

(7/2/25) **This continuing education resource is from the national  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

### **Featured**

**(1) How are schools mapping existing student/learning supports?**

**(2) How important is student engagement to school achievement?**

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:**

**>How are schools mapping existing student/learning supports?**

***A first step in improving student/learning supports  
is to fully map and analyze existing resources.***

In an era of tight resources, it becomes ever more essential to use existing resources in the most effective way, to rethink how they are used, and to amplify positive use of human and social capital. This is especially the case with respect to student and learning supports.

Our focus here is on highlighting steps related to (a) redeploying and weaving together resources to increase what is available and (b) enhancing effective use of such supports by students. (Other Center documents listed below present frameworks to guide realignment of resources for student and learning supports.)

First – Develop a detailed map of what the school and district have in place, including any community resources that are formally linked to district and schools.

Second – Analyze the map to clarify what’s working, redundancies, and gaps.

Third – Use the analysis to decide what resources can be redeployed and priorities for filling the gaps.

Fourth – Once the district and its schools have maximized effective use of existing student and learning support resources, the focus expands strategically to braiding school and community resources. Doing this begins with mapping and analyzing formal and informal community resources readily identifiable and expands as others become evident. This involves more than cataloguing the service agencies in the community in order to make referrals for students and families.

Note: Tight budgets call for amplifying and personalizing the use of human and social capital. This means connecting with a broad range of formal and informal community resources. Special attention must be given to the empowering possibilities of enhanced home involvement, student service learning (e.g., peer buddies, mentors, mediators, “counselors”), and volunteer programs (including mentors, tutors, etc.).

From: *Mapping Ecosystems: Building Understanding of an Urban Network of Supports and Resources for Black and Latino/a Students*

*A map is not an end, outcome goal because cataloging resources in itself cannot change a complex urban ecological system. Still, mapping is a first step in building an understanding that can be used for system change.*

"...Students are surrounded by cultural, family, and community resources, funds of knowledge, and community cultural wealth. ... A first step in working toward promoting more equitable and positive outcomes involves developing a deeper understanding of these ecosystems and young people's positionality within them. Young people's outcomes—such as graduating, attending college, getting a certification or postsecondary degree—are structured by the array of supports around them, as well as the gaps, connections, and fit of these resources to their needs. At the same time, the supports—especially organizations and educational institutions—may only focus on one specific area or part of the puzzle: the population they serve, the issues that are central to them, the geography that they covered, or other determining factors....

Interventions designed on a partial, at best, or inaccurate, at worst, understandings of the lives of young people are likely to face obstacles or impediments at many levels. Mapping the ecosystem, in contrast, can provide a foundation for systems change in urban education by building a broad understanding of resources and their interconnections. This framework can lay the groundwork for a strengths-based approach that illuminates various supports and networks, highlights best practices, and identifies gaps where further action could prove fruitful....

Studying ecosystems can provide insights into the available supports resources and gaps, but also contextualize and frame psychosocial development. The latter is important because it moves away from individual pathologization or negative determinism by centering the roles of macrosystems in structuring internal psychological processes ....

This process entails cataloging resources, supports, and organizations that make up this ecosystem, as well as their interconnections, the gaps and limitations in what they can offer, and how they understand their work. Taking strengths-based approach to building this understanding entails engaging openly with community partners doing the work ....

Ecosystem mapping also acknowledges and builds on existing resiliencies and supports. Within such a framework, urban communities are not simply failing to produce certain types of young people and the youth themselves are not pathologized, but rather are coping and pushing back while embedded within oppressive systems. Taking a holistic and interconnected approach to understanding these issues requires incorporating various sources of support and power that must be identified, amplified, and synergized. ...

Organizations outside of schools but whose work connects with urban students can better understand how they fit within the broader ecosystem. These organizations face many constraints in relation to resources and time. Often, they must prioritize and focus on the young people they can serve or on one issue (i.e., youth homelessness, afterschool programming) to attract funding and efficiently use their resources. They may know their partners and other organizations working on similar topics, but may be limited in scope by factors like geography and service focus. We found that these actors were struck by how the map and conversations helped them see how their organization fit within a broader network of organizations and offered an opportunity to position their work and its value while examining possible new collaborations.... A simple listing of all available supports is one part of this foundation, but conversations and engaged discussions using the map as a prompt can facilitate academics, community leaders, and nonprofit workers in building more nuanced, systemic understandings of opportunities for synergy and intervention....

To build better policies, practices, and approaches that foster more equitable outcomes for all urban youth, we must consider systems change through such nuanced work that builds understandings, communication, connections, and synergies across levels. The conversation and action must continue to be moved from individualization of these challenges (e.g., pathologizing the students, families, and schools in areas not thriving academically) while also negating deterministic negative frameworks (e.g., focusing only on the challenge and risks...)"

For more resources on mapping from our Center and other sources, see our Center Quick Find.

>[\*Mapping Existing School and Community Resources for Addressing Barriers to Learning\*](#)

For more on how our Center approaches this matter, including a guiding framework, see

>[\*Resource Mapping and Management to Address Barriers to Learning: An Intervention for Systemic Change\*](#)

>[\*Mapping a School's Resources to Improve Their Use in Preventing and Ameliorating Problems\*](#)

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

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

>[\*Addressing Barriers to Learning: A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What It Needs\*](#)

Surveys for 6 domains of student/learning supports and related system needs that constitute a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach to addressing barriers and teaching. The six domains are (1) in-classroom-focused supports, (2) crisis assistance and prevention, (3) support for transitions, (4) home involvement in schooling, (5) student and family assistance programs and services, and (6) community outreach for involvement and support (including volunteers).

**For discussion and interchange:**

>[\*\*How important is student engagement to school achievement?\*\*](#)

From: [\*Variables associated with middle school achievement: The important role of engagement\*](#)

“...Tension between the demands of school and developmental readiness are especially magnified during the transition to the secondary education environment (i.e. middle and high school), as it marks the early adolescent period that is a time of rapid and intense biological, social, and cognitive changes in the adolescent. Simultaneously, the environment brings notable increases in organizational and planning demands that are often in direct conflict with the developmental readiness of the students...

The most noteworthy finding is the significant contribution of engagement to student achievement above the other variables studied. This is consistent with previous research demonstrating that students who are more engaged in class by participating, paying attention, applying effort, and listening carefully have higher academic achievement than their less engaged peers ...

Understanding the significant impact of school engagement on academic achievement is vital for school personnel in particular, in order to create learning environments that promote student engagement and are sensitive to the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional needs of adolescents. Moreover, this study provides a clear impetus for principals, teachers, school psychologists, and social workers to focus intervention efforts on improving engagement for middle school students, especially given that prior research has shown this to be a malleable variable and one that is responsive to intervention...”

You used to be so engaged during class.  
What happened?



3



You took my iPhone away.

From: *Generation Alpha Is Causing Problems for Teachers*

"Short attention spans, an overdependence on technology and a lack of interest in learning are all things that Generation Alpha has been accused of having.

The demographic, born between the 2010s and the mid 2020s, is entering a world of education that is radically different than their Generation Z predecessors. Hit by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as young children, Generation Alpha is going through school at a time when technology is more ubiquitous in education than ever before.

Matt Eicheldinger ... has a background in teaching. Eicheldinger said that while the experience of students varies greatly across districts and states, there are three points that illustrate a "noticeable change in student focus and engagement in school, all in regard to Gen A," he said, when "smartphones became more commonplace, when one-to-one devices were introduced into schools, and the post Covid-19 reentry to in-person school."

Eicheldinger said that smartphones becoming more common caused "major disruptions," particularly at a middle school level. "It wasn't just the fact that students tried using them during class," he said. "Students' involvement in text messaging and social media brought outside-of-school social issues into schools. It was difficult to manage all the online bullying, harassment, and anxiety, and placed a lot of the burden on classroom teachers, counselors, social workers, and administration to figure out how to handle it. This had a direct negative impact on student learning."...

"Technology is impacting this generation in powerful ways—both good and bad," Elizabeth McPherson said. "Students have unlimited access to knowledge. That's a gift. But with that gift comes a cost: instant gratification. And that makes it hard for students to commit to learning processes that are slow, complex, or challenging.... We have to rethink the curriculum and how we deliver it. This generation is different, so the same strategies from decades ago simply don't work anymore. We need more hands-on, student-centered learning experiences—projects, discussions, simulations, real-world applications.... It's not about abandoning tradition—it's about adapting it. We need to be willing to reimagine what school looks like. And that reimagination should start with the people who are in the classroom every day—teachers—and the people we serve—our students."

**Center Comment:** Anyone involved in teaching will attest that engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school. Research stresses that higher levels of engagement are found in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and a structure that emphasizes guidance and support rather than an overreliance on management by control. Conversely, student disengagement is associated with a range of learning, behavior, and emotional problems and school dropouts.

**For more from our Center and other sources on engagement (and reengaging disconnected students), see our Center Quick Find.**

>*Motivation, Engagement, Re-engagement*

**For more on how our Center approaches this matter, see Parts I and II in**

>*Improving School Improvement*

We also have some relevant information and practice resources. Here's an example:

>*Project Based Learning and Student Engagement*

And as technology plays an ever expanding role, we regularly rework our Quick Find on

>*Technology as an Intervention Tool.*

and our information and practice resources

>*About Gamified Learning and Intrinsic Motivation for Classroom Learning*

\*\*\*\*\*

**In your locale: *How are the above topics being pursued?***

**Please let us know so we can share the info widely. Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

\*\*\*\*\*

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

- >> **Advocating for Disciplinary Reform Through a Systematic Review of School Discipline Laws and State Guidance Across the United States**
- >> **Considering Historical Context, Current Societal Trends, and Implications for Understanding Harm in Youth Mental Health Treatment**
- >> **Bridging the gap: The role of parent advocates in enhancing child protective services practice**
- >> **A Systematic Review of Social Media Use and Adolescent Identity Development**
- >> **Risk Factors for Problematic Social Media Use in Youth: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies**
- >> **Screen Time and Summer**
- >> **How to Keep Kids Reading Over the Summer**
- >> **Young People With Lived Experience in Foster Care Recommend Improvements to Mental Health Supports**
- >> **Team-Based Staffing, Teacher Authority, and Teacher Turnover**

#### **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>

- 7/9 Building social connections
- 7/16 Leveraging CDC's Mental Health Action Guide
- 7/17 Advocacy, ethics, and sustainability in prevention
- 7/23 Investing in young people
- 7/24 Problematic Media Use: Screening and Intervention
- 7/29 Adolescent substance abuse prevention /
- 7/30 Conflict management and problem solving
- 8/5 Harnessing the power of anxiety
- 8/6 Student Connectedness Fosters Attendance and Engagement
- 8/20 Mental health and special education
- 8/20 Classroom participation and engagement
- 8/21 Making the case for prevention
- 9/18 The power of emotion regulation to drive k12 wellbeing
- 9/24 Family Engagement is the Foundation for Attendance and Learning

***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](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! Contact: [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

\*\*\*\*\*

The work of the **National Initiative for Transforming Student/Learning Supports** emphasizes that:

***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.***

Our research indicates that transforming student/learning supports involves

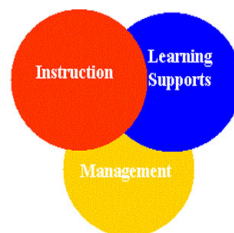
>moving school improvement policy from a 2 to a 3 component framework

and

>unifying and developing student/learning supports into a comprehensive and equitable intervention system

See:

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



**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/>)**