

This resource is from the national  
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA (36 Years & Counting)  
(September, 2022 Vol. 26 #12)

**Featured:**

**>What are the plans for supporting students seen as struggling during their first weeks at school?**

**Plus:**

**>Quick links to online resources**

**>A few news stories**

**>Comments and sharing from the field**

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***A Difficult School Year Ahead as Students,  
Many of Them Already Behind, Return to Classrooms***

This news headline seems self-evident. The question it raises for schools is:

**What are the plans for supporting students seen as struggling during the first weeks of school?**

Even before the pandemic, some students experienced difficulties adjusting to new classes, new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc.

It is always poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but can't keep up.

Over the first few weeks, teachers realize quickly who has and hasn't made a good adjustment to their classrooms and to the school. That is the time to address any problems before they get worse. If adjustment problems are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase. The misbehavior often arises in reaction to learning difficulties or may be the result of problems at home.

**Prepare Teachers and Student/Learning Support Staff to Intervene Quickly**

To proactively address the needs of students who are not adjusting well to school, staff development plans can include a focus on the type of strategies described below.

It is invaluable to have student support staff work with teachers *in their classrooms* to intervene before problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions. As soon as a student is identified as having problems adjusting, a problem-solving process should be initiated. The process begins with efforts to enhance personal contacts and build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.

The teacher and/or a student support staff member arrange a meeting to better understand the student's interests, capabilities, and the causes of the problem with the aim of working out ways to make things better at school. To these ends, the interchange explores

- the student's assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class);
- what the youngster doesn't like at school and the reasons for this (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?);
- other possible causal factors

Based on what is learned from the meeting, possible actions to make things better are explored with the youngster and those in the home. The focus is on feasible changes that

- build on the student's assets and that deemphasize areas that are not of high interest
- provide extra support and guidance, including tutoring (e.g., from a volunteer, a peer, friend,, etc.)
- provide temporary special assistance in the classroom as necessary
- stress strategies designed to enhance the student's engagement during learning activities and other facets of the school day (e.g., provide learning and enrichment options that are a good fit with the student's capabilities and interests; teach specific academic and social skills that are seen as barriers to effective classroom performance and learning.)

### **Some Special Assistance Strategies\***

If a student seems easily distracted, the following might be used:

- identify any specific environmental factors that distract the student and make appropriate environmental changes
- have student work with a group with others who are task-focused
- designate a volunteer to help whenever the student becomes distracted and/or starts to misbehave, and if necessary, to help make transitions
- allow for frequent "breaks"
- interact with the students in ways that will minimize confusion and distractions (e.g., keep conversations relatively short; talk quietly and slowly; use concrete terms; express warmth and nurturance)

If students need more direction, the following might be used:

- develop and provide sets of specific prompts, multisensory cues, steps, etc. using oral, written, and other guides as organizational aids related to specific learning activities, materials, and daily schedules
- ensure someone checks with the student frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)
- support students efforts related to self-monitoring and self-evaluation and provide nurturing feedback keyed to the student's progress and next steps

If the student has difficulty finishing tasks as scheduled, the following might be used:

- modify the length and time demands of assignments and tests
- modify the nature of the process and products (e.g., allow use of technological tools and allow for oral, audio-visual, arts and crafts, graphic, and computer generated products)

\*The need for special assistance is best identified through a response to intervention (RtI) assessment. Once the need is indicated, teachers can benefit from bringing a support staff member into the class to help implement strategies. Also, aides, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors, those in the home, etc. not only can help support student efforts to learn and perform, but can enhance the students social support network.

If nothing seems to be working, seek out collegial support and coaching.

- Ask for structured staff discussions and staff development (including observations) to learn what others are doing
- Ask that other staff (mentors, student support staff, resource teachers, etc.) be enabled to team with teachers in their classrooms to enable school adjustment

If all else fails, it is time to use the school's referral processes to ask for specialized support services. As such services are added, it is essential to coordinate them with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

For links to more resources related to the above, see the following Center Quick Finds

> *Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcoming*

[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101\\_01.htm](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm)

> *Classroom Focused Enabling* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm>

> *Motivation* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

> *Response to Intervention* <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/responsetointervention.htm>

> *Special assistance* is covered in Chapters 9 & 10 of *Improving School Improvement*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/improve.pdf>

The following free books may be helpful for staff who want to delve deeply into concerns related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students:

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

> *Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change*

Both can be accessed at [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html)

*And don't forget about supporting new teachers – see*

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/8-25-22.pdf>

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“Quite simply, money does matter and investing in education early and often matters in the everyday life of a student. Ultimately, as a civil right, we need to support students through the P-20 pipeline, which includes high school completion and earnings later in life, with the ultimate goal of reducing adult poverty.”

Vasquez Heilig

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## >Quick Links to Online Resources

Re-conceptualisation of school bullying from a children's rights' perspective

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/chso.12546>

2022 State Trends in Child Well-Being <https://www.aecf.org/resources/2022-kids-count-data-book>

School and classroom climate measures [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR4259.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4259.html)

Gauging school climate <https://www.nasbe.org/gauging-school-climate/>

Conceptualizing and Measuring Safe and Supportive Schools

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40688-020-00309-6>

Misconceptions about school shootings

<https://www.wested.org/resources/five-misconceptions-about-school-shootings/>

Addressing Teacher Shortages by Adjusting Teacher Salaries

[https://ednote.ecs.org/addressing-teacher-shortages-by-adjusting-teacher-salaries/?utm\\_source=ECS+Subscriber&utm\\_campaign=6288604b09-Ed\\_Note\\_Daily&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_1a2b00b930-6288604b09-53599575](https://ednote.ecs.org/addressing-teacher-shortages-by-adjusting-teacher-salaries/?utm_source=ECS+Subscriber&utm_campaign=6288604b09-Ed_Note_Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1a2b00b930-6288604b09-53599575)

More Federal Funding for Safety and Mental Health in Schools

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/8-4-22.pdf>

Increased Attention to Mental Health in Schools is an Opportunity to do More than Address the Immediate Needs of a Few Students <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/8-18-22.pdf>

Enhancing Equity of Opportunity at Schools: Not likely without schools developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System of Student/Learning Supports

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/8-11-22.pdf>

Understanding & Preventing ACEs

[https://nihcm.org/publications/understanding-preventing-aces?utm\\_source=NIHCM+Foundation&utm\\_campaign=142c599197-Understanding\\_%26\\_preventing\\_ACEs\\_infographic&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_6f88de9846-142c599197-167730924](https://nihcm.org/publications/understanding-preventing-aces?utm_source=NIHCM+Foundation&utm_campaign=142c599197-Understanding_%26_preventing_ACEs_infographic&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6f88de9846-142c599197-167730924)

Strategies to Create a Healthy and Supportive School Environment

[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sec\\_schools.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sec_schools.htm)

CDC has sections on its website discussing

- >School Connectedness
- >Protective Factors in Schools
- >Parents for Healthy Schools
- >Adolescent Connectedness
- >Positive Parenting Practices
- >Helping Children Cope

See links at Back to School Time

[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/features/B2S.htm?ACSTrackingID=USCDC\\_1009\\_DM87125&ACSTrackingLabel=Helping%20Students%20Return%20to%20a%20Healthy%20and%20Supportive%20School%20Environment&deliveryName=USCDC\\_1009\\_DM87125](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/features/B2S.htm?ACSTrackingID=USCDC_1009_DM87125&ACSTrackingLabel=Helping%20Students%20Return%20to%20a%20Healthy%20and%20Supportive%20School%20Environment&deliveryName=USCDC_1009_DM87125)

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“Understanding the root causes of adverse outcomes and addressing these circumstances through primary prevention services and interventions strengthens and empowers families, communities, and the nation and helps to ensure that all people have equitable opportunities to avoid negative health and social outcomes.”

National Prevention Science Coalition

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**Here's what was discussed in the Community of Practice during August**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

Note: All community of practice editions contain Links to relevant shared resources.

- >How should schools improve discipline practices?
- >About student jobs: Good for students? Good for schools?
- >What's Going on with children's cabinets?
- >Accounting for the views of children and adolescents
- >What role do situational and relationship factors play in youngsters' emotional problems?
- >Does a "hardened campus" discourage parent engagement?
- >Welcoming and student/family support starts at the front office
- >Concerned about student anxiety, aggressive behavior, school climate?
- >How are schools using federal funds to advance efforts to transform student and learning supports?
- >How can classroom's better meet student needs this fall?
- >Finding places where marginalized young adults can find support and increase resilience

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**>For more resources in general, see our website**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

**>For info on the status of upcoming conferences**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

**>For info on webinars**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

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"We do not have any evidence to show that most of the products and solutions being touted as part of the \$3 billion per year school safety and security market are effective. It is critical that any proposed policies, procedures, or solutions be empirically tested. We shouldn't just grab for the shiny objects or the things we can see because they make us feel better or feel like something is being done." Dr. Jaclyn Schildkraut

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**>Calls for grant proposals**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upcall.htm>

**> job and training opportunities  
when available**  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm>

## Online Summit Being Planned by the National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

As part of the *National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, a national online summit is being planned focused on unifying student/learning supports with mental health concerns fully embedded.

We are seeking widespread input as we plan the summit.

*Please take a few minutes to respond to the 4 questions  
on p. 3 of the following brief article.*

### **Reversing the Fragmentation of Student/Learning Supports: Are You Part of the Problem?**

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summer2022.pdf>

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Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. See <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>.

## >A Few News Stories (excerpted from various news sources)

**Student Gains Last Year Narrowed COVID Learning Gap.** “New research shows students largely made academic gains this past year that paralleled their growth pre-pandemic and outpaced the previous school year.... “These signs of rebounding are especially heartening during another challenging school year of more variants, staff shortages, and a host of uncertainties. We think that speaks volumes to the tremendous effort put forth by our schools to support students,” Karyn Lewis, director of the Center for School and Student Progress at NWEA...  
<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-07-19/study-student-gains-last-year-narrowed-covid-learning-gap>

**Relief Funds Help Districts Find Homeless Students Lost During Pandemic.** Report: Federal aid has tripled the number of districts receiving funds to identify and re-engage homeless students, but challenges remain. Homeless students have a right to immediate enrollment in school, even without academic and residency documents, and to remain there no matter where they move. But the relief funds have expanded ways districts can respond to emergencies. Many offer families prepaid debit cards and pay for short-term hotel stays. One purchased bicycles to help students get to school.  
<https://www.the74million.org/article/relief-funds-help-districts-find-homeless-students-lost-during-pandemic/>

**Ways ed leaders can prepare for funds in newly enacted gun safety bill.** The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act provides over \$2 billion to expand mental health services, improve learning conditions and enhance school safety. With the enactment of the \$13 billion Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, schools will have an influx of available federal funds to put toward expanding mental health supports and improving learning conditions and school safety.  
<https://www.k12dive.com/news/4-ways-ed-leaders-can-prepare-for-funds-in-newly-enacted-gun-safety-bill/626125/>

**Vermont’s multicultural liaisons help create bridges between new immigrant families and schools.** In addition to supporting teachers with new students in the classroom and helping immigrant families communicate with school and city departments, multicultural liaisons also provide assistance with health care, housing, food, legal aid, insurance, transportation and internet

issues. The English-language learning programs were remodeled and renamed “to reflect who our students are, their language strengths, and that we value those parts of their identity.” At the basic level, liaisons convey essential school information such as student progress and school events, while also supporting teachers with newcomers in class. At a higher level, the liaisons help implement the district’s goals of equity and inclusion by connecting families to employment, housing and helping to build strong community roots.

<https://vtdigger.org/2022/07/22/vermonts-multicultural-liaisons-help-create-bridges-between-new-immigrant-families-and-schools/>

**Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021.** “...Overall, several crime and safety issues have become less prevalent in the nation’s schools and college campuses over the past decade, while some have become more prevalent. Lower percentages of public schools in 2019–20 than in 2009–10 reported that each of the following discipline problems occurred at least once a week: student bullying (15 percent in 2019–20 vs. 23 percent in 2009–10), student sexual harassment of other students (2 vs. 3 percent), and student harassment of other students based on sexual orientation or gender identity (2 vs. 3 percent). However, cyberbullying has become more prevalent. A higher percentage of public schools reported cyberbullying in 2019–20 than in 2009–10 (16 vs. 8 percent)....” <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022092>

**Free summer camp pays dividends: 100K .Arizona children fill learning gaps created by pandemic.** Across Arizona this summer, students are learning in a variety of new ways. The pedagogy has changed, but the educational purposes are familiar and, leaders say, critical to catch students up to fill social and learning gaps the pandemic may have created. Gov. Doug Ducey’s AZ On Track Summer Camp program, announced in March, awarded 150 organizations grant contracts to offer free summer camp sessions and allocated more than \$100 million from American Rescue Plan funds toward it.

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-education/2022/07/20/gov-doug-ducey-free-summer-camp-program-benefits-100-thousand-arizona-children/7813540001/>

**Legislative Council rescinds \$500M in spending authority for Arkansas Department of Education.** The Arkansas Legislative Council approved a motion to rescind its approval last month of \$500 million in spending authority for the state Department of Education to disperse funds under the federal American Rescue Plan’s Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund in an effort to recommend the money be used for a bonus to educators. The Legislative Council recommended the funds be used to give a \$5,000 bonus to teachers and \$2,500 bonus to staff that will be financed with ESSER funds. “That bonus is a diversion. It doesn’t not address the educator shortage. A bonus doesn’t pay the bills next year” said Carol Fleming, president of the Arkansas Education Association.

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2022/jul/21/legislative-council-rescinds-500m-in-spending-authority-for-arkansas-department-of-education>

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"This latest guidance\* from the CDC should give our students, parents, and educators the confidence they need to head back to school this year with a sense of joy and optimism. While COVID continues to evolve, so has our understanding of the science and what it takes to return to school safely. Thanks to vaccines, boosters, new treatments, and commonsense safety precautions – as well as funding from the American Rescue Plan – our schools have more resources than ever before to provide the healthy learning environments our students need to grow and thrive academically, socially, and emotionally."

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

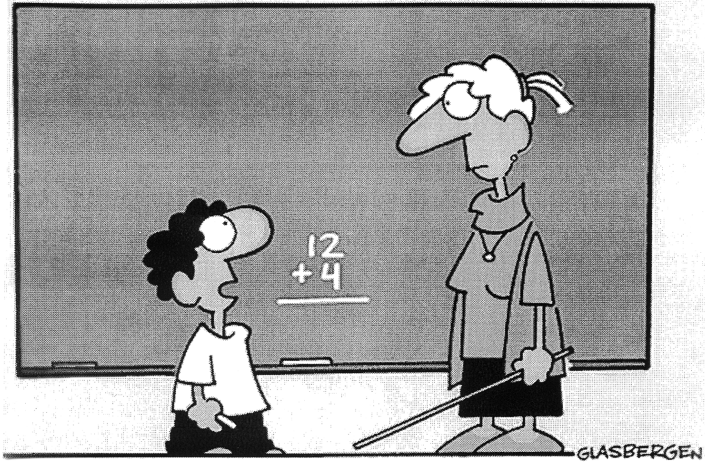
*\*Guidance for Minimizing the Impact of COVID-19 on Individual Persons, Communities, and Health Care Systems*

[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7133e1.htm?s\\_cid=mm7133e1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7133e1.htm?s_cid=mm7133e1_w)

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pyright 2002 by Randy Glasbergen. www.glasbergen.com



**“Do I get partial credit for simply having the courage to get out of bed and face the world again today?”**

### **Invitation for Comments and Sharing from the Field**

**Everyone has a stake in the future of public education. This is a critical time for action. Send this resource on to others. Think about sharing with the growing number who are receiving it. AND Let us know about what we should be including.**

Send to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

Here's what one colleague shared recently:

*We can't keep sending behavior problems to MH professionals when teaching behavior is as important as teaching math! We are piloting the Classroom management plan with teachers. It ties to their work and gives them autonomy to think about what they need to do to ensure students have learning behaviors that connect them to the classroom community rather than isolate them.*

### **THIS IS THE END OF THIS ISSUE OF ENEWS**

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.

**For more information about the Center and its many resources, go to the website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu) or [adelman@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:adelman@psych.ucla.edu)**

**Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**