachers. This has always been a rewarding and challenging job. We should always support our teachers, but now more than ever we need to support and thank those teachers that have continued to do this necessary invaluable work.

Bob Norris

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Teachers deserve more credit than they get.



They wouldn’t need it if we paid them what they deserve.

Comments and sharing from the field

“Thanks so much for your continued efforts to support students and keep the community at large informed about such important issues. Your emails and site are truly impressive. I appreciate all that you are doing at UCLA and that you share the knowledge with us. Thanks for all the work and hosting the site!”

Request: Respond to lht@strategiesforyouth.org

We value the information you share on your listserv and thought you might be interested in our work at Strategies for Youth, too. We have launched our 3rd Annual YOUTH VOICES CONTEST on the topic of police in schools. We hope you will consider circulating it to people working with students.

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