

(1/10/24) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

### Featured

**>>Martin Luther King Day: An opportunity**

**>A High School Student asks Questions Related to Addressing Barriers to Learning at school**

**>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

### For discussion and interchange:

**>Martin Luther King Day: An opportunity**

As with every commemorative day, Martin Luther King Day (Monday, January 15, 2024) is a special opportunity to initiate projects, lessons, and discussions not only about the historical context, but also to facilitate social and emotional development (e.g., fostering understanding of and compassion for others).

### The Opportunity

From: **Classroom activities for Martin Luther King Day**

... As our country celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., his legacy and teachings remain particularly significant. Engaging in meaningful classroom activities can help today's students better understand our country's history and its direct links to the past.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Dr. King taught the importance of serving others. In his honor, many communities celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a day of service. Teachers can make Martin Luther King Jr. Day particularly meaningful for their classes by creating a service project. Students of all ages can develop their own service project for their school or community. If you need ideas or lesson plans, check out the **Corporation for National and Community Service**."

From: **Martin Luther King, Jr., National Day of Service**

... MLK Day is the only federal holiday designated as a National Day of Service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. During the last quarter-century, the MLK Day of Service has grown, and its impact increased as more Americans embraced the idea that citizenship involves taking an active role in improving communities. On Monday, Jan. 15, and the days surrounding, AmeriCorps invites you to: engage with your community and create constructive action; act on Dr. King's legacy of social justice and equity; and recommit by volunteering to serve others...."

For more, see **Service learning in Schools**.

**And please share what is happening in your locale – send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>A High School Student asks Questions Related to  
“Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide”**

I am currently enrolled in AP Research at my High School. I have based my research on challenges secondary schools face when preparing students for postsecondary education. I came across your research on [Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide](#).

I plan on utilizing your research in terms of approaches schools can take to re-engage disengaged students, establish a schoolwide student and learning supports component, frame interventions for school and community collaboration, create readiness, commitment, and engagement as well as problems of change implementation and scale-up.

I have several questions:

**Question 1. In the book, you say: *The first step in moving forward is to escape old ideas.* In your opinion, what are the old ideas that are holding schools back from fulfilling their missions to provide equity of opportunity? Would you assert that the damage of old ideas’ implementation can be corrected for by implementing new strategies, or has there been permanent damage respective to the achievement gap?**

**Our response:** Our work stresses that school improvement needs to be *transformative*. The culture of schools tends to change slowly, but we think that many factors are coming together that will produce transformative changes in the next 5-10 years. Here are some changes we suggest are necessary to reduce the opportunity and achievement gaps.

Excerpted from: [The Challenge of Addressing Equity of Opportunity for All Students](#)

“...If schools are to play a potent role in enhancing equity of opportunity, they must transform the ways in which they address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. For this to happen, school improvement policy must be expanded.

Current policy is based on a two component model that emphasizes (1) instruction and (2) management/governance. A third primary component is essential to the equity agenda. The focus of this third component is on unifying and developing a comprehensive set of interventions to support students and their families....”

From: [Enhancing Equity of Opportunity by Improving Access to Higher Education](#)

“... it is essential to improve policies and actions that address inequities in accessing and staying in post-secondary education.

Our Center stresses that:

- At all levels of schooling, greater attention must be devoted to preparing students for higher education and providing immediate supports for those who are not doing well.
- Recruitment for higher education must begin early, with potent outreach to and academic, financial, personal, and social supports for underrepresented groups of students.
- Transition programs should include careful monitoring of students so that additional supports are provided quickly for those who are not doing well.
- Ongoing monitoring is necessary to enhance retention rates.
- Family and peer support should be mobilized when problems arise.

As always, the reality of individual differences means that programs must be personalized as much as feasible. At the same time, our Center stresses that focusing student/learning supports primarily on individual students usually does not address the needs of the many and results in a set of fragmented and costly interventions. Ultimately, intervention programs must be unified and developed into a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports...”

Excerpted from: *Interventions to Support Readiness, Recruitment, Access, Transition, and Retention for Postsecondary Education Success*

“...In revisiting policy using the lenses of equity of opportunity and social justice, our analysis suggests the need for policy that can guide development of a much more comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of interventions. That system should begin preK and continue in a fully interconnected way through postsecondary graduation. The focus is on enhancing equity of opportunity by addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

Developing such a comprehensive preK-16 system requires developing a unified component for enabling success at school by

- reframing current student support programs and services, and integrating, at every stage, the best broad-band, but limited scope direct strategies
- redeploying available resources and aligning them horizontally and vertically
- revamping school-community infrastructures to weave resources together to enhance and evolve the system
- supporting the necessary systemic changes in ways called for by comprehensive innovation, scale-up, and sustainability...”

**Question 2. In the book you say: *Children of poverty and new immigrants often have developed a range of other cultural, subcultural, and language abilities that many schools are unprepared to accommodate, never mind capitalize upon. How do you suggest schools should capitalize upon students’ diverse backgrounds, life experiences and perspectives?***

**Our response:** A diverse society needs and benefits from well-integrated schools. And the diversity includes race, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, immigrant status, language background, and differences in motivation and development. Those concerned with promoting diversity in schools stress that integration efforts could be improved by renewing court oversight and enforcement as well as implementing new policies at federal and state levels. At the same time, there are ongoing calls for enhancing the diversity of teacher and administrative staffing at schools, as well as the diversity represented in the curriculum. The problem remains that integrating schools is profoundly political, and the politics continues to overwhelm efforts to address diversity in ways that benefit students and society.

See:

- >*Racial diversity in schools: Some of the benefits*
- >*Children and poverty*
- >*Cultural concerns in addressing barriers to learning*
- >*Diversity in schools: Facilitating positive interactions*

**Question 3. How could schools best accommodate and address environmental factors specifically (academic and emotional implications of life situations outside of school)?**

**Our response:** Schools have an important role to play in dealing with multiple, interrelated concerns, such as poverty, child development, violence, crime, safety, housing, employment, and more. However, dealing with all this requires multiple and interrelated solutions. Just adding a few additional services and programs to schools is not a solution. Indeed, what is generally advocated is just a recipe for perpetuating the current marginalized and fragmented set of efforts that have been demonstrated to have only a limited impact. Interrelated solutions require wide based collaboration. In particular, schools, homes, and communities need to work together strategically in pursuing shared goals related to the general well-being of the young and society.

See:

- >*About Addressing Poverty: What’s a School’s Role?*
- >*Barriers, Buffers, & Youth Development*

**Question 4. How can schools not just address factors that hinder student learning and success, but promote protective factors, and could this be accomplished within the classroom?**

**Our response:** There is growing realization that schools need to embed a focus on fostering resilience into efforts to facilitate social and emotional development and to begin this at the onset of schooling. Learning to cope effectively with challenges and being able to recover from adversity are as important as learning arithmetic. Failure to cope effectively contributes to a variety of mental health concerns and overwhelms the ability of efforts to support students (and staff).

At the same time, research clearly indicates that external factors (related to neighborhood, family, school, and/or peers) are primary challenges causing most learning, behavior, and emotional problems manifested at school. Schools must proactively improve how they address such challenges. With protective buffers in mind, a first step in focusing on resilience is to improve the way the school (a) promotes well-being and prevents problems, (b) responds as soon as problems arise, and (c) plays an appropriate role related to addressing severe and chronic problems. Over the long-run, the need is to transform student and learning supports by developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of interventions that address barriers to learning and teaching, enhance protective buffers, and promote social and emotional development. By doing so, schools can not only foster student and staff resilience, they can also reduce the number of students in need of special assistance.

See:

>[\*About Resilience and Schools\*](#)

>[\*Protective Factors \(Resiliency\)\*](#)

**Question 5. In the book you suggest “Clarify student perceptions of the problem.” Who should take the first step, schools, parents, or students? Should factors be addressed on a case by case basis, and if so, how would this come into effect and remain feasible with schools’ limited resources? Would addressing factors provide a guarantee that students will re-engage with learning,?**

**Our response:** This fits into the broader view that youth voice in all that affects them is essential to good practice and outcomes that are good for them. Teachers and other school staff can reach out to elicit a student’s thoughts and feelings about school, home life, and life in general. Teachers can expand ways that they promote student self-expression through each day’s regular lessons. The following activities can help.

*Self-expression activities.* Providing time, guidance, and support so that students can express their thoughts and opinions (e.g., journal entries, blogs, group discussion, short videos, drawings).

*One-on-one time with teachers.* Teachers can arrange individual formal and informal dialogues with a student (e.g., a personal conference, a random chat). These provide opportunities for authentic and caring interchanges and empathic listening.

*Interviews and surveys.* Another formal approach is through interviews, surveys, focus groups, shadowing, or taped dialogues. These are common mechanisms used by those mainly seeking input related to school improvement.

*Special collaborative roles for students.* Some of the literature focuses on choosing students to participate in special collaborative roles...”

See:

>[\*Youth participation: Making it real\*](#)

>[\*About student voice and participation\*](#)

>[\*\*Links to a few other relevant shared resources\*\*](#)

**Social Media and Adolescent Health**

**Family Functioning and Social Media Use in Early Adolescence**

**Which social media platforms matter and for whom? Examining moderators of links between adolescents’ social media use and depressive symptoms**

## Fostering Youth-Enabling Environments

Classroom Management Styles and Disparities Related to Disciplinary Practices

Beyond Life Satisfaction: Wellbeing Correlates of Adolescents' Academic Attainment

Biases Contributing to ADHD Overdiagnosis

A critical evaluation of adolescent resilience self-report scales

SROs share how schools can minimize disruptions caused by swatting hoaxes

How Does Anxiety Affect Kids in School?

A Qualitative Exploration of Everyday Resilience in Kindergarten Children

College Mentors for High School Students

A Better 2024-25 FAFSA Form

4 key school staffing solution themes that emerged in 2023

### A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

1/10 Bullying prevention

1/11 Understanding Doubled up

1/17 Staff recruitment and retainment

1/17 Promoting positive mental health in schools

1/17 Mediating Conflicts

1/18 Strengthening your workforce

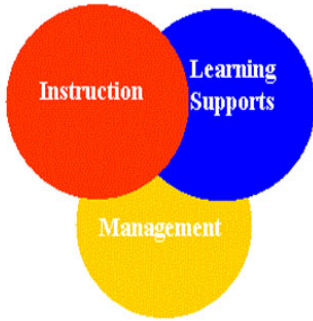
1/18 Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education

1/18 Building Your Program: Empowering Grassroots Mentoring

1/23 Trauma recovery

1/30 Anxiety and stress





For information about the

***National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports***

go to <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights, transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

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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 your views about the topics shared and about 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)

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**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

For new sign-ups – Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

We post a broad range of issues and responses to on our website and on Facebook.

**Access on the Center's home page** – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>