

(8/19/26) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

Featured

(1) How one district's leadership is taking students' advice

(2) What's a school's role in helping families meet the new Medicaid requirements?

(3) The Case for Systemic Redesign of Student/Learning Supports

And, as always, you will find

(4) Links to more resources

This community of practice *Practitioner* is designed for a screen bigger than an phone.

For discussion and interchange:

>How one district's leadership is taking students' advice

From: *How LAUSD students influence, learn from district leadership*

"Each month, about 20 Los Angeles Unified students gather on Zoom to discuss some of the district's toughest issues — from school finance to mental health — and give recommendations to help shape policy.

Should Los Angeles Unified consider closing campuses amid budget shortfalls? Are large class sizes entirely bad for students — or are they good preparation for the college lecture halls to come? What makes school worth attending?

These are the kinds of questions students on board member Tanya Ortiz Franklin's Student Advisory Council consider each month. The council is one of several student advisory groups that give young people a direct line to district leaders. Other school board members convene their own councils, and the superintendent also has an advisory council. ..

The councils do more than give students a chance to weigh in on issues confronting the district. They also provide a firsthand look at how school boards, district leaders and local governments make decisions — and how students can influence those decisions. ...

To ensure they represent more than their own opinions, council members survey students across the board district to solicit more perspectives before making recommendations....

Ortiz Franklin described the students as the district's 'ear to the ground.' Council members collaborate with other student advisory councils, district administrators and the elected student board members to highlight student concerns and propose solutions....

Student input extends beyond individual board offices. The Superintendent's Student Advisory Council includes students from across the district, representing multiple grade levels, schools and backgrounds.

The Student Advisory Council, which makes presentations to the school board on occasion, has informed 'conversations and decisions around student wellness, school climate, instructional supports, and opportunities for student voice and engagement,' the district said in a statement. 'The Council serves as a direct line between students and District leadership,' the statement reads. 'It provides a structured space for students to share their perspectives, elevate issues that matter most to them, and offer feedback on District initiatives and policies....'"

Center Comment:

Student voice brings a wide range of perspectives that reflect both individual and group differences, including background, socioeconomic status, developmental level, motivation, and communication skills. Student participation can take several forms:

- Joining established adult-led groups, such as committees, planning teams, and decision-making bodies.
- Creating and leading their own organizations, where students identify priorities and take action on issues that matter to them.
- Forming collaborative structures in which students and adults work as equal partners, sharing responsibility for discussion, planning, and decision making.

By engaging students through these varied avenues, district leaders gain valuable insights that can strengthen policies, improve practices, and foster a more inclusive and responsive educational environment.

For more on student voice, participation, and development, see our Center Resources

> [*Youth Participation: making it real*](#)

> [*About Student Voice and Participation*](#)

> [*Promoting Youth Development and Addressing Barriers*](#)

We also have a Quick Find on

> [*Youth Development*](#)

For discussion and interchange:

> ***What 's a school's role in helping families meet the new Medicaid requirements?***

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation estimates that “Between 4.9 and 10.1 million people will lose Medicaid coverage in 2028 due to work requirements and more frequent eligibility checks under high and low mitigation scenarios, respectively....”

From: [*Medicaid Community Engagement Requirement ...*](#)

“As required by law, on June 1, 2026, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued an interim final rule implementing a new statutory requirement for certain adults in Medicaid to meet an 80 hours per month work requirement (sometimes referred to as Medicaid community engagement) as a condition of eligibility. States must generally implement this requirement no later than January 1, 2027....

Under the rule, affected Medicaid applicants and enrollees (referred to as “applicable individuals”) will be required to demonstrate 80 hours per month of qualifying activities, such as employment, participation in certain work programs, or community service, or be enrolled in educational program at least half time. ..

Certain individuals are exempt from the requirement, including those who are pregnant or in a postpartum period, disabled or medically frail, parents and caretakers of children under 14 years of age or people with disabilities, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and certain others...”

Center Question:

Is this an opportunity for schools/districts to strengthen GED, Adult Education, and volunteer programs for the parent/families of high school students? (Would districts see this as an opportunity?)

Here's what two colleagues had to say about this question:

(1) "This an interesting idea and I'm not sure how districts might think about it - probably depends on the district.

My first thought is that a progressive district could partner with their local Medicaid Services office (develop an Memorandum of understanding) to make sure THEY know about volunteer opportunities in the district. The offices are required to reach out to "applicable individuals" to make sure they're meeting requirements and to notify them 30 days in advance if benefits will be terminated.

This seems like the perfect opportunity for them to suggest/highlight volunteerism opportunities for the district and provide contact information. That way, schools don't necessarily have to "advertise" but could benefit from the support... The district could design a "check-in" system for volunteers and report the data to the Medicaid office to help with their reporting/processing requirements, knowing the data is verified by the school. This could potentially help with federal Medicaid reporting.

Similarly, schools may have educational programs (GED and/or Adult Ed) that could be promoted through the Medicaid office when they conduct their routine outreach/eligibility checks. Again, promotion would be minimal on the district's part but they would have to consider the cost per student to run the program and perhaps "cap" the number of enrollees..... The Medicaid folks would need to understand when/where/how much, etc for these opportunities so that attendance can be tracked for the individual.

Without some type of agreement with the Medicaid office, districts will need to invest staff time to promote and recruit Medicaid recipients. Then, they may have to train or, at a minimum, provide orientation to help them understand and successfully complete their work. And then, there could be reporting requirements on the part of the district. I don't see school leaders taking this on without a partnership - even if it is a great idea."

(2) "These rules were in place during the Bush era. As a social worker in the late 90s and early 2000s, I encouraged moms to get part-time work, like Educational Assistants in the schools. I'm curious what the new generations of welfare recipients will do and how they are thinking and how this will impact them? I have always worried about our workforce for high school students... it doesn't prep them well for high paying jobs. Many work fast food and can't get out of that cycle of poverty... "

Do you have a perspective on what the impact of work/volunteer requirements for Medicaid will have on the families in your school/district/community? If so, please send it along to us for sharing with colleagues. Send to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

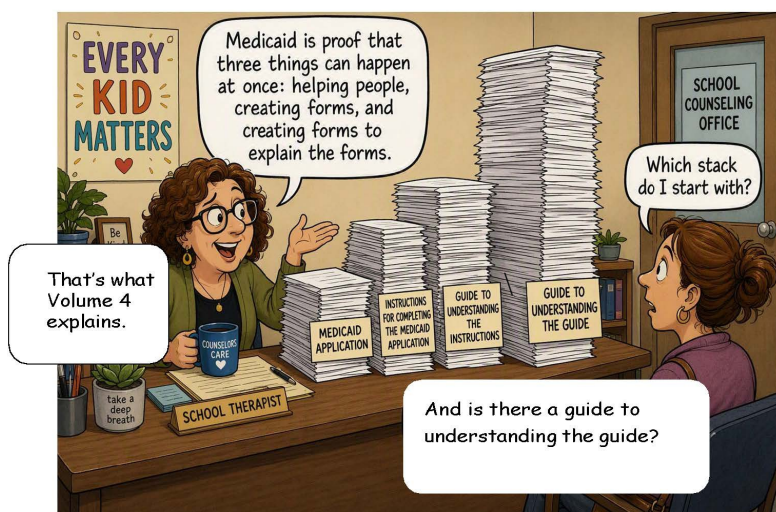
You may be interested in this Center resource:

>[*About Addressing Poverty: What's a School's Role?*](#)

Here's two related Center Quick Finds:

>[*Children and Poverty*](#)

>[*Student and Family Assistance*](#)



For discussion and interchange:

>The Case for Systemic Redesign of Student/Learning Supports

Schools have long been expected to provide high-quality instruction and effective management. Today, however, there is growing recognition that these two imperatives, while essential, are not sufficient to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to learn and succeed. Students come to school affected by a wide range of factors that influence engagement, behavior, attendance, well-being, development, and academic performance. Mental and physical health concerns, family and housing instability, poverty, chronic absenteeism, social isolation, trauma, and other barriers to learning and teaching profoundly shape students' opportunities to benefit from instruction. As a result, increasing attention is being given to strengthening student and learning supports.

Across the country, educators, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders are pursuing a variety of initiatives intended to address these concerns. Whole-child approaches, integrated student supports, community schools, comprehensive school mental health efforts, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS), expansion of student support personnel, and system transformation initiatives all reflect a growing awareness that learning, development, and well-being are deeply interconnected. Although these efforts differ in emphasis, terminology, and strategy, they share a common recognition: improving student outcomes requires more than improving instruction. Schools also must strengthen their capacity to address barriers to learning and teaching and to promote conditions that enable all students to thrive.

Our Center report *New Directions for Student and Learning Supports: From Fragmented Initiatives to System Transformation* examines major initiatives being pursued to strengthen student and learning supports, identifies lessons emerging from these efforts, and explores implications for new policy and practice directions. In doing so, we highlight progress that has been made and the significant challenges that remain.

A central theme running throughout the report is that no single initiative has provided a sufficiently comprehensive framework for addressing the full range of factors that interfere with learning and teaching. Moreover, despite decades of reform activity, student and learning supports continue to operate largely as fragmented and often marginalized endeavors.

While much of the current discussion focuses on fragmentation of services and supports, this report argues that fragmentation is not the fundamental problem. It is a symptom of a deeper policy problem: efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching have never been established as a primary and essential component of school improvement. Consequently, programs, services, personnel, and initiatives frequently develop in parallel rather than as parts of a coherent and comprehensive system.

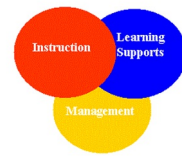
From this perspective, the next major stage of progress requires moving beyond the longstanding two-component framework for school improvement focused on instruction and management/governance. Our view is that school improvement policy must incorporate a third primary component dedicated to addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Operationalized as a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports, this third component provides a foundation for weaving together existing programs, services, personnel, and community resources into a coherent system for enhancing learning, development, well-being, and equity of opportunity.

The central challenge ahead is system development, not program development.

The next major frontier in school improvement is not program expansion – it is system transformation.

For guidance and resources on how to transform student/learning supports, see the

>National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports.



>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

- >>Helping young people navigate emerging adulthood
- >>Declining enrollment in public schools: reasons and recommendation
- >>Elevating Rural Voices in Evidence-Based School Practice
- >>Youth advisory boards: A scoping review of characteristics, youth engagement...
- >>What Is Student Voice Anyway? Intersection of Student Voice and Shared Leadership
- >>School cellphone bans don't boost scores or attendance, study finds
- >>Miami-Dade schools no longer offering free meals districtwide
- >>When language barriers look like learning disabilities

Here's a few more Center resources:

- >>Volunteers in Schools <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/volunteers.html>
- >>Guiding and Supporting Volunteers
- >>Volunteers to Help Teachers and Schools Address Barriers to Learning
- >>Evidence-Based Parent Training Programs for those Raising a K-5 Student

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>

- 8/19 Eating disorders
- 8/20 Authentic family engagement
- 8/24 Supporting emotional regulation in kids
- 8/24 Prevention core competencies
- 8/25 How AI is being incorporated into tools that support reading, writing ...
- 8/25 Adapting prevention programs
- 9/1 Connecting prevention and youth leadership
- 9/16 Rethink Classroom Management
- 9/16 Communicating with the IEP team
- 9/17 Special education advisory councils
- 9/23 Navigating IEP disagreements
- 9/29 Leading Teams: Building Capacity for Teacher Leaders
- 10/7 Understanding special educations: the IEP
- 10/7 How AI can help you build flexible options for diverse learners

How Learning Happens (Edutopia's series of videos explores guiding all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become engaged learners).

Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth (Webinar recording)

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To Listserv Participants

We hope you will share this resource with others who may find it helpful.

And 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 140,000 on our listserv.)

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

Send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

@#@#@#@#

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! Contact: Ltaylor@ucla.edu

THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER

Who Are We? Our national Center was established in 1995 under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project (which was established in 1986). We are part of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. The Center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and now is named the *Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports*.