

(9/18/24) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

## **Featured**

### **>Enhancing How Schools Assist Families**

Also for discussion:

#### **>Promoting social capital in youth**

And, as always:

#### **>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:**

#### **>Enhancing How Schools Assist Families**

The strongest predictors that a student is likely to drop out are family characteristics such as: socioeconomic status, family structure, family stress (e.g., death, divorce, family moves), and the mother's age. Students who come from low-income families, are the children of single, young, unemployed mothers, or who have experienced high degrees of family stress are more likely than other students to drop out of school. Of those characteristics, low socioeconomic status has been shown to bear the strongest relationship to students' tendency to drop out.

National Education Association

Schools are well aware of the many factors interfering with the participation of parents and other student caretakers in pursuing the school's agenda. Examples include caretaker economic status, work schedules, immigrant status, ethnic and racial considerations, single parent families, number of youngsters in the home, homes where English is not spoken, extended families, military families, families where a parent is in prison, foster homes, and homeless families and youngsters. In addition, some caretakers have disabilities, and some are dysfunctional.

While schools cannot be expected to overcome all these matters, they must play a role in addressing them in order to make significant reductions in the opportunity and achievement gaps.

Unfortunately, as with so many endeavors for addressing barriers to learning and teaching, home involvement policies and practice are not well-developed at many schools.

Engaging/reengaging primary student caretakers who are encountering significant obstacles to participation requires extraordinary outreach strategies and a full continuum of supports. In moving forward, we stress that schools must

- broaden their focus beyond thinking only in terms of parents to primary caretakers
- enhance the range of ways in which schools address factors that interfere with (re)engaging primary caretakers (with particular attention to outreaching to those caring for a youngster who is not doing well)
- transform current policy and practice to fully encompass home involvement and engagement into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching

As an aid for moving forward with an expanded approach to enhancing how schools assist families, see *Home Involvement, Engagement, and Re-engagement in Schooling*. (This is Chapter 15 in *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*.) The chapter presents ways to frame and design the efforts with an emphasis on how it fits into school improvements that strengthen and build on efforts to transform student/learning supports.

For more on family support, see our Center Quick Find on:

>*Parent/Home Involvement and Engagement in Schools*

Other related Center resources include:

>*Engaging the Strengths of Families, Youth, and Communities*

>*School-Based Mutual Support Groups*

>*Children and poverty*

>*Homeless children and youth*

>*Student and family assistance*

From: *Parents Helping Parents Achieve Stability*

Together with Families, a program funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, achieved remarkable results in its pilot program for families experiencing homelessness in Cobb County, Georgia....

Referred by the Cobb County School District, families in the pilot received crucial support to secure basic needs like transportation, employment opportunities and education....

Children were able to stay in their schools, experiencing improved attendance and academic performance....

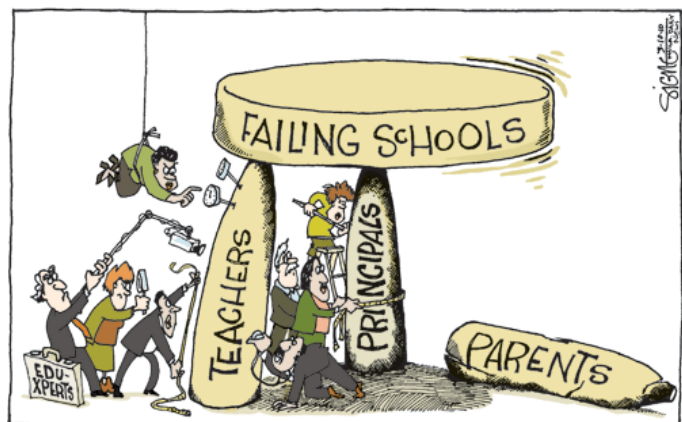
Key areas of focus included:

- > Safe and Secure Housing: The program offered assistance with navigating housing programs....
- > Reliable Transportation...
- > Employment Opportunities: Parents were connected to job training, resume building workshops and interview coaching....

#### **The Power of Peer Support**

The pilot went beyond simply providing resources. Together with Families fosters genuine connections through its parent ally component. These allies, themselves with past experiences in poverty or the child welfare system, receive comprehensive training to support families by:

- > Offering Peer Support....
- > Identifying Needs and Goals....
- > Building a Support Network: The program connects families with valuable community resources, fostering long-term stability and a sense of empowerment....”



**For discussion and interchange:**

**>Promoting social capital in youth**

While not enough, there are many youth-oriented programs for after school and non-school days in the schools. Some are on school campuses; other are at parks, community centers, churches, libraries, and organizational and business sites. The programs serve a variety of functions for students, families, schools, and society. They provide a safe time and place to enhance and enrich learning and for healthy recreation; they help with child care for working families; they play a role in countering neighborhood juvenile delinquency and school dropouts. Working families have a particularly high need for such programs. And the programs have been found especially beneficial for students at greatest risk for learning and behavior problems.

From: *The Role of Organized Activities in Supporting Youth Social Capital Development*

“...social capital is defined as the resources that arise out of a web of developmental relationships that young people can access and mobilize to improve their lives and achieve their goals...

Organized activities are defined as structured and supervised activities outside the school curriculum that a group of young people engage in (Bohnert et al., 2010). This may include school-based extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs, as well as out-of-school time programming such as faith-based, youth, and workforce development programs. Plentiful research has shown that positive relationships provided through these activities support youth in pursuing their education and career aspirations...

Organized activities are known to serve as important contexts for positive youth development and growth, where young people have opportunities to build skills (e.g., relationship-building, social skills), overcome challenges (e.g., peer pressure, academic struggles), and foster prosocial relationships...

Several supporting structures that were helpful for cultivating a relationally strong climate that prioritized youth social capital development. This relationally strong climate was characterized as a safe and culturally responsive space where youth feel a strong sense of community and belonging, and are provided opportunities to explore their sparks; i.e., the interests and passions that give them joy, energy, and purpose...

Organized activities also created a strong relational climate through fostering community and a sense of belonging. Across the organized activities examined, staff and youth often described their organized activities as a “second home,” a family, and/or a team...

Participation in organized activities can foster a commitment to paying-it-forward, both within the program and the greater community context. For instance, some organized activities intentionally built in opportunities for the youth to become interns or mentors to incoming cohorts ... Activities that provide opportunities for youth leadership foster high regard for reciprocity and encourage youth to leverage their own social capital in support of their community....

When organized activities partner with youth’s families and other community organizations, they enhance the capacity of their staff by expanding their network of resources (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Through this expanded network, organized activities are better able to provide wraparound supports that meet the holistic needs of the youth...

These findings serve as a call for action for organized activities to consider how they might increase collective efficacy and action to redress the systematic barriers and inequities that prevent many young people from reaching their full potential.”

For more on this matter, see our Center resources:

**>Youth Participation: Making It Real**

**>About Programs for After School Hours and Non-school Days**

And the Center Quick Find on: **Youth Development**

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**Are the above matters being discussed in your locale?**

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

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

- >> **Preparing Schools for Educational Change: Barriers and Supports**
- >> **Welcoming families**
- >> **A Systematic Review of the Facilitators and Barriers to Help-Seeking for Self-Harm in Young People: A Systems Thinking Perspective**
- >> **Supporting English Learner Students With Disabilities**
- >> **The Hodgepodge Reality: A Qualitative Systematic Review of the Challenges and Barriers in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care Systems**
- >> **Are chronic absenteeism interventions working?**
- >> **70 Years After Brown v. Board, Dolls Research Still Sheds Light on Black Children's Well-being**
- >> **State of the Superintendent 2024**

**A Few Upcoming Webinars**

***For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts***

- 9/19 Teaching digital and media literacy
- 9/19 Teacher compensation reforms
- 9/19 The IEP: special education series
- 9/19 Empowering grassroots mentoring
- 9/25 Compassion fatigue and burnout
- 9/25 The critical role of interpreters in special education meetings
- 9/25 Using AI tools to address equity
- 9/25 Keeping talented teachers
- 9/26 Afterschool programs to reduce absenteeism
- 9/26 Organizational culture
- 9/26 Mental health and special education
- 10/1 Preventing bullying
- 10/16 Cooperative activities
- 10/17 Promoting the wellbeing of students
- 10/17 Wellness and resilience
- 10/23 Addressing challenging behaviors
- 10/24 Effective communication with the IEP team
- 11/14 Balancing academics, extracurriculars and college application stress

Webinar recording: ***[Unpacking the Impacts of Structural Racism on Youth](#)***

For more webinars, go to the our Center's links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

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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)

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Schools committed to the success of all children must be redesigned so that teachers, student support staff, and others at the school can help students as early as is feasible when they become aware of a behavior, emotional, learning, and/or physical problem. Such a redesign can minimize the impact of such problems and appropriately stem the tide of referrals for out of class specialized assistance (e.g., mental health services) and special education.

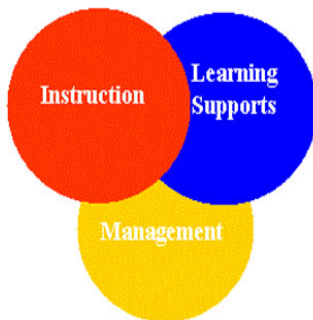
Through the ***National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports***, our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

If you are aware of efforts underway to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching, please share with us.

And if anyone is thinking about increasing the capacity of a district or school with respect to developing a *unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports*, we have many resources to help in moving forward. For example, see our recent guides:

- >***Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions***
- >***Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process***

Send all info and requests to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)



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**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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**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 resource ideas, requests, comments,  
and experiences for sharing.**

**THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF THE PRACTITIONER**

Who Are We? Recently renamed the Center for MH in Schools and Student/Learning Supports, 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.