

(8/13/25) **This continuing education resource is from the national  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

### **Featured**

**(1) How are you heading off behavior problems?**

**(2) Youth depression rates decline**

**(3) About the impact of funding cuts on student learning**

And, as always, you will find

**(4) 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 you heading off behavior problems?**

#### **We received this Request:**

"I am a school superintendent and we are looking to help our students, principals, and staff by developing a way to meet with and support kids before they lose self control. We have seen a sharp increase in the # of students who become seriously dysregulated, younger and younger, in our elementary schools.

We are looking to have a support staff member work closely with each elementary school principal and a district BCBA to give students an alternative setting when the classroom teacher sees a student is spiraling. Our hope is to both support students when they are spiraling and before we have to evacuate the classroom etc. Our goal is to assist these students before the situation becomes too bad, help teachers with seeing signs before they happen, as well as teaching all staff how to diffuse situations with students through the teaching of preventive strategies.

We are at a point where the cup has "runneth over" in regards to the dramatic increases in behavior outbursts that we are seeing and needing to deal with. The physicality is quite concerning. We have had a three year effort working PreK - 12 on SEL with improved understanding for staff but the dramatic increase in students losing control in PreK-4 is quite concerning.

We/I need to stabilize the situation in our elementary schools which are all around 300 students with a principal, counselor, nurse, and social worker support. I am looking to add a support staff member in each school to work with the principal to assist each school. I know every situation is different but do you know of any MTSS/RTI systems a school or schools have put in place to catch students before "blast off", where classroom teachers are taught to sense possible difficulties and having a schoolwide intervention that helps the student (support staff member comes to the classroom and brings the student to a place) before they no longer have self-control?  
I would love to see some models that we could review.

I could go on and on but you get the general drift. We know we are unwittingly making most of these situations worse in the classroom and if we can reduce both the instances and offer greater support when a dysregulation goes to 100 we feel we can begin to crack the "classroom engagement needs" of individual students through suggested strategy support and PD seen live and in memories and less through hour-long PD.

Any info you could share about intervening in the above situations would be more than helpful."

## Center Comments:

Thanks for contacting us. Our perspective on this is laid out in

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

See Chapter 5. “Classroom Behavior Management: It's Not Just About Controlling Kids; It's About Engaging and Re-engaging Them in Learning” The chapter explores

- Managing Behavior at School: Overreliance on Strategies to Control Behavior
- About Punishment
- About Logical Consequences
- Is Skill Training an Answer?

A priority whenever a student misbehaves should not only be on restorative justice, but strategies that can promote the student's personal and social growth. Here are a few:

- >Promote a caring, supportive, and nurturing climate in the classroom and schoolwide
- >Personalize classroom instruction (e.g., to accommodate a wide range of motivational and developmental differences by ensuring a good match with students' intrinsic motivation and capabilities)
- >Provide status opportunities for nonpopular students (e.g., special roles as assistants and tutors)
- >Identify and remedy skill deficiencies early
- >Offer appropriate and attractive alternative ways the student can pursue a sense of competence, control, and relatedness
- >Equip students with acceptable steps to take instead of misbehaving (e.g., options to withdraw from a situation)
- >Enhance student motivation and skills for overcoming behavior problems (including altering negative attitudes toward school)
- >Provide extra support and guidance so that students who are prone to misbehave can cope with difficult situations (including steps that can be taken instead of misbehaving)
- >Develop consequences for misbehavior that are perceived by students as logical (i.e., that are perceived as reasonable fair, and nondenigrating reactions which do not threaten students' sense of competence, self-determination, and relatedness)

In general, we stress that efforts to address misbehavior provide natural, albeit challenging, opportunities to promote social and emotional development and minimize transactions that interfere with positive growth in these areas. Support staff need to grab hold of these opportunities as an avenue for working with teachers in a new way. See

### *>Common Behavior Problems at School: A Natural Opportunity for Social and Emotional Learning*

## Comments from the Field:

We sent this request to several colleague; here is the first reply. We are looking forward to more:

“ This is not an unusual situation, and these types of frustrations are growing. I've worked with school districts in multiple states and I'm suggesting Dialectical Behavior Therapy in schools. Some school districts are using Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) principles to train teachers and school staff on how to understand, anticipate, and respond to student behavior in ways that prevent escalation and support emotional regulation—both for students and adults. DBT is now adapted in some schools as a proactive tool to help students and staff manage emotional and behavioral challenges. It blends cognitive-behavioral techniques with mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Some districts offer DBT-informed training sessions to teachers, counselors, social workers, and paraprofessionals to understand what the behavior is trying to communicate, learning about

In Hall County School District in Georgia, teachers are taught to identify students' triggers (e.g., transitions, loud noises, academic frustration) and they learn to use proactive supports—such as giving choices, visual cues, or short breaks—to avoid triggering behaviors. DBT seems to work because it builds staff confidence in managing emotional and behavioral challenges. Also, because it promotes a positive school climate, reduces referrals, and increases teacher retention by decreasing burnout from difficult student interactions. DBT helps students learn emotional regulation from trusted adults modeling those skills in real time.

The Linehan Institute at U. Washington found that DBT-based group interventions in the school setting reduced behavioral incidents, confrontations, and out-of-school suspensions. Hall County (Ga) found a 45% reduction in student discipline referrals and many feedback sessions with teacher revealed significantly fewer student-staff confrontations, reduced student-to-student confrontations, and improved classroom climate.

It's also important to note that research has discovered that many students have language development issues that are not related to cognitive abilities – they were not in a language rich environment. A recent study of juveniles in detention found that 75 percent had receptive, expressive, and/or pragmatic language skill issues. When language is an issue, the behavior becomes the language. So, some school districts are training early grade teachers on Language as a Missing Link Toolkit. It's been effective in reducing student behavior issues while increasing student engagement.

For more resources related to this matter, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find on

## A cartoon illustration by Mark Anderson. Three people are seated at a table in what appears to be a cafe or office setting. On the left, a woman with short dark hair is looking towards the center. In the middle, a man with a shaved head is looking towards the right. On the right, a woman with long dark hair is looking towards the center. They are all holding coffee cups. On the table are several coffee cups, some with logos like Apple and Starbucks. There are also laptops open in front of them. The background shows a window with a grid pattern and some papers pinned to the wall. The cartoon is signed 'ANDERSON' in the bottom right corner. In the top right corner, there is a credit line: '© MARK ANDERSON, WWW.ANDERTOONS.COM'.

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## Youth Depression Rates Decline

From: *Teen suicide is on the decline, new federal data shows*

“...The analysis of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that between 2021 and 2024 depression and suicidal thoughts and behaviors in teens declined. ...

The new report shows that the prevalence of serious suicidal thoughts in 12-to-17-year-olds fell from nearly 13% in 2021 to 10% in 2024. And the prevalence of suicide attempts by teens also fell slightly — from 3.6% to 2.7%....

The report also found that the share of teens with an episode of major depression in the past year fell during this time — from 21% to 15%. ...”

For more resources related to this matter, see our online clearinghouse Quick Find on  
>[\*Depression\*](#)

Note: As part of their university experience, students working in our Center at UCLA often want to explore topics related to personal experiences. This was what led Hayley McAvoy to this topic. She wanted to learn and then share a perspective that would empower peers and school staff to help when someone seemed depressed. After reading these practice notes, let us know any changes you think will make this resource of greater use. See:

>[\*About Supporting Those Who Seem Depressed\*](#)

And we offer a general discussion of

>[\*Affect and Mood Problems related to School Aged Youth\*](#)

## For discussion and interchange

### >[\*About the impact of funding cuts on student learning\*](#)

Recently we asked how for your perspectives on the following:

- (1) *In what ways will changes in the way the federal government plays its role in the nation's education system have implications for students and schools?*
- (2) *What do you think can be done to minimize negative outcomes for students?*

We thought you might be interested in the following response from a colleague:

“Many changes are on the landscape and most will have a negative impact on public education, especially students.

Impact of the government's overreach:

Control of public education will lead to decreased funding to our already depleted state and local budgets, as well as more control over what can and should be taught in public schools. Educational outcomes from the government's overreach will lead to more disparities in educational opportunities, increased inequities in higher education opportunities, decreased educational and career opportunities for marginalized students, disproportionate treatment of students of color and students with disabilities, increases to the school-to-prison pipeline, more racism and bullying in schools, increases in social injustices, and economic despair, just to name a few.

Dictating what schools must teach in history and science will impact students by depleting the knowledge and thinking skills they require in order to function in a culturally diverse and globally-connected world. It will decrease students' awareness of social inequities and injustices and lead to a poorly prepared workforce (see item above, as well.) Again, this is just to name a few.

This is the million dollar question! Two things I think are important: 1) We must reshape the image of public education, and that means emphasizing what has been working really well and de-emphasizing the failures. I believe we'll get more buy-in and will be better positioned to replicate

these successful efforts. Despite how much improvement we've witnessed over the last few decades, there is little acknowledgement of what has worked well. Undoubtedly, this is the result of a negative campaign against public education by those who are fighting for privatization. This is not a new attack, but was planned and put in motion many, many years ago by a power-hungry group of people who are massively funded by wealthy individuals and corporations. So, I believe we need to identify what's working well and replicate those things, but at the local level, not at the state and federal levels. When outcomes are aggregated at those levels, it makes everyone look bad! We need to focus on what's working at the local levels and replicate those things in schools that continue to struggle (with appropriate funding to ensure success.) 2) We must close the gap between high school and post-secondary education. Many, many students have reported that high school did not prepare them for their college or career experiences. They are now disillusioned more than ever. In order to improve outcomes, we must identify a pathway for success after high school. This means we will need to reshape the language around public education. Public fear about what is being taught in schools is unfounded and has led to a perception of our school system as being "indoctrinating" and "anti-parent". This fear and perception has been fueled by terminology that "twists our words" and creates greater fear and animosity among the public. The attacks need to be stopped and we can only do that by addressing what students need (by way of skills, not by ambiguous terms that can't be quantified). We need to prepare students for workforce and life success. So, we need to reshape the language around what these skills are.

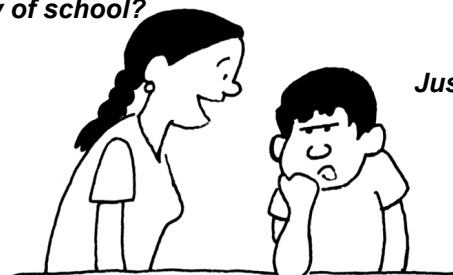
Additional thoughts:

We should look at how we can help educators develop a systems-thinking perspective. More training is needed on what this means and what it looks like. We can't change our education system using a symptoms approach or a component approach. Educators need more training on what this means and what it looks like. They also need more training on implementation science so they better understand that implementation of new programs or practices must be done using systems-thinking and understanding the underpinnings of successful implementation."

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

- >Staff Who Shape the School Day
- >Reimagining Open House: Connecting Families, Inspiring Learning, Building Community
- >Profiles of Risk and Promotive Factors Associated With Aggression and Other Problem Behaviors Among Middle School Students in an Urban School System
- >Empowering Adolescents to Transform Schools: Lessons from a Behavioral Targeting
- >The Effectiveness of School-Based Programs on Aggressive Behaviors among Children and Adolescents
- >Training, Education, Assistance, Mentorship and Support to Enhance School Health Services
- >Sustaining Community Schools Through State-Level Blending & Braiding
- >6 building blocks of positive school communities

*How was the first day of school?*



### **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>

- 8/13 Redesigning school in an era of declining enrollment
- 8/14 Building resilience: How families can prepare for the uncertain school year ahead
- 8/20 Mental health and special education
- 8/20 Understanding anxiety
- 8/20 Inviting yourself to the table
- 8/20 Building resilient teams
- 8/20 Classroom participation and engagement
- 8/21 From Classrooms to Careers: How Schools and Districts Can Prepare Students for a Changing Workforce
- 8/21 Making the case for prevention
- 8/25 Understanding anxiety in children and youth
- 8/26 Building strong prevention partnerships
- 8/27 Homeless youth: scenarios and solutions
- 8/27 Social media impact on youth
- 8/27 Understanding depression
- 9/4 Social media and teen mental health
- 9/9 Ensuring literacy success across the disciplines for students with disabilities
- 9/10 Theories of change
- 9/10 Homeless youth: McKinney-Vento basics
- 9/15 Responding to children in crisis
- 9/16 Creating a low stress environment
- 9/17 Helping families support their child's mental health needs
- 9/17 Understanding grief
- 9/17 Strategies to improve student engagement
- 9/17 Supporting Unaccompanied youth
- 9/18 How parents can help anxious children
- 9/18 The power of emotion regulation to drive k12 wellbeing
- 9/24 Family Engagement is the Foundation for Attendance and Learning
- 9/29 De-escalating children in distress
- 10/1 Determining McKinney-Vento eligibility with care

***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)

**We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths. Walt Disney**



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

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

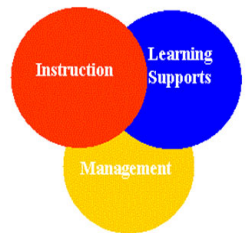
**Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.**

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>.**