

(3/18/26) This continuing education resource is from the national
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

Featured

(1) Classroom based assistance for students experiencing stress

(2) Improving understanding of determinants of absenteeism

(3) Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

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:

>Classroom based assistance for students experiencing stress

From: *Students Experiencing Stress*

“Teachers are an important part of establishing and maintaining healthy environments for students to learn and grow. They also play an important role in guiding students suffering from excessive stress to professionals in the building who can be of assistance. Avoiding students who display signs of stress do not help them in any way. Teachers can assist students who are expressing stress by providing emotional support, promoting positive peer relationships, and connecting students with other professionals in the school who may be helpful resources....

What can teachers do?

- >Listen, express understanding, and (if appropriate) offer help. For example, “I notice you seem a bit stressed (or worried or distracted) lately. Is there something I can help you work through?”...
- > Offer ways for students to cope. ... Older students may respond well to writing in a journal...
- > Speak to the student privately ...
- > Remind students you care about their academic and social success...
- > Confer with colleagues who also work closely with the student. This may reveal a fuller picture of the issue and help determine if the behaviors are persistent in other classes, between classes, or during extra-curricular activities as well....
- > Continue to monitor the student. If they continue to demonstrate stress-based behaviors for an extended period of time, or the behaviors reemerge after seeming to have abated, consult with the school counselor regarding introducing stronger support resource opportunities....
- >Refer students to further help if needed (Review your school policy for seeking student supports.)”

Center Comments:

A step in helping students in need of special assistance is to provide added supports in the classroom. This is key to preventing and responding quickly to when learning, behavior, and emotional problems arise at school.

However, given there are classrooms with a host of students who need individual assistance, teachers cannot and must not be expected to do work alone. With this in mind, a key facet of school

improvement involves enabling in-classroom collaborations between the teacher and others (e.g., student and learning support staff, teacher colleagues, aides, volunteers) to

- >ensure instruction is personalized in ways that enhance intrinsic motivation and social-emotional development
- >provide learning accommodations and special assistance as necessary
- >use response to intervention in applying special assistance
- >address external barriers with a focus on prevention and early intervening

Properly implemented, this will stem the tide of unnecessary referrals for out-of-class specialized assistance and special education, reduce opportunity and achievement gaps, and improve classroom and schoolwide climate.

For more on this, see our Center resources. For example:

- >[*Students in Distress*](#)
- >[*Anxiety & Stress*](#)
- >[*Classroom-based Learning Supports to Enable Learning and Teaching*](#)
- >[*Enhancing Student/Learning Supports in Classrooms*](#)

For discussion and interchange:

>Improving understanding of determinants of absenteeism

From: [*Missing Classmates and Attendance Patterns in Elementary Schools*](#)

“A large body of research has established the multifaceted nature of student attendance, where determinants of absenteeism include a host of factors outside of school, in school, and in classrooms....

>**Out-of-School Factors** – External factors such as socioeconomic disadvantage, family instability, health barriers, and community conditions consistently predict chronic absenteeism. Students from low-income families frequently face attendance obstacles due to housing instability, limited transportation options, and unmet basic needs, such as food insecurity or inadequate clothing. Family disruptions, including frequent moves, homelessness, family dissolution, and other parental hardships (e.g., unemployment, incarceration), further impede consistent school attendance. Likewise, health-related issues—both acute illnesses (e.g., flu) and chronic medical conditions (e.g., asthma)—are significant contributors to student absenteeism, particularly when healthcare access is limited.

These external influences on attendance imply that individual absences frequently can occur due to factors beyond students’ immediate control, leading to classroom environments regularly disrupted by absenteeism. Such consistent disruption may influence classmates’ perceptions of school attendance norms, instructional continuity, and peer relationships—thereby potentially amplifying absenteeism through peer dynamics.

>**School Factors** – Much research illustrates how school-level practices and characteristics significantly shape student absenteeism. Schools that actively monitor and communicate about attendance, implement comprehensive support systems, and foster positive relationships with families typically experience lower rates of chronic absenteeism. Additionally, schools employing disciplinary policies perceived as punitive or schools lacking adequate engagement strategies may inadvertently reinforce absenteeism by diminishing students’ sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community. The availability of wraparound services—such as health, nutrition, and transportation programs—can mitigate external barriers and support regular attendance.

These school-level contexts directly influence classroom stability and peer interactions, which, in turn, may establish normative attendance behaviors within classrooms. When absenteeism is frequent or poorly managed at the school level, absenteeism may become normalized in classroom environments. Classroom instruction becomes fragmented, peer interactions are disrupted, and students receive inconsistent messaging about attendance expectations....

>**Classroom and Teacher Factors** – Recent work has examined the classroom-level impact on absenteeism, many studies specifically analyzing the influence of teachers on student absences.... Emerging literature also underscores that classroom-level dynamics, including class size and teacher characteristics, significantly relate to attendance patterns...

In addition, absences negatively affect the classroom environment by requiring teachers to remediate students who fall behind academically on returning to school.... Thus, when parents and students perceive school as less engaging or academically meaningful, voluntary absences may increase.

Moreover, students frequently absent from school have been shown to display weakened social skills and increased problematic behaviors, further disrupting the classroom. This lack of classroom cohesion exacerbates behavioral disruptions, creating a less engaging and more stressful environment that could lead other students to avoid school....

>**Finally, teacher behaviors—including attendance patterns and classroom management approaches—can significantly influence student absenteeism.** Teachers set classroom cultural norms, and inhospitable or disengaging environments shaped by teacher attitudes, beliefs, preparation, or frequent absences can negatively influence student attendance...

If structures were in place to support remediation for students, but not at the expense of the rest of the class, a consistent level of engagement could be maintained. This could be through providing support staff or supporting elementary educators in structuring remediation times primarily during regular small-group times instead of taking away from whole-group instruction....

Absenteeism has been found to result in greater behavioral disruptions and, as such, may create an environment that is less inviting for other students. Students returning from an absence may need a “re-entry” time with a counselor, support staff, or faculty mentor that could help them process the struggles of returning to a routine and coach them through what is keeping them from positively engaging in class.... These check-ins prior to entering class could promote a soft landing back into the classroom with less anxiety and stress for the absent student and fewer disruptions to peers....

For school policy and practice, this provides an entry point for schools to identify risk hotspots. That is, if a classroom experiences an upswing in absenteeism, this may spark further absenteeism among other students.... Classroom disruptions—rather than broad, time-specific attendance patterns—contribute to the spillover effects of absenteeism. Future research should further explore how school- and district-wide attendance patterns interact with classroom-level absenteeism trends to better inform intervention strategies....”



(AI generated images)

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Post pandemic research shows that chronic absenteeism has risen dramatically. All authoritative data sources define chronic absenteeism as missing 10% of the school year (e.g., 18 days). The most up to date reports indicate that, nationally, chronic absenteeism reached 31% in 2021–22 and 28% in 2022–23. With about 49 million K–12 students, this corresponds to roughly 13–15 million chronically absent students. U.S. Dept. of Education

Every student absence jeopardizes the ability of students to succeed at school and schools to achieve their mission. School attendance is a constant concern in schools. Average daily attendance rates are a common determiner of school funding, so schools funded on the basis of average daily attendance have less resources to do the job. Students who are not at school cannot receive instruction, and school performance indicators suffer. Excessive school absence is a precursor of school dropout. Some youngsters who are truant from school engage in behaviors that are illegal. And the negative correlates related to school attendance problems go on and on.

Research confirms that absenteeism is driven by interconnected academic, social emotional, health, climate, and family factors, not simply student motivation. Effectively dealing with the problem of chronic absenteeism over the long-run requires a fundamental rethinking of policies and practices. See

>Absenteeism: Beyond Reporting and Beyond Another Special Initiative

In particular, the need is to move beyond isolated attendance tactics and implement a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports. Such a system is designed to address barriers to learning directly, reengage disconnected students in classroom instruction, and reengage families with schools. See

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

Key steps include adopting a three-component policy for school improvement, mapping existing resources, appointing reworking the operational infrastructure to ensure leadership, developing strategic plans, continuous capacity building (especially professional development), and monitoring and accountability focused on the direct intended outcomes of the supports provided. See

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

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

>>Children Coping with Deployment

>>The War in Iran: A Place for Student Questions and Reactions

>>Summer as a Launchpad to Build Teacher Capacity and Strengthen Student Readiness

>>Coalitions that Succeed by Grounding Efforts in Community Context

>>Investigating the Promise of Integrated Student Supports

>>Amid Dismal Test Scores, Oregon Weighs Its Short School Year

>>Schools Banning Smartphones: Pros & Cons

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>

- 3/18 Strengths based resilience
- 3/24 Teamwork That Works: How Strong Teams Communicate, Lead, and Succeed
- 3/24 Letting go of what doesn't work in prevention
- 3/24 Student voice and advocacy
- 3/25 Teens, trends and turning points
- 3/25 Improving attendance for homeless students
- 3/31 Improving relationships with staff and students
- 3/31 Engaging community with a focus on youth involvement
- 4/9 Transforming school culture through student voice
- 4/15 Multi Tiered System of Support in Action
- 4/15 Communicating with your child's IEP team
- 4/15 Supporting Grief-Sensitive Classrooms
- 4/20 Strengths based approach for autistic students
- 4/22 Talking to kids about mental health
- 4/22 How to de-escalate children in distress
- 4/28 Supporting immigrants students
- 5/5 Understanding social anxiety
- 5/18 Understanding school avoidance
- 5/26 Understanding eating disorders

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)

Current Approaches to Student Supports Need Fundamental Rethinking

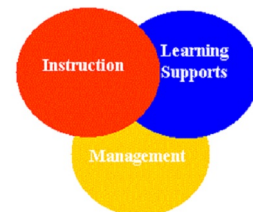
Schools cannot continue devoting the full capacity of student and learning support staff to reacting to the constant culture of crisis that dominates current efforts to address barriers to learning and reengage disconnected students and their families. Continuing down this path only perpetuates the marginalization, fragmentation, counterproductive competition, redundancy, and limited impact that characterize student support systems in most schools.

Fundamental, systemic redesign is urgently needed. Immediate action is essential to move beyond crisis driven responses and toward a cohesive, proactive, and equitable system of student and learning supports.

For guidance and resources on how to pursue this transformation, see the

>[*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.