**Featured**

*(1) Supporting Social and Emotional Development in 2025*

*(2) Advocating for Change in Providing Student/Learning Supports*

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:**
>*Supporting social and emotional development in 2025*

From: *Social-Emotional Learning 2025: New Priorities Emerge*

Social-emotional learning programs have now been in schools for several years, and in many cases, even longer. They aim to teach kids how to regulate their emotions, empathize with peers, make responsible decisions, and build other life skills. A little more than half of the states have adopted standards for the use of SEL in K-12. But in many places, parents and community members have pushed back against the integration of SEL into district curricula, claiming the programs de-emphasize academics. Even so, growing concerns that kids are struggling to manage their emotions and become independent thinkers and decision-makers are putting SEL strategies front and center in efforts to address those problems.

As the following request to our Center suggests, the best way for schools to proceed in 2025 remains uncertain at many schools.

**Request from a colleague:**

"Do you have any suggestions on where to start in looking for some kind of social emotional learning environment for a primary building? I am a school counselor for a small district, our class size is around 130 students at each grade level. We have been using Positive Action SEL curriculum as a resource for the past 5 years and are considering options. I am familiar with the curriculum Stop and Think and have referenced the primary books on a number of occasions. As a district we do not maintain fidelity and don't anticipate that changing, however I am looking for suggestions on a curriculum that may be useful to a smaller district that can be utilized as efficient and effective for teachers yet substantial and applicable for kindergarten, first grade and second grade students. I welcome your thoughts and value your suggestions."

**Center Comments:** Here are some matters to think about as schools wrestle with the challenges of pursuing an agenda related to Social Emotional Learning.

(1) Keep the big picture in mind: The aim is to continuously promote positive social emotional development - not just teach a limited set of social skills.
(2) Identify places in existing curricula for embedding social emotional learning.
(3) Map natural opportunities for promoting and supporting social emotional development at school.
(4) Stress ways to improve how the school staff models social and emotional functioning every day.

(5) Ensure that students have many opportunities and support to connect and build strong relationships with positive peers and adults at school.

(6) Also transform how the school staff responds to students' learning, behavior, and emotional problems to ensure that the responses enhance positive social and emotional development and school climate.

Addressing these matters goes beyond just thinking about SEL. The need is to embed the growing emphasis on SEL into the school's focus on both promoting positive development and addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

And, remember that purchasing and implementing expensive SEL curricula, especially for lower-income schools, is not the only approach. Those concerned with promoting social-emotional learning need to place greater emphasis on strategies that can capitalize on natural opportunities at schools, and interventions that can minimize transactions that interfere with positive growth. In keeping with these concerns, we stress

>outlining a range of natural opportunities,
>highlighting key principles underlying efforts to use such opportunities,
>suggesting who might take the lead in developing strategies for capitalizing on them.

---

**What are Natural Opportunities?**

Natural opportunities at schools for promoting personal and social growth. They are grouped into four categories:

- daily opportunities
- yearly patterns
- transitions
- early after the onset of student problems.

In effect, natural opportunities are one of the most authentic examples of "teachable moments.

---

From: ***Can Bite-Sized Lessons Make Social-Emotional Learning Easier to Teach?***

The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory at Harvard University emphasizes using flexible, bite-sized lessons ("kernels") "designed to be adaptable to students' interests and needs to teach social and emotional learning."

One example offered in this article is how they deal with the problem of the transition from recess back to classroom learning. As described: "teachers began using exercises after recess that included structured discussions about what took place during recess, and if there had been a problem, how students could solve it and move on. The goal is to help them leave behind the drama of the playground and refocus on their academics."

Such a transition concern is a good example of a natural opportunity (e.g., addressing daily transitions) for promoting social emotional development.

For more resources on all this from us and from others, see our Center Quick Finds on:

>***Classroom/school climate***
>***Social and emotional development***

---

***How is this topic being discussed in your locale?***
Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to ltaylor@ucla.edu

**For discussion and interchange:**

<span style="color:red">***>Advocating for change in providing student/learning supports***</span>

A colleague shared the following letter she sent to her district superintendent:

"I have followed your work since you became Superintendent and am pleased to see so many progressive data-based decisions made to improve the district and support all students. Because of the improvements made under your leadership, I was prompted to contact you.

I am a retired educator who was fortunate to work at the Iowa Department of Education during my career. At that time, my focus was on non-academic aspects of education such as Safe and Drug Free Schools, character education, anti-bullying programs, social/emotional learning and general issues that place students at-risk for failure. It was there that I learned about how to organize a system of Learning Supports - a researched-based, data-driven approach needed to ensure that students can learn and are successful in school.

I was fortunate to work with the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools and Learning Supports. At that time, we adopted and promoted strategies for implementing Learning Supports with AEA and district staff. Unfortunately, the work faltered due to staff turnover and the lack of support for change at the state level. As you well know, substantially changing or modifying our educational system is not an easy undertaking and requires long-term attention.

In short, Learning Supports is a strategy for organizing a system of student supports that maximizes the use of limited resources and is based on local data. I am including a link to a presentation from the Center that summarizes thinking about systems change to support student learning. I sincerely hope you will make time to learn about this approach if you are not already familiar with it.  https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/powerpoint/briefintroslidesrec.pptx

In my view, many of the challenges to student achievement are based in an antiquated educational system. My hope is that this approach will be helpful as you and your staff work to address the varied, non-academic supports needed to help all students in the district.

I am more than happy to talk with you further about this important topic and would love to support any efforts the district might want to take in this direction. I already have training materials, books, presentations, etc. that I am more than happy to share, as does the Center at UCLA."

<p style="text-align:center"><span style="color:red">**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***</span></p>

Those of you concerned with improving how schools address barriers to learning and teaching might want to follow this example in advocating for change.  Here are some additional resources you might find helpful:

<span style="color:blue">*>A unified and comprehensive system of learning supports*</span>

<span style="color:blue">*>Introducing the Idea of Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports to Administrators and Others Who May Be Ready to Move Forward*</span>

<span style="color:blue">*>Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, & Equitable System of Learning Supports: First Steps for Superintendents Who Want to Get Started*</span>

<span style="color:blue">*>Establishing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports at a School: Seven Steps for Principals and Their Staff*</span>

<span style="color:blue">*>New Directions for School Counselors, Psychologists, & Social Workers*</span>

<p style="text-align:center"><span style="color:red">**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***</span></p>

<div style="border: 2px solid; border-radius: 20px; padding: 10px;">

### *Transforming* Student/Learning Supports

**Are you ready to increase the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing *a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports*?**

**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.**

</div>
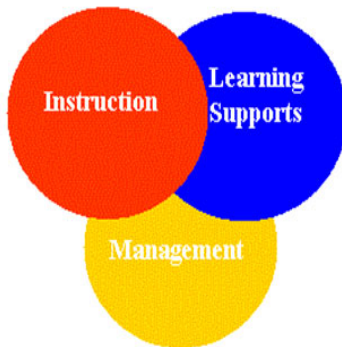


**Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.**

*National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports*

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

>>**An Imperative to Include Children's Voices in Policy Development: Part of the Solution to Understanding the Impact of Policy on Children's Mental Health**

>>**The Education Crisis and the Allied Role of School-Based Mental Health Care**

>>**Investigating the Interplay Between Mental Health Conditions and Social Connectedness on Suicide Risk: Findings from a Clinical Sample of Adolescents**

>>**Adolescent suicide risk factors and the integration of social-emotional skills in school-based prevention programs**

>>**Helping juvenile justice youth transition back to school settings**

>>**Deeper Learning, Not Passive Compliance (about students and AI)**

>>**K-12 cybersecurity a hot topic in state legislatures in 2024**

>>**Hundreds of thousands of students are entitled to training and help finding jobs. They don't get it**

>>**How to Talk to Kids About Sex and Consent**

>>**How to Support a Friend Who Is Struggling**

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

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)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

### 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**

*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

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**What did you learn in school today?**

**I Learned to be anxious, frustrated, and angry!**

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

<p align="center"><span style="color:red"><b>THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND<br>INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!</b></span></p>

<p align="center"><b>For new sign-ups – email</b> <span style="color:blue">Ltaylor@ucla.edu</span></p>

<p align="center"><span style="color:red"><b>Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.</b></span></p>

<p align="center"><span style="color:green"><b>We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange<br>on our website a</b></span>t <span style="color:blue">http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm</span><br><span style="color:green"><b>and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page</b></span> <span style="color:blue">http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/</span> )</p>

</div>