Featured

(1) What's been learned from efforts to address learning loss?

(2) Prevention yields threat reduction

(3) About School Climate

And, as always, you will find

(4) Links to more resources

**This community of practice *Practitioner* is designed
for a screen bigger than an Iphone.**

For discussion and interchange:
> *What's been learned from efforts to address learning loss?*

Concerns about "learning loss" continue. The broader concern, however, is the increasing number of students who are not doing well at school. And, of course, all this raises the question of how schools need to change.

As the excerpted article below stresses, one focus is on shifting away from a student-deficit perspective.

From: ***Beyond the "Learning Loss" Narrative: Toward a More Holistic Story***

"In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the term "learning loss" has dominated conversations across public, academic, and policy arenas globally. In this context, learning loss refers to the setbacks students experienced in key academic skills, particularly reading and math, due to regular schooling disruptions during the pandemic. However, these setbacks are typically measured by standardized tests that compare students' performance during or shortly after the pandemic with what would have been expected during a typical school year. But is this the whole story?...

Focusing solely on learning loss measured by test scores can overlook the many other ways young children learn and grow.... By considering not only what learning may have been lost and needs to be recovered, but also what new skills emerged through innovative, nontraditional means, we aim to shift the conversation from a focus on recovery to one of capacity, recognizing what is present rather than what is perceived or measured as lost. In doing so, we hope to move beyond the narrative of learning loss and present a more holistic story of how children adapt, grow, and even thrive in unexpected ways....

**Expanding the Conversation Beyond the Learning Loss Narrative:
Recommendations for Shifting Perspectives**

To truly appreciate and support the full range of children's growth and capacities, we recommend moving beyond the narrow focus on learning loss to embrace a richer, more nuanced understanding of learning—one that adopts a strengths-based perspective highlighting learning gains. As such, we reiterate three key shifts in perspective and action for education policymakers, school leaders, and educators:.

(1) Shifting From a Deficit to a Strengths-Based Approach

Although the "learning loss" narrative raises valid concerns, we should move forward with a

lens of equity and innovation to expand our understanding of learning. Furthermore, we should recognize that learning loss is just one part of a much larger picture—one that includes not only what children may have missed but also the strengths and new skills they gained along the way. By recognizing the strengths and capacities children bring to the classroom, schools can create a stronger support system that leverages their lived experiences and addresses real gaps in opportunity and equity, especially for children from racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds. With thoughtful and intentional effort, a strengths-based approach can create opportunities for all young children to thrive in their development and learning.

(2) Embracing a "Whole Child" Approach Beyond Academics
 When focusing too narrowly on academic benchmarks, particularly those tied to standardized tests, we risk limiting how we understand children's potential. This limited view can also lead us to miss how children build other important life skills, such as social-emotional competencies, adaptability, executive functioning, and digital skills, as they navigate challenging circumstances .... This knowledge can, in turn, empower teachers to create more responsive and meaningful instruction that supports the whole child.

(3) *Reconsidering Educational Investments in the "Right" Places*
When learning is viewed primarily through the lens of loss, education leaders risk falling into ... a "trap" — one that can have costly consequences. This perspective may lead to misplaced priorities, where resources are directed toward remediation efforts that focus primarily on what's perceived or measured to have been lost, rather than what students are actually gaining. While standardized test results can provide useful insights, relying on them too heavily or using them inappropriately can present a fragmented and sometimes misleading view of what children have learned and can do. To support all learners, we advocate moving beyond the learning loss narrative and contributing to a more meaningful, holistic story by investing resources wisely in the development of the whole child...."

****

The above article highlights a shift in perspective for some schools. However, achieving lasting breakthroughs in addressing students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems requires more than a change in mindset. It also requires school improvement policies, planning, implementation, and accountability systems that address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. A key facet of this work is redesigning and transforming classroom strategies to better support learning. At the same time, efforts to promote equity of opportunity must be embedded within a unified, comprehensive, and equitable schoolwide system of student and learning supports. This requires transforming student/learning supports.

Our analyses indicate that current approaches to providing student/learning supports are too narrowly focused. They reflect and perpetuate the prevailing marginalized and fragmented approach schools use to address the wide range of educational, psychosocial, and health concerns encountered daily.

These matters may seem less pressing for schools where most students' needs are met effectively. But for the many schools with significant numbers of students who are struggling, this is a critical concern. Such schools must move forward by rethinking and rebuilding a sustainable system of student/learning supports that is unified, comprehensive, and equitable. This system transformation can begin by redeploying existing school resources and establishing formal connections with a broad array of community resources.

For more on this, see:

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

Also available for free access are:
>*Improving School Improvement*
>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*
>*Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

From: *Aligning Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management with A Multi-tiered System of Support: Building a Continuum of Prevention and Intervention*

"...In an attempt to follow prescribed models and/or state mandates, schools and districts occasionally establish school safety and other prevention efforts separate from broader prevention systems, other existing student support programs, and, in some communities, separate from the district itself. Siloed implementation like this can strain limited resources and may result in less effective and less efficient supports for students. Common barriers to integration include lack of cross-team coordination, limited professional development, and challenges in aligning different data systems and intervention approaches....

   Positive school climates built on a culture of safety, respect, trust, and social-emotional support enhance targeted violence prevention. Safe school environments are characterized by adults who prioritize student support, encourage communication between faculty and students, actively intervene in conflicts, and work to prevent harassment and bullying. In schools where teachers and staff are encouraged to build positive, trusting relationships with students, students feel connected, cared for, and empowered to share concerns without fear of discipline or shame....

   Schools should actively maintain positive school climates featuring safe, respectful, and trusting cultures that support students' social and emotional well-being, while clearly specifying expected school behaviors needed to maintain an effective learning environment.
   • All school staff should encourage communication between adults and students, intervene in social conflicts, and actively confront bullying behavior.
   • Schools should encourage and support teachers in building positive, trusting relationships with students and work to create an environment where students feel seen, heard, connected, and cared for. This will empower students to share concerning behavior when they observe it....

Supporting students with disabilities begins by establishing a strong multi-tiered system of support that promotes a culture of connectedness and belonging for all students. This culture provides the foundation for the early identification of needs and timely and effective interventions for students regardless of IDEA or 504 status. Early identification and intervention can prevent or reduce the need for more intensive support later...."

The above excerpts are a good start for discussion about what contributes to threat reduction. We would add that, while everyone seems to agree that schools should ensure a positive school climate, less agreement exists about what this means and how to accomplish it. This is especially so when the call is for developing a safe and supportive environment that also is nurturing and caring and that provides all students with an equal opportunity to succeed.

Equity concerns are heightened when efforts to enhance school climate are viewed using the lens of how schools interface with students who are struggling academically, acting out, and experiencing conflictual relationships with school staff and peers. From such a perspective, it's clear that an enhanced school climate only emerges when the focus is on whole school improvements. That is, improvements that include, as a primary focus, transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See

>*Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide*

>*Improving School Improvement*

Ans see our Center Quick Find for more on *Threat Assessment: Resources and Cautions*,

About School Climate

The concept of school climate currently is playing a major role in discussions about the quality of school life, teaching, learning, and support. School and classroom climates range from hostile/toxic to welcoming and supportive and can fluctuate daily and over the school year.

A variety of studies indicate that a positive climate can have a beneficial impact on students and staff; a negative climate can be another barrier to learning and teaching. Analyses of research suggest significant relationships between classroom climate and matters such as student engagement, behavior, self-efficacy, achievement, and social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher burnout, and overall quality of school life. Studies report strong associations between achievement levels and classroom goal-direction, cohesiveness, and organization. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low-income homes and on groups that often are discriminated against.

What the research doesn't articulate well is that school and classroom climate are *emerging* qualities. That is, climate is a temporal, fluid quality of the immediate setting, and it emerges from the complex transaction of many factors.

School and classroom climate reflect the influence of the underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions that constitute the school culture. And, of course, the climate and culture at a school also are shaped by surrounding political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighborhood, city, state, country).

A range of concepts have been put forth for understanding school and classroom climate. These include social system organization; social attitudes; staff and student morale; power, control, guidance, support, and evaluation structures; curricular and instructional practices; communicated expectations; efficacy; accountability demands; cohesion; competition; "fit" between learner and classroom; system maintenance, growth, and change; orderliness; and safety. Moos groups such concepts into three dimensions: (1) *relationship* (i.e., the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment; the extent to which people are involved in the environment and support and help each other); (2) *personal development* (i.e., basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur); and (3) *system maintenance and change* (i.e., the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change).

Given the correlational nature of school climate research, cause and effect interpretations remain speculative. The broader body of organizational research does indicate the profound role accountability pressures play in shaping organizational climate. For example, pressing demands for higher achievement test scores and control of student behavior often contribute to a classroom climate that is reactive, over-controlling, and over-reliant on external reinforcement to motivate positive functioning.

Given an understanding of what factors affect school and classroom climate, good schools, good teachers, and student support staff work diligently to create an atmosphere that encourages and supports whole child learning and wellness and prevents learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems.

A proactive approach to developing positive classroom climate requires enhancing the quality of life for students and staff not only in the classroom, but school-wide. Three major components of this are (1) a curriculum that promotes not only academic, but also social and emotional learning and fosters intrinsic motivation for learning and teaching, (2) a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports that addresses barriers to learning and teaching and re-engages disconnected students in classroom learning, and (3) a governance/management approach that is inclusive of key stakeholders.

How was school today?

Well, if it's true we learn from our mistakes,
I had a great day!

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

>>**Education in 2026: Where K–12 Schools Are Headed Next**

>>**Unlock a Lifelong Love of Learning by Nurturing Curiosity and Discovery**

>>**Understanding patterns of hope from informal mentoring**

>>**Supporting Teacher Resilience: Strategies for School Leaders**

>>**A Case for After-School Programs Engaging Emergent Bilinguals Through Play to Offer Equitable Opportunities for Growth**

>>**Practical Strategies for Building a Positive School Climate**

>>**Improving School Climate to Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Reduce Inequalities**

>>**The State of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management in K–12 Public Schools**

>>**How to Provide Quality Opportunities for Young People in the Summer Months**

A Few Upcoming Webinars

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

1/14 School avoidance and mental health
1/15/26 From AI Risk to AI Readiness
1/15/26 Systemic advocacy in schools and districts to support student well-being
1/15/26 Elevating school staff talent and recruiting
1/15/25 Support for students experiencing homelessness
1/19 Building children's self-esteem
1/20 Building belonging in our schools
1/20 Support your school communities through crises.
1/21/26 How schools are finding and keeping talent
1/22 Partner with families throughout the special education process.
1/28 Consent and confidentiality in adolescent care
2/10 Strengthening school community partnerships
2/10 Prevention core conpetencies
2/24 Whole school approach
3/3 Strong leaders make strong schools
3/24 Student voice and advocacy

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's series of videos explores guiding all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become engaged learners).
Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth (Webinar recording)

<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px;">

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

An Agenda for Improving Student/Learning Supports:
A Month-by-Month Guide for Systemic Change with Existing Resources

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

</div>

****

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 140,000 on our listserv.)

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to 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! Contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

****

<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;">

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER*

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

Send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing Ltaylor@ucla.edu

*Who Are We? 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.

</div>