

(6/21/23)

## Featured

>**Increasing student engagement: Students as teachers**

>**Enhancing mental health effectiveness: Focus on Prevention**

>**School board member responds to MH in Schools: Moving Beyond the Emergency**

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

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### **For discussion and interchange:**

>**Increasing student engagement: Students as teachers**

Summer provides an opportunity to plan and introduce new ideas and practices for engaging students. Active learning is especially important. We have stressed many ways to promote active learning at all grade levels (e.g., class discussions, problem based and discovery learning, a project approach, involvement in learning centers, school-wide or community service projects “internships”).

*Involving students in the teaching process is another good practice.*

From: *Students as Teachers*

...There is a large and longstanding body of research measuring the positive impact of peers teaching peers. The effect is twofold. Researchers have found that learning from fellow students fosters deep understanding of the material and a positive attitude toward the subject matter. But studies have also found that the benefit is mutual — that simply preparing to teach others deepens one’s own knowledge....

In Washington, D.C., the nonprofit Reach Incorporated, has found tremendous success in training high school students who struggle with reading themselves to act as reading coaches to second- and third-graders. In the process, the high school students end up strengthening their own skills. Within a single academic year, these high school tutors show, on average, two years of reading gains. The elementary school students they teach show almost as much growth.

In New York, 10 public high schools participate in the Peer Enabled Restructured Classroom program which trains primarily 10th-graders to be assistant teachers in ninth-grade math and science classes. Similar to Reach, Peer Enabled Restructured Classroom specifically seeks out students who struggled in math and science, supporting them as they become assistant teachers working in the classrooms of their peers.

The opportunity to teach your peers sends a powerful message. It says to students, “You have knowledge worth sharing, you have a teacher’s trust, and you have an opportunity to support your friends’ learning and growth.” Students teaching students is an authentic way to build confidence, leadership, and empathy. But the impact is no less for the students being taught. They see in their peers role models with similar experiences and concerns, who can affirm them and also push them to reach higher....

From: *Meaningful Student Involvement*

...There is a plethora of research supporting the effectiveness of engaging students as teachers. A variety of findings shows how teaching results in better learning than being taught in traditional methods. When students prepare to teach other students, learning suddenly involves active thinking about material, analysis and selection of main ideas, and processing the concepts into one’s own thoughts and words. Also, the superiority of student-led teaching is particularly marked for students below the median in ability.

Most importantly, moving students to the front of the classroom moves young people from being passive recipients to becoming active drivers of learning.... Engaged as partners, students can strengthen, expand, and deepen their learning through teaching. ...

For more Center resources on *student participation*, see

- >[\*Cross-Age Peer Mentorship Programs in Schools\*](#)
- >[\*Peer Tutoring: Part of Learning Supports\*](#)
- >[\*Youth Participation: Making It Real\*](#)
- >[\*About Student Voice and Participation\*](#)

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>Enhancing mental health effectiveness: Focus on Prevention**

Interventions to promote mental health encompass not only strengthening individuals, but also enhancing nurturing and supportive conditions at school, at home, and in the neighborhood. All this calls for a potent emphasis on increasing opportunities for personal development and empowerment. This includes promoting conditions that foster and strengthen positive attitudes and behaviors, inoculate against problems, and maintain and enhance health and safety (e.g., enhancing intrinsic motivation and capabilities for pursuing positive goals, fostering resilience, resisting negative influences, personalizing whole child instruction, and providing in classroom, schoolwide, home, and neighborhood supports for overcoming barriers).

From: [\*Factors Contributing to the Efficacy of Universal Mental Health and Well-being Programs in Secondary Schools: A Systematic Review\*](#)

...Well-being programs delivered in schools tend to show small effect sizes for mental health and well-being outcomes with effects often not sustained...

Factors aimed at increasing participant engagement (e.g., using student-centered and active learning approaches), appear more closely linked to improved mental health and well-being outcomes. ... Universal programs can be effective in producing better mental health and well-being outcomes in secondary school settings when participant engagement is maximized...

Between 30% and 40% of young people with mental health concerns who do access evidence-based intervention therapy will relapse within two years.... The relapse rates associated with psychological interventions in the adolescent population suggest that prevention programs may be needed as an alternative. Engaging adolescents in prevention programs can help to reduce the volume of people requiring individually delivered mental health intervention...

Universal prevention programs that use techniques designed to increase participant engagement are more likely to be effective in producing better mental health and well-being outcomes in secondary school settings. ...

Methods used to engage secondary school students in these programs...

- >Teacher engagement appears important, whether involved with program delivery or reinforcing the work of program facilitators through student well-being practices during the school day.
- >Similarly, more effective programs tended to deliver content using pedagogy proven to positively influence participant engagement.
- >Programs that used a student-centered learning approach and required participants to be active in their learning were associated with more positive effects for mental health and well-being outcomes.
- >Future... prioritize program delivery methods that allow participants to actively engage and influence the content delivered while ensuring it is guided by evidence based psychological theory...

For more Center resources on *prevention*, see

>[\*Prevention and schools\*](#)

>[\*Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Problems at School\*](#)

And for more from sources around the field, see our general Quick Find on

>[\*Prevention\*](#)

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### **School board member responds to *MH in Schools: Moving Beyond the Emergency***

In a recent [\*\*commentary\*\*](#) we noted:

In the wake of the pandemic, student mental health has been called a crisis. Schools have scrambled to do what they can to address the problem using emergency tactics.... all efforts that narrowly focus on adding a few more mental health services fall far short of meeting the needs that are present in too many schools.

It is time to redirect some of the energy devoted to emergency tactics so that student/learning support staff can build a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing learning, behavior, and emotional problems....”

From the responses we received, this clearly resonated. One school board member indicated:

*I have been talking with our legislators numerous times about this issue. This is a problem that is hitting personally. I will not stop until someone starts listening.*

We responded with a few resources for how school boards can take steps to appropriately and more effectively address the current concerns about student mental health, behavioral problems, and learning loss.

>[\*How School Boards Can Pursue New Directions to Help Schools Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching\*](#)

Boards need to take some time to map and analyze the student/learning supports at schools as a basis for enhancing school improvement policy and practices. To do this systematically, here are mapping resource aids:

>[\*An Aid for Initial Listing of Current Resources Used at a School for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching\*](#)

>[\*Mapping & Analyzing Learning Supports\*](#)

When we have done such mapping, the results show that, despite all the emergency band-aid approaches being added to cope with the increases in student problems, most schools are nowhere near responding in ways that can significantly meet students’ learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

Efforts mainly focused on improving instruction are insufficient. So is just adding a few more mental health services and student/learning support staff (especially if the additions are affordable only on a temporary basis).

Of course, student/learning supports are essential to school efforts to enhance student success at school and beyond; but current approaches are poorly conceived and organized. After analyzing the situation, Boards can rethink and establish policies and guidelines for rebuilding student/learning supports at schools.

See [\*Student Supports: What’s in place? What’s Missing?\*](#)

## **National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**

In our work with Boards, we have seen them focus on establishing policy to unify and then develop student/learning supports into a comprehensive and equitable system. Such a system is fundamental to addressing student learning, behavior, and emotional problems. See examples of relevant Board position and policy statements at

- >*Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Learning Supports*  
(A prototype adapted from board policy in several districts)
- >*Grant Parish School Board Comprehensive Learning Supports Policy*
- >*Examples of Other Policy Statements*

As you know, our Center has many resources online focusing on these matters that can be used for discussion, continuing education, and planning. As a start, see, the following brief resources:

- >*Rethinking Student and Learning Supports*
- >*Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

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

**Having Students Learn by Teaching**

**Students as Teachers (National Association of Elementary School Principals)**

**Student Voice: A growing movement within education that benefits students and teachers**

**Who do students ask for help with classwork? Sources of help and changes in help-seeking from peers during early adolescence**

**Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Academic Well-Being and Success: Strategies for Educators and School-Based Staff**

**How to Support Kids Who Are Questioning**

**Mental Health Challenges of LGBTQ+ Kids**

**Should struggling students be held back a grade? Why researchers don't have a clear answer**

**The Behavioral Health Care Workforce**

**Improving School Improvement**

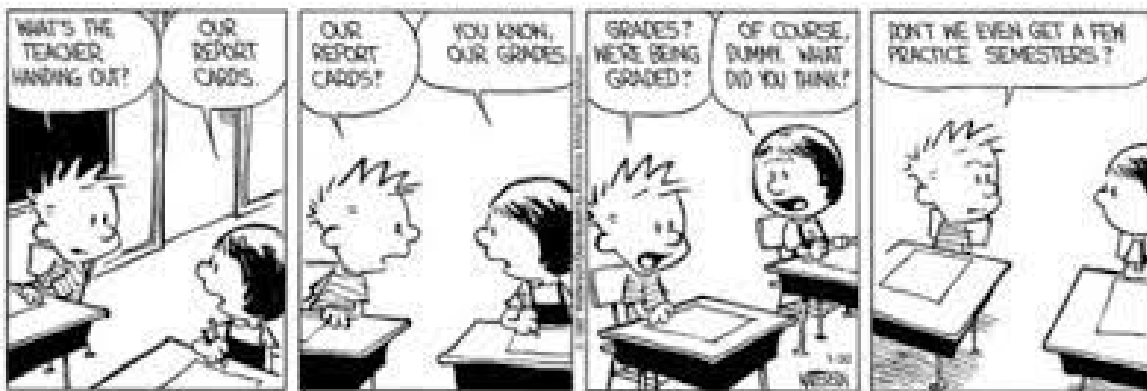
**Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide**

**Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change**

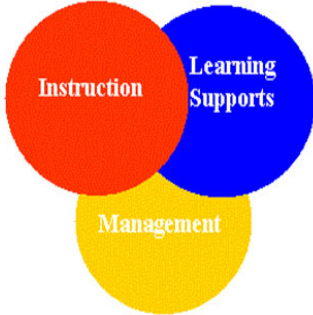
## A Few Upcoming Webinars

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>

- 6/21 Using ChatGPT to improve student outcomes
- 6/21 Children and Youth Resilience Challenge
- 6/21 Preparing for youth adulthood
- 6/22 How mentoring can heal our communities
- 6/22 Students with anxiety
- 6/22 Tech is everywhere but is it making schools better
- 6/23 Youth mental health
- 6/26 Stages of change
- 6/26 Peer support
- 6/28 Peer support
- 7/17 Mental health first aid
- 7/18 Building an effective team
- 7/20 Counseling for equity in rural America
- 7/24 Peer perspective
- 7/26 Flipping the youth services paradigm
- 8/2 Jump start service learning



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For information about the  
**National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports**  
go to <http://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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### 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)

**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/> )**