

(5/17/23) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

**Featured**

**>What's next for a district ready to transform student/learning supports?**

**>What can schools do about student problems in poverty neighborhoods?**

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

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**For discussion and interchange:**

**>What's next for a district ready to transform student/learning supports?**

**Request from a district:**

“Our staff has discussed the direction for transforming learning support in our district. Here is a snapshot of what we were thinking and where we want to go:

Steps to enhance the capability of staff to meet the needs of the schools/students:

- > District needs to align our elementary, middle, high school program and supports. Also, guide our school psychologists/counselors to support our students in a systematic way
- > Survey to determine the needs of our mental health support providers
- > Ongoing training by outside providers and/or trainer of trainer models within our District
- > Parent education
- > Mental Health Resource Page
- > Partnerships with Universities with internship programs

What we need to move forward:

- >Where do we start? What level of investment is needed to create a program that shows benefit to our students?
- >What model programs are you familiar with?
- > Sustainability of programs?
- > Intern Programs to assist and support our sites?
- > We have a large Asian population, how do we discuss mental health in cultures that may not be as open to discuss?”

**Center Comments:**

You’ve already made a start. Below we try to cover the matters you raise. We know our response is likely to be a bit overwhelming, but just take matters a step at a time. Establish a broad picture shared overview so that you and your colleagues have a vision of what you are trying to create. Then formulate an action plan with a realistic timetable for moving forward.

About what to do next:

- (1) Start by being certain that the Superintendent understands the need for making the systemic changes that will be recommended and indicates a solid commitment of support. This also applies to other key administrators and the Board. (Reassure folks that, given sparse resources, the first investments amount mainly to redeploying existing resources.) Perhaps you could adapt our resource entitled: *Introducing the Idea of Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports to Administrators and Others Who May Be Ready to Move Forward*
- (2) The first action by the Superintendent involves designating a leader for transforming current student/learning supports into a more unified system. This amounts to reassigning someone about half-time. (See *Job Description*)
- (3) The first step for the leader is to pull together a team to help with the work. See *What is a learning supports leadership team?*

- (4) The team's work starts with mapping existing resources, identifying gaps, and developing recommendations for system change. See *First Steps in Transforming Student and Learning Supports into a Unified and Comprehensive System to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching*

About other matters you raised:

>*Guide school psychologists/counselors and others to support our students in a systematic way:* This involves not only having them commit to transforming the system, but learning to work in different ways. This calls for understanding a unified system of student/learning supports and how it fully embeds a focus on mental health. See *Schools and Mental Health: A Position Statement*

The work also entails some reworking of job descriptions and related professional development. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/report/framingnewdir.pdf>

>*Connecting Schools:* This matter is related to reworking operational infrastructures. See *Improving Student/Learning Supports Requires Reworking the Operational Infrastructure*

>*Sustainability of programs:* The broader concern is replication, scale-up, sustainability, and renewal. This depends a great deal on how well you are able to institutionalize system changes that can survive superintendent and other personnel changes. We can talk about this more as you get started.

>*Intern Programs to assist and support sites:* We broaden this matter to embed outreach to local universities for a variety of resource assistance into the learning supports domain of community support and engagement. See *self-study survey*.

>*Discussing mental health in cultures that may not be as open to the matter:* Here is one of the positive side effects of embedding MH into a unified system of student/learning supports. The message to those from reluctant cultures is not that a youngster has a mental health problem, but that the school provides student/learning supports whenever a youngster needs such assistance. The concern also is addressed as the schools enhance their focus on home involvement and engagement with schools. See *Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning: A Collaborative Process*.

**As we noted at the outset, the process we outline involves many steps, but the payoff for schools will outweigh the effort it takes to unify and then over several years develop a comprehensive and equitable system of student/learning supports that can reduce the opportunity and academic gaps. We do offer free online technical assistance and coaching.**

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**Is transforming student/learning supports 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:**

**>What can schools do about student problems in poverty neighborhoods?**

As is clear from a recent *Pew Research Center survey*, efforts to reduce the opportunity and achievement gaps must address poverty.

“A majority of U.S. parents (58%) rate their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to raise children, and an additional 28% give their community a good rating.... However, more than one-in-ten parents (14%) say their neighborhood is only a fair or poor place to raise kids, and these shares of parents have higher levels of worry for their children’s well-being. ...

Parents who rate their community more negatively are also more likely to be worried about other physical dangers facing their kids. Some 44% of these parents are extremely or very worried about their children getting beaten up, attacked, kidnapped or abducted – far higher than the share of parents who say they live in a good, very good or excellent place to raise their children.

About half of parents (51%) who say they live in an only fair or poor area say they are very or extremely worried about their children struggling with anxiety or depression or being bullied. ... Research has shown that mental health disorders are more common among children growing up in “non-supportive neighborhoods” – that is, those where residents do not help each other or watch out for each other’s children....”

While schools cannot be expected to address all the problems arising from poverty, as the Carnegie Task Force on Education has stated, when the impact affects learning, the school must meet the challenge. That is, it is necessary to do whatever can be done to address the impact of poverty both in the classroom and school-wide.

Here are few brief resources to stimulate renewed discussions about this matter.

From: *For Each and Every Child – A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence*

“ Students from high-poverty backgrounds are at greater risk of academic failure, are more likely to be suspended from school and are more likely to drop out of school than are middle-income students. These students also sometimes face additional obstacles—such as homelessness, foster care, alcohol or drug problems, abuse and delinquency—that place them at even greater risk of never completing high school. Students who become involved in the criminal justice system must also be a policy priority, because these at-risk students cost society in both social-humanitarian and monetary terms....”

From: *The relationship of intergenerational poverty and exclusionary school discipline*

“...Children born into situations of poverty face many challenges as they begin their formal education in classrooms. Researchers have demonstrated that poverty is related to a lack of school readiness, low academic achievement, increased chronic absence, increased behavioral incidents, and is generally considered a risk factor for success in school ...

At the community level, schools can play a critical role by creating supportive environments. This might include offering specialized programs, connecting students and families to critical resources, and adopting comprehensive school climate frameworks that focus on supporting students.”

For more, see the following from our Center:

**>*What is a School's Role in Addressing the Impact of Poverty?***

**>*Children and poverty***

Recently we received the following question/statement:

***Why are you pushing equity?  
Equal opportunity is what needs to be pushed, not this.***

**We responded:**

Good question about a highly complex concern for those of us who are trying to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

We definitely agree that equalizing opportunity is critical, as is ensuring equity of opportunity. If you search the internet there are many discussions of the difference between equality and equity. Here's a link to one discussion -- <https://www.diffen.com/difference/Equality-vs-Equity>

Given the difference in how the terms are widely used, we choose to emphasize equity of opportunity and recognize the opportunity gap as a major concern for many schools -- especially those with a significant number of students who are not doing well.

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

**Opportunity and Performance: Equity for Children from Poverty**

**Addressing disparities around unexcused absences**

**Education and Child Welfare System Efforts to Improve Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care**

**How can we leverage mentors to build student resilience?**

**The value in student protests**

**Health advisory on social media use in adolescence**

**Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation**

**A Decade Into Experiments With Gamification, Edtech Rethinks How to Motivate Learners**

### **Peer Learning Can Modify the Reciprocal Relationship Between Peer Support and Victimization in Middle School**

“...Cooperative learning, sometimes referred to as small-group learning or peer learning, offers an alternative to the prevention of victimization in both theory and approach. Cooperative learning provides a mechanism to improve peer relations by changing the format of instruction (i.e., the way we teach) and creating change through small-group learning experiences instead of through a didactic approach to knowledge-building. Cooperative learning targets peer dynamics by creating conditions in which students are motivated and reinforced to work cooperatively. In addition to being fully integrated into existing curriculum, Cooperative learning is active and student-directed, as opposed to top-down, didactic, and teacher-centered. ...”

## A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

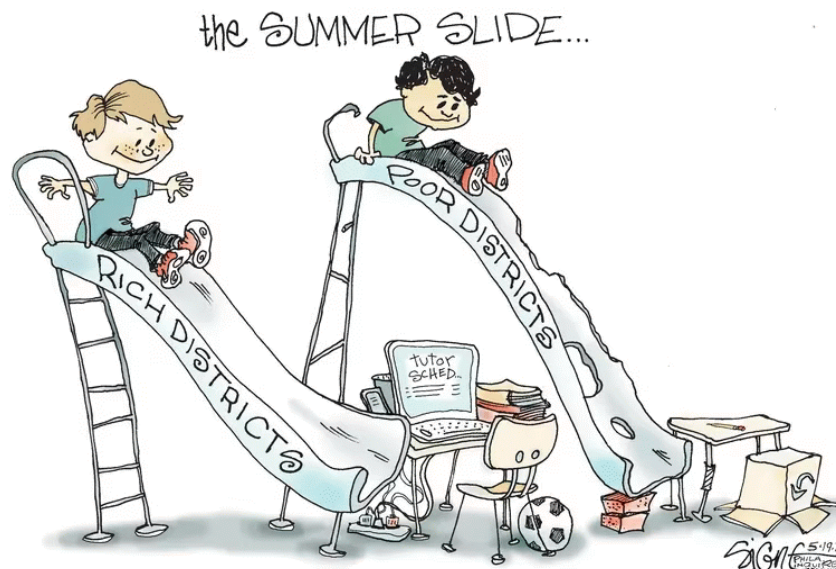
- 5/17 Working Towards Positive Educational Outcomes: Mental Health and Special Education
- 5/18 Lived experience: why it is important
- 5/24 Culturally responsive practice
- 5/23 Understanding doubled up
- 6/6 Afterschool learning: academics or fun?
- 6/6 Wellness strategies
- 6/8 Effective psychotherapy
- 6/23 Youth mental health
- 6/28 Peer support

### To Listserv Participants

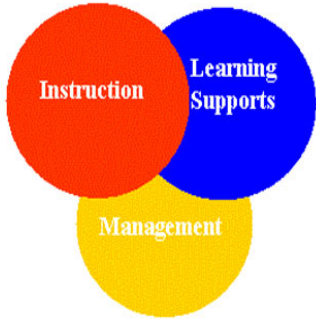
- **Please share this resource with others.** (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- **Let us know what's going on** to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share 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!***

Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)



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For information about the  
**National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**  
go to <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

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.

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**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/> )**