

(2/11/26) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

Featured

(1) How much can a neighborhood impact educational outcomes?

(2) About referring students for emotional support

(3) Anticipating student protests with a view to their well-being

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:

>How much can a neighborhood impact educational outcomes?

Research (and general observations) consistently indicate that socioeconomic and social environments in which children develop can significantly shape educational outcomes. Geographic context – including segregation patterns, demographic concentrations, and resource disparities – also creates measurable differences in school performance and contributes to persistent educational inequality. For example, growing up in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty is linked to lower academic achievement, while exposure to affluent neighborhoods provides stronger, positive educational outcomes. Overall, while neighborhoods may not fully determine a youngster’s educational trajectory, available evidence indicates they exert substantial influence through socioeconomic conditions, peer environments, and access to opportunities.

Of course, neighborhood disadvantage affects students differently. This is where addressing barriers to learning becomes an essential topic. Youngsters who encounter barriers to learning that are effectively addressed are comparatively less affected than those who don’t. And schools with a community-focused agenda that establishes the school as “the heart” of the neighborhood are more likely to have developed a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of supports for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students and families. Such a system unifies piecemeal and ad hoc initiatives transforms how schools and communities weave resources together.

Here are excerpts from a 2025 article on:

>Neighborhood Factors and Their Impact on Educational Outcomes

“Schools serve as a point of intersection to explore, learn, and grow. Though often shaped by internal experiences, student academic and classroom outcomes continue to be influenced by external factors....

Hypothesizing that neighborhood adversities may heavily influence schooling success, we aim to understand how neighborhood adversities directly influence schooling success.... Neighborhood adversity variables included poverty, violent crime, unemployment rates, percentage of the population on Medicaid, percentage of the population in households with no computer or internet,..., percentage of the population age 25 or older with no high school diploma, percentage of individuals with no health insurance, and percentage of population ages five and older not

proficient in English.

Schooling success variables included student-peer relationships, academic performance, and engagement....

Research indicates that adverse neighborhood factors impact student outcomes in the classroom, which leads to four hypotheses: adverse neighborhood factors negatively affect (1) student academic outcomes, (2) student academic engagement, (3) student-peer relationships, and (4) neighborhood factors and observable student behaviors are related to academic performance.

Inequities in larger community settings, like neighborhoods, typically extend into smaller communities such as schools. These inequities influence students' success within the classroom....

>Student-Peer Relationships

Student interaction has been shown to have a direct effect on academic performance....

Students develop their social skills through interactions with their peers and teachers.

Several studies have shown a negative correlation between poverty and perceptions of school.... These associations between peers from similar backgrounds and cultures may also directly affect students' academic performance....

>Academic Performance and Engagement

Academic performance is the objective measure of student performance based on standardized test scores and teachers' grades. Academic engagement is the subjective measure of how a student performs based on the way they think, act, and participate in class. According to Fredricks et al. (2004), engagement consists of three categories: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional.

Behavioral engagement encompasses participation in academic or extracurricular activities,

Cognitive engagement refers to the willingness to learn

Emotional engagement includes both positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school.....

Neighborhood violence and poverty have many different impacts on student outcomes and performance.... Unemployment is a factor that drives frequent transitions, and this should be taken into consideration when researching external neighborhood factors and their impact on students....

Further research must be based on analyzing additional factors and behavioral data in and outside of school... This will offer valuable insights into the intricate relationships between neighborhood characteristics, school environments, and student success, ultimately informing more effective interventions and policies to support student development."

Here are two other recent articles on the topic

>[*Neighbourhood effects on educational attainment. What matters more: Exposure to poverty or exposure to affluence?*](#)

>[*How neighbourhood effects vary by achievement level*](#)

And the following brief documents from our center provide links to resources on

>[*Addressing Neighborhood Problems that Affect the School*](#)

>[*About Addressing Poverty: What's a School's Role?*](#)

For more on this, see our Center Quick Finds on:

>[*Children and Poverty*](#)

>[*Barriers to Learning*](#)

>[*Collaboration - School, Community, Interagency; community schools*](#)

For discussion and interchange:

>About referring students for emotional support

Growing attention to student mental health – along with rising referrals to both in person and online therapy – highlights the need to help referrers, parents, and students understand what makes a a good therapeutic “fit.” To support this effort, the following guidelines, excerpted from an article in the newsletter *Psyche*, outline key considerations that should be shared with those involved in making or receiving referrals.

“...therapy should feel safe, supportive and genuinely helpful. If it doesn’t, it’s important to notice and honor your doubts. Sometimes talking about them with your therapist leads to greater clarity and connection; other times, your doubts help you recognize that a different therapist or approach might be a better fit. Either way, listening to these signals can guide you toward the kind of support you need to thrive....”

Fit is paramount. ‘Fit’ refers to how well a therapist and client match in ways that foster trust, progress and wellbeing. It’s not about whether your therapist is perfect (no one is), but whether you feel seen, heard and supported in the ways that matter to you.

The strength of the therapeutic alliance – your working relationship with your therapist – is one of the most consistent predictors of positive therapy outcomes. Ensuring that your therapist is a good fit for you will greatly contribute to your alliance throughout treatment....

While every situation is different, here are a few common sources of doubt that you might recognize as you reflect:

>You might wonder whether your therapist has the right background or training to help with your specific concerns. If so, it’s reasonable to ask them to tell you more about their experience and approach, and to see if what they share alleviates your doubt.

>You might question whether you’re in the right kind of therapy – for instance, whether you need something that is more supportive, trauma-focused, or based on learning new skills. This, too, is something you could bring up with your therapist, who might be able to adapt their approach to your needs or recommend someone who uses a different approach.

>Something the therapist said or did: maybe a comment felt dismissive, or they seemed distracted during your session. These moments can be unsettling, but they’re often worth discussing directly with the therapist.

>If your therapist ever acts disrespectfully, makes you feel unsafe or crosses professional lines, that’s a red flag. In those cases, protecting your wellbeing comes first....

Having a disappointing experience with a therapist does not mean that therapy isn’t for you. Many people see more than one therapist before finding someone who feels like the right fit. And, when they do, it can make all the difference.

Remember, no two therapists are alike. In addition to a therapist’s personal style, experience and background...

If individual therapy hasn’t felt like the right approach for you, you can also explore group therapy or support groups. Some of these are more skills-based, and others focus on education, relationships or specific struggles. Many people find it comforting to hear from others who’ve had experiences similar to theirs. Group settings can expose you to different perspectives and normalize what you’re going through so that you feel less alone, less ‘weird’ and more supported....”

For more on helping students find the right supports, visit

>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

See chapters on:

>>Chapter 3. *Promoting Mental Health*

>>Chapter 4. *Mental Health Assistance for Students at School*

>>Chapter 5. *Connecting a Student with the Right Mental Health Assistance*

Among other matters, these chapters cover topics such as

- Developing Systems at a School for Problem Identification, Triage, Referral, and Management of Care
- School-Based Client Consultation, Referral, and Management of Care

Anticipating Student Protests with a View to Their Well-being

Increasingly young students are observing protests and many are engaging in protests in their neighborhood and/or on their campuses. Everyone needs to consider the impact all this may be having on their students.

With respect to addressing the impact on students, we stress that the key is to anticipate and plan to maximize proactive actions and ways to help those students and staff affected.

In general, it is essential to prioritize safety, open communication between student organizers and local authorities, and to treat the events as teachable moments for civic engagement. Schools often opt to designate safe, on-campus areas for protest rather than punishing peaceful, brief demonstrations.

Key approaches previously used across the country include:

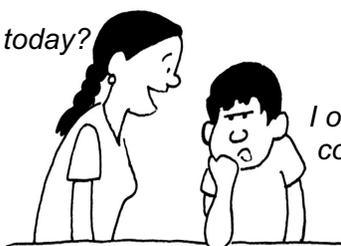
- >*Safety and Communication*: Administrators were advised to meet with student leaders to discuss plans, ensuring a peaceful assembly. Organizers were advised to use social media for coordination and to focus on clear, peaceful objectives.
- >*Legal Rights and Discipline*: Inform parents and students ahead of time about the school's attendance policies and the consequences of leaving class without permission. While the Supreme Court's *Tinker v. Des Moines* ruling protects student speech, schools can discipline students for unexcused absences or substantial disruptions to learning. The ACLU states that, while schools can discipline students for cutting class (unexcused absences), they cannot punish protestors more harshly than students who miss school for other reasons. Suspensions were considered inappropriate for peaceful, brief protests.
- >*Role of School Personnel*: Schools were encouraged to remain neutral, neither strictly forbidding nor overtly promoting protests, but ensuring all student voices were respected.
- >*Providing Alternatives and Additional Means for Action*: For example, encouraging letter-writing campaigns to legislators.

If you have already done work related to these matters, please share it with us so we can share with others. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For students who are emotionally upset, a useful resource to draw on is the
>*Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) Field Operations Guide*

Other resources can be found on our Center website – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>
For easy links to resources, see our online clearinghouse Quick Finds –
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

What got you in trouble at school today?



I organized a protest against compulsory education!

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >Teen "Grind" Culture and Mental Health
- >Building Student Resilience
- >Connections between housing and education: A case study with implications for homelessness prevention school-housing partnership
- >Embracing Student Voices in the Well-Being Debate
- >Exploring Extracurricular Activity Participation, School Engagement, and Social Competence for Students With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders
- >What Education Leaders Can Learn from the AI Gold Rush
- >Digital Ecosystems, Children, and Adolescents: Policy Statement
- >As number of West Virginia special education students increases, some school districts are going into debt
- >De-implementation: Clearing the Path for What Truly Works
- >Teacher Perceptions of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- >School and parent perspectives on symptomatology in pediatric obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- >Powerful Partners: Centering Student Voice in Implementation

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>

- 2/11 Building Resilient Teams, Coalitions and Communities
- 2/16 ADHD in Youth: Practical Strengths-Based Supports
- 2/17 Teaching students life skills
- 2/19 Support Student Well-Being Through Focused Learning and Meaningful Human
- 2/23 Understanding substance use and misuse
- 2/24 Whole school approach
- 2/25 Risk and protective factors framework
- 2/25 Family therapy in foster care
- 2/25 IEP meetings for your child with mental health needs
- 2/26 Teaching children to care
- 2/26 Transitioning to a new school on an IEP
- 2/26 Engaging youth in prevention
- 3/3 Strong leaders make strong schools
- 3/5 Building belonging in school
- 3/9 Understanding childhood grief and loss
- 3/18 Strengths based resilience
- 3/24 Student voice and advocacy
- 3/31 Improving relationships with staff and students
- 4/15 Supporting Grief-Sensitive Classrooms

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)

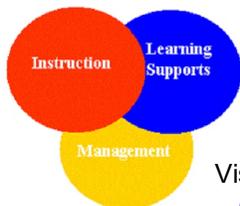
A Few Podcasts

Starting next week, we will be including a sample of relevant podcasts in this weekly resource. They will come from listings on the following sites.

- American Association of School Administrators
- ASCD
- EdSource
- EdSurge
- Effective School Solutions
- How's School?
- Institute for Educational Innovation s
- Learning Policy Institute
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Center for Safe and Supportive Schools
- National Education Association
- National Education Policy Center
- Public Broadcasting System podcasts for teens
- Responsive Learning
- Schoolhouse Connections (videos)

As with the webinars, the sample will draw from those that we reference on our website.

If you have any podcasts or sites that list podcasts that you want to share, send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu



Visit:

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

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.

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

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.