

(2/12/25) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

### Featured

**(1) Including Youth in Deciding on How to Improve Schools**

**(2) Youth need to feel useful**

And, as always, you will find

**(3) Links to a few other resources relevant to continuing education**

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

### For discussion and interchange:

**>Including Youth in Deciding on How to Improve Schools**

Potential benefits accruing from including students in planning and implementing school improvements include enhanced student engagement and learning and a more positive school climate. Student voice and participation are particularly important in understanding how to address barriers to learning and teaching.

When asked about what's negatively affecting their learning and behavior and what needs to happen to make things better, students' perspectives can be garnered from even reluctant students by empathically asking and hearing what they have to say. Doing so not only provides essential data, the process can help enhance a sense of trust and personal involvement in schooling.

From: *Youth recommendations for educators who administer school climate surveys*

"... positive youth development, youth voice, and youth participatory approaches emphasize the need to illuminate insights and perspectives from those at the center of the schooling experience—students. ...

Bringing youth voice to the center requires changing norms, values, and practices within educational settings, and in youth-adult partnerships, by building reciprocal relationships, working collaboratively with youth, and positioning youth as experts and essential participants in the decision making process. When schools listen to youth, educators can gain a unique perspective and can see youth as important stakeholders to advocate for themselves and their peers ...

After a school climate survey, students want adults to

- (1) "Recognize our voices"—to understand trends and current challenges students may be facing;
- (2) "Take action on our responses"—to follow up directly after surveys and communicate what the data showed, and what realistic changes can be made as a result;
- (3) cultivate opportunities for connection with school staff; and
- (4) increase mental health supports....

Students felt that following school climate survey administration, centering their experiences and uplifting their voices when implementing school improvements would result in better learning environments, relationships, practices and policies, and importantly, improved academic outcomes and student well-being."

For more on this matter, see our Center resources:

- >*About Student Voice and Participation*
- >*Youth Participation: Making It Real*
- >*Enhancing Classroom Climate for All Students*

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**Is this topic being discussed in your locale?**

Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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**For discussion and interchange:**

**>Youth need to feel useful**

From: *The significance of feeling needed and useful to family and friends for psychological well-being during adolescence*

“As they progress through adolescence, youth increasingly seek ways to have an impact upon their families, friends, and communities. This motivation manifests itself in multiple ways, including adolescents' desire to have more input in decision-making within their families and schools, the frequency with which they provide support to close others, and their efforts to improve their communities. Having opportunities to offer ideas, resources, and support consistently predicts better psychological well-being and physical health. As such, some observers have argued that adolescents have a fundamental need to contribute and make a difference in their social worlds....

Feeling more needed and useful predicted multiple aspects of psychological well-being during adolescence, consistent with previous research at other stages of the lifespan. The breadth of the associations—self-esteem, meaning presence, positivity, loneliness, and generativity—suggests feeling needed and useful is relevant for core aspects of psychological and social functioning during adolescence. Associations with well-being remained even after controlling for the support received from family and friends. Follow-up analyzes indicated that feeling needed and useful significantly mediated the associations of helping others and received support with psychological well-being....”

For more on this, see our Center resources

- >*About Promoting Youth Development in Schools*
- >*Service Learning in Schools*

The agenda for promoting youth development may be embedded in a special curriculum (e.g., social skills training, character education, assets development), incorporated into the regular curricula, or pursued in community service, after school programs, and mentoring efforts. However, some of the best opportunities in classrooms and schoolwide (a) capitalize on natural opportunities to promote development and (b) minimize transactions that interfere with positive growth. Natural opportunities are one of the most authentic examples of “teachable moments.”

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf>

## >Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>Project-based learning for all? An examination of the approach for students with disabilities
- >>Adaptability and buoyancy: investigating their unique associations with students' wellbeing and academic achievement
- >>A systematic review of intervention programs for school attendance problems
- >>Strengths-Based Screeners for K–8 Students
- >>Mental Health and Student Support Service Providers in the Schools
- >>Adolescent suicide risk factors and the integration of social-emotional skills in school-based prevention programs
- >>Global public concern of childhood and adolescence suicide: a new perspective and new strategies for suicide prevention in the post-pandemic era
- >>Report: Kids Check Out of School as They Get Older, and Parents Are in the Dark

### A Few Upcoming Webinars

*For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's [Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts](#)*

- 2/12 Safe and inclusive schools
- 2/12 Students as equity leaders
- 2/12 Understanding depression
- 2/19 Planning an IEP team meeting for your child with mental health challenges
- 2/25 Empowered Families: Tools and Resources to Support Youth Mental Health at Home
- 2/26 Thriving Youth: Messaging Strategies to Encourage a Brighter Future for Young People
- 3/6 Ensure we do no harm
- 3/5 Understanding social anxiety
- 3/10 Language to Build Children's Self-Esteem
- 3/11 Guide to a happier life
- 3/12 Relations, family, and mental health
- 3/12 Planning for special education over the summer
- 3/18 Understanding stress responses
- 3/19 Promoting Young Children's Achievement
- 4/22 Student led initiatives
- 5/7 Racial Justice in Discipline
- 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.

*[Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth](#)* (Webinar recording)

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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 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!* Contact: [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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### Transforming Student/Learning Supports

Everyone we hear from indicates that schools generally are not doing well in addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems. At the same time, the solutions being suggested don't come close to meeting the needs of too many schools.

Clearly, budget concerns are a factor. But so is the lack of transformative efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching at schools.

In this respect, all stakeholders (e.g., school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, student/learning support staff, parents, students, community leaders, etc.) must face up to the reality that school improvement requires expanding current policy and practice from a two-to a three-component approach.

In particular, what this means is ensuring efforts to address student and school problems that interfere with teachers being successful are approached with more than instructional solutions (which, while usually helpful, are insufficient in meeting the nature and scope of need).

To make this a high priority at all school planning and decision making tables, the focus on improving student/learning supports needs to be understood as being as primary and essential as the focus on improving instruction and management/governance concerns. For clarity on this matter, see Chapter 1 in [Improving School Improvement](#).

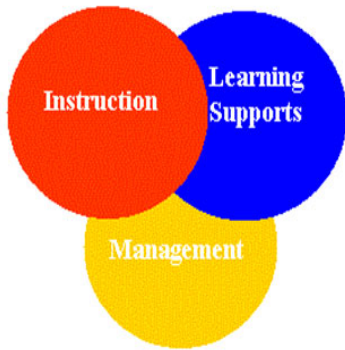
The far reaching implications of expanding to a three component approach to school improvement are highlighted in our recent guides that offer a roadmap for moving in new directions:

- (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.**



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*

What did you learn at school today?



I learned I don't like school.

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

For new sign-ups – email [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 the Net Exchange on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> )