(12/26/24) **This continuing education resource is from the national**
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

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Featured

(1) End of the year? ... No, not for the school year!
It's time to reflect on what's been happening and move forward
to enhance equity of opportunity over the remaining months

And, as always, you will find
(2) *Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education*

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

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For discussion and interchange:
>*End of the year? ... No, not for the school year!*
It's time to reflect on what's been happening and move forward
to enhance equity of opportunity over the remaining months

Reflecting on her work helping to enhance student/learning support systems, one of our team members (a former Superintendent consulting with school districts) reported the following:

>**Gainesville City Schools, Georgia** is an example of the power of sustaining the Learning Supports System over time to increase organizational effectiveness. Today, the system is used to identify and analyze barriers to learning and then organize, align, and integrate the work in three components: instruction, learning supports, and leadership management. They have eliminated redundant and/or ineffective practices.

• United Way of Hall County and Hall County Family Connections, GA joined the process of working in the system in to unify community initiatives for collective impact. Gainesville City Schools now hosts a community support center, "The Hub" at Gainesville High School. This center coalesces the learning supports efforts offers by aligning the programs and initiatives for prevention, intervention, and family supports. The district has a Learning Supports Coordinator, who works with each school's leadership team to ensure social workers, counselors, mental health clinicians, and community providers work collaboratively in 3 components to unify efforts for improvement.

• Hall County Schools, the neighbor district and partner with Gainesville City Schools, is an example of identifying and implementing a district and community wide strategy that impacts instruction, learning supports, and leadership. When Hall County Schools examined the root cause for their barriers to learning, they made the decision 2020 to develop and train all employees in Dialectical Skills Groups, making a significant impact in providing emotional regulation skills to both adolescents and adults. By integrating the teaching of skills from Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), they have seen improvement in both emotional regulation and relationships effectiveness. Pre-and post-test data reflect over a 40% gain in participants ability to recognize and utilize strategies. To date, over 250 individuals have bee trained to be DSG Facilitators.

>**Brewton City Schools, Alabama**, is an example of using the leadership of the Learning Supports System in a transition to new leadership challenges. The new district Special Education Director examined the existing programs, practices, and people to improve learning outcomes. She applied the Learning Supports System to lead the schools and district in analyzing the needs and barriers and strategically collaborating with all departments and schools, to align their work to optimize

learning. Their work has enabled them to pare down programs and offers a deeper look into their professional learning community. They have aligned their work and financial resources with Southwest Mental Health and employed a Transition specialist through a partnership with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services."

> ### From Our Center's Perspective
>
> We recognize the urgent necessity in 2025 to improve and strengthen student/learning supports so all students have equity of opportunity to succeed at school. In moving forward, we will accelerate our efforts to (1) continue providing resources to the field at large and (2) advance efforts to implement and sustain new directions for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, with a focus on replication to scale in school districts.

Others have been sharing what's been happening in their locales. Here, slightly edited, is a bit about what a regional student support staff member reported as an important success for students.

"... our superintendent promoted the Behavior Solutions model of MTSS. ... Every school attended training with the intention to build a strong Tier 1 over 3 years.

The year one School Focus has been 'Laying the Foundation for Teaching Behavior'. This year has been focused on developing the leadership needed for integrating behavior into academics. Each School Principal and teacher leader as well as their Vice Principals, were instructed in 4 critical areas of leadership for behavior.

>To build in leadership for behavior with their leadership team,
>To review Data both qualitatively and quantitative data (e.g. ask teachers what behaviors bothered them the most, ask counselors what incidents happen for students to end up in their offices, and vice principals what behaviors occur that result in students being in their offices. We also review discipline data and SEL data.
>Based on Data leadership team select an Essential Behavior Standard, 72% of CA schools, admin, counselors, School mental health, all selected the standard "Responsible Verbal and Physical Interactions between peers and adults
>School leadership selected professional development for their faculty that included Classroom Management Training, Behavior Basics, MTSS, Readiness for implementing and Coaching for success. The complex area used the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) from PBIS to establish a baseline and early second administration of the TFI indicates that most schools are well on their way to improvements.

... Leaders have clarity in what they do to roll out Tier One and improve implementation with more and more teachers taking on 'low burden, high impact' strategies that are can do ideas that promote 'responsible verbal and physical interactions between peers and adults'. The big focus is on what teachers can do to teach the behaviors students need to learn. All this helps in trauma focused practices, SEL, etc. without having to buy more and do more.

Our biggest challenge has been learning how to support schools and resistors. We are looking at beliefs and readiness factors so that we can meet teachers where they are at and help them with what they can do. ... and more often than not, our schools are welcoming the systems because they can last when people come and go. But we need leadership to make it happen at the school level and that has taken time."

Please share your district/school successes so far this year, as well as challenges encountered and what resources/information would help address these challenges.

Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

The Work Remains Challenging

>*Reflections as the calendar year comes to a close* (edited)

From a Resource Teacher

I want to say that I survived! I am a Specialized Academic Instructor, but it didn't feel that way. Didn't feel like I got to teach academics.

   I think my greatest success is that I have observable and measurable progress made with all of my students (minus 1). I have also learned how to track goals better. Another success was working with a grade level on an inclusive intervention where progress was made and successful for everyone. I do have some awesome kids to work with.

   At the same time, this is the 1st year in all my 29 years that I have had more than 1 Kindergarten student and now TK. I have 8 students at these grade levels. My para's also didn't feel competent in what our caseload required this year.

   Another challenge was having to service a 5th grader for 170 minutes daily when the rest of my caseload was TK-2 and hardly in classroom because of so much push in

   What would help address these challenges is
   >for students to have a mild/moderate classroom or another paraeducator or 2
   >a smaller caseload with these types of higher need students
   >better training on behavior goals and techniques for establishing an inclusive environment
   >more planning time and tools.

From a school nurse

So far this school year,
   >Completed the numerous reports for SST, 504, and IEPs.
   >Helped families in need with outside resources and solutions to their children's medication issues

What are the biggest challenges?
   >Time -- There is not enough time in the day to get everything done. I am constantly wanting to work from home. Having three schools (with almost 900 students and multiple general ed students with severe needs) I don't feel I can keep them all safe adequately. I can't possibly attend all the SSTs, 504s, and IEP meetings. We are adding more stipend positions such as two SST coordinators per site which is increasing the number of things needed from the nurse. We are getting younger students that require more time. We have so many medications at that the medication cart is full to the top. I was extremely anxious about not being able to get my notifications, care plans, and ER plans out in a timely manner to staff this year. Adding EXCEL, created more work for the nurses. I have had three schools in the past, and it had never felt like this year.
   >Workspace -- Not having a quiet place to work.

What would help address these challenges?
   >More nurses, and health techs with more hours
   >2 schools per nurse for elementary and middle school, and 1 nurse per high school
   >District wide health trainings yearly for admin, credentialed and certificated staff
   >EXCEL (afterschool program) health tech and nurse for the whole program
   >An office outside of the health office"

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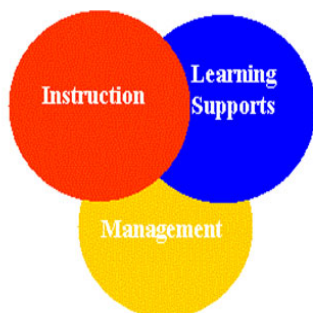
Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

>>**The Key Role of Schools in Youth Suicide Prevention**

>>**Review of Mental Health Promotion Interventions in Schools**

>>**Impact of a mental health curriculum on knowledge and stigma among high school students**

>>**A three-tiered model for addressing the mental health needs of immigrant-origin youth in Schools**

>>**Schools take proactive steps to protect immigrant students**

>>**Can theater help prevent violence in schools?**

>>**Taking Reform to Scale: Learning from California Education Partners' Collaborations**

>>**The Side Effects of Universal School-Based Mental Health Supports: An Integrative Review**

>>**'The kids everyone forgot': The faltering post-pandemic push to reengage teens and young adults not in school, college, or the workforce**

>>**National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments**

A Few Upcoming Webinars
For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to
Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts

1/8 Work stress and burnout
1/13 Wraparound fidelity
1/14 Use cultural humility to shape a prevention coalition
1/14 How to have a successful and equitable student program
1/15 Adapting evidence based programs
1/15 School avoidance
1/16 Blending and braiding funding streams
1/21 Creating a low stress environment
1/22 Creating a work-life balance
1/23 Conflict management
1/23 Leveraging evaluation for transformative growth
2/11 Prevention core competencies
2/12 Safe and inclusive schools
2/12 Students as equity leaders
2/19 Planning an IEP team meeting for your child with mental health challenges
4/22 Student led initiatives
5/8 Creating conditions for healthy disagreement /

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's updated series of videos explores how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners.

Webinar recording: *Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth*

I *heard you used AI in writing up your paper for class. How did that work out?*

The AI passed but I didn't.

Transforming Student/Learning Supports

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 have many resources to help in moving forward.

For example, see our recent guides that provide a roadmap for moving in new directions:

(1) *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

(2) *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process*

These provide prototypes for new directions and first steps for moving forward on a monthly, schedule. The first steps outlined involve

(a) mapping existing student support activities and operational infrastructure,
(b) analyzing what has been mapped,
(c) identifying priorities for and clarifying the benefits of system changes,
(d) developing recommendations for system changes,
(e) building a critical mass of support

Links to resources are provided to aid in carrying out each task.