

Featured

>What's the plan for strengthening relationships with families this school year?

>Reclaiming Our Schools' Promise and Purpose

>A closer look at mandatory reporting

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

For discussion and interchange:

>What's the plan for strengthening relationships with families this school year?

It is time to review school plans for welcoming, supporting, and engaging students and families (and staff). These are critical elements related to enhancing a climate where stakeholders interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals. Such a plan includes a focus on welcoming everyone; providing special orientations for newcomers; supporting smooth transitions and positive social interactions; ensuring ready access to information about the coming year; facilitating students' school adjustment; encouraging involvement in decision-making; and generally enhancing a sense of community at school.

From: ***Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Academic Well-Being and Success: Strategies for Schools to Enhance Relationships With Families***

... Educators can use a combination of family engagement and communication practices to develop and support effective engagement. However, it is important to remember that ... educators must tailor these practices....

Strategy #1: Improve Communication Between School and Home

- >... Be intentional, thoughtful, and welcoming from the start by emphasizing the importance of working together for student success and personally connecting with families via phone, social media, and face-to-face meetings at school or during home visits. Use each family's preferred contact method and preferred time....
- >Honor families' cultures and seek to learn more by getting to know each family. Invite families to share information about their cultures and primary languages....
- >Tap into families' knowledge regarding their children's learning styles, motivations, strengths, needs, stressors, and experiences. A family's perspective is essential in prioritizing and framing a child's strengths, challenges, and needs....

Strategy #2: Intentionally Implement Family Engagement Practices

... To build and enhance home-school partnerships, educators can:

- > Engage families rather than just involving them. Schools can facilitate engagement by providing training, coaching, practice opportunities, resources, and information to equip all educators and families with the skills and knowledge needed to implement effective family engagement that supports students' learning and development....
- >Increase families' opportunities to serve as partners, co-producers, and co-creators of excellent education for all students. Engage families in shared decision-making and policy development and implementation to create a school climate that advances student and school success....

Strategy #3: Improve Systems to Sustain Family Engagement

... Schools can embed family engagement practices in all improvement strategies and support these practices with infrastructure and resources. To build such systems, districts and individual schools can:

- > Establish family advisory councils that reflect the diversity of the school community....
- >Co-develop systemwide family engagement policies and processes in collaboration with families. Evidence shows that family engagement in student learning and behavior is positive and improves students' attendance, behavior, and achievement....

For more on strengthening relationships with families, see

- > [*Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning: A Collaborative Process*](#)
- > [*Home Involvement, Engagement, and Re-engagement in Schooling*](#)
- > [*Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement*](#)
- > [*Parent and Home Involvement in Schools*](#)
- > [*Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families*](#)

Reclaiming Our Schools' Promise and Purpose

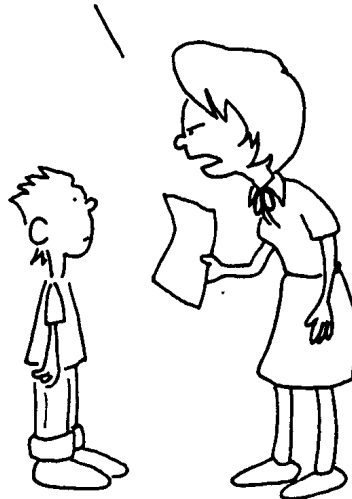
From: *Defending Public Education*

Those of us involved in public schools work hard to strengthen them to be the best they can be. But only public schools have as their mission providing opportunity for all students. And by virtually any measure—conversations, polls, studies, and elections—parents and the public overwhelmingly like public schools, value them, need them, support them—and countless Americans love them.

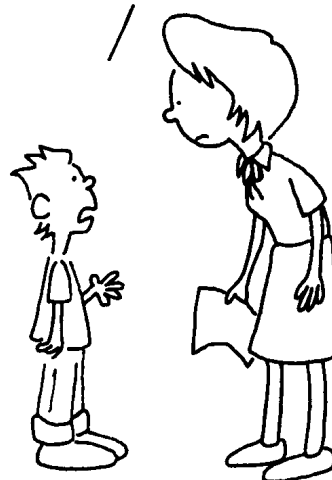
Public schools are more than physical structures. They are the manifestation of our civic values and ideals: the ideal that education is so important for individuals and for society that a free education must be available to all. That all young people should have opportunities to prepare for life, college, career, and citizenship. That, in a pluralistic society such as the United States, people with different beliefs and backgrounds must learn to bridge differences. And that, as the founders believed, an educated citizenry is essential to protect our democracy from demagogues....

When kids go to school together, they become part of a community; their families become part of a community. That community comes together at school concerts, basketball games, and science fairs, and for shelter and comfort when people are displaced by natural disasters or, far too often, at vigils for victims of gun violence. In good times and bad, public schools are cornerstones of community, of our democracy, our economy, and our nation....

I CAN HARDLY READ YOUR HANDWRITING.
YOU MUST LEARN TO WRITE MORE CLEARLY.



AW, WHAT'S THE USE!
IF I WRITE ANY CLEARER, YOU'LL
COMPLAIN ABOUT MY SPELLING.



A Closer Look at Mandatory Reporting

From: *When mandated reporting does more harm than good: Tools for a new approach*

A child repeatedly lashes out, withdraws or exhibits some other troubling behavior. There may be repeated bruising, fearful body language or lack of hygiene. Red flags. What do you do? Because school staff are mandatory reporters—required by law to report suspected child abuse, maltreatment or neglect—the answer is often to immediately call child welfare authorities. But while such reporting is well-intended, mandatory reporters as well as child welfare agencies are seriously questioning whether it is appropriate in every case.

Here's the reality: Research shows that mandatory reporting often does more harm than good. Most reports are unsubstantiated upon further investigation, and many can trigger a cascade of harmful consequences such as intrusive home inspections—even strip searches of children—and painful family separation.... But many feel ill-prepared to discern the moment at which child services are needed, and fear serious consequences if they do not report.

Recently, the idea of mandatory supporter, rather than mandatory reporter, has taken hold. Coined by JMACforFamilies, a child advocacy organization, mandatory support involves more careful consideration of alternative tools and resources to consider before escalating to the child welfare system.... Tools include collaboration, consultation and connection to school families.... Mandatory support offers a different path. Focusing on students' well-being, it utilizes solutions including trauma-informed practices, community schools and bargaining for the common good.

Its basic tenets use preventive "healing gestures" to celebrate, comfort and inspire students; continue professional growth on implicit bias; combat stigma; support student privacy; collaborate; make caregivers the first call; consider a consultation that anonymizes the family; and share power with families by ensuring they are aware of triggers, know their rights and share their strengths as well as vulnerabilities...."

From: *Mandated supporting*

In 2020, a collective of students at Columbia School of Social Work partnered with social work professors and community organizations created a curriculum that transforms mandated reporting to "mandated supporting," incorporating the importance of critically analyzing themes of power, race, oppression, & privilege. This training seeks to implement numerous alternative responses to mandated reporting that are liberatory, harm reductive, decolonial, and centers families.

Note: With respect to homeless families, many parents are concerned that if they let schools know they are homeless, their children might be taken away.

How do you address the concerns of parents who need support, but are afraid to ask?

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 your views** about the topics shared and about 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!

Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

The Consequences of Social Media Use Across the Transition Into Adolescence: Body Image and Physical Activity

Social Media and Youth Mental Health (US Surgeon General's Advisory)

Associations of Positive Relationships and Adolescent Well-Being Across Cultures

Assessing the Feasibility of Peer Coach Training for Disruptive Middle School Youth

An emerging youth-centered model of community resilience

Youth Mental Health and Safety Don't Take a Summer Break

Education's long COVID: 2022–23 achievement data reveal stalled progress toward pandemic recovery

**The Relationship Between Caring Teachers and the Mental Health of LGBTQ Students
Transgender Youth's Mental Health**

**A Toolkit for Supporting the Implementation of School Employee Wellness in Districts/
Schools**

Tools for Supporting Emotional Wellbeing in Children and Youth

Elevating the Role of School Nurses in School-Based Mental and Behavioral Health

Suicide: Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention

National Guidelines for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Crisis Care

Attendance Playbook Smart Strategies for Reducing Student Absenteeism Post-pandemic

State(s) of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education: Looking at Equity

**Clinical Applications of Cultural Elements When Working with Hispanic and Latino
Populations Trainer's Guide**

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>

7/20 Counseling for equity in rural America

7/24 Peer perspective

7/25 Individualized Family Service Plans

7/26 Flipping the youth services paradigm

7/27 Reimagining high school

8/1 Designing tomorrow's classroom

8/2 Jump start service learning

8/17 Start the school year strong

8/16 Paving the Way to College for Students Experiencing Homelessness

8/29 McKinney-Vento 101: Basic Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act

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.

For information about the *National Initiative* go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

It is essential to continue to urge districts/schools to play an increasing role in helping to transform student/learning supports into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system.

Our Center has many resources online focusing on transforming student/learning supports 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***

The work is detailed in three free books:

- > ***Improving School Improvement***
- > ***Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide***
- > ***Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change***

Note: We caution that, unless they are evolved from their current limitations, moves to MTSS and Community Schools will exacerbate the prevailing marginalization and fragmentation of student/learning supports in school improvement policy and practice. See

- > ***Rethinking MTSS to Better Address Barriers to Learning***
- > ***Evolving Community Schools and Transforming Student/Learning Supports***

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

For new sign-ups – email 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/>)