

Students & Schools: Moving Forward

(June, 2025 Vol. 29 #9) – 37 Years & Counting

Featured

As cuts are made, we must make the most of the remaining student support resources

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As cuts are made, we must make the most of the remaining student support resources

With cuts to federal funding of multiple programs for student support, it is crucial that we use the people and programs in schools most effectively. The summer months allows staff who work year round to strengthen student and learning supports by unifying and systematizing what is available at school and in the community.

Turning Learning Supports into a Major Systemic Component

At most schools, support staff struggle each day to meet the demands on them. This usually means reacting with a limited set of individually focused and reactive interventions. Now is the time to think about how to become proactive and more effective.

The aim should be to set a process in motion for unifying a cohesive component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Such a component has been called a learning supports component.

Establishing such a component not only can end fragmented approaches, it can help end the marginalization of student support activity and staff. In turn, unifying the component provides the foundation for building on initiatives such as MTSS to develop, over a few years, the component into a comprehensive and equitable approach.

Moving Forward

In 2022, the Center sent out a document entitled *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*. In that guide, we discussed the need for system changes to end the fragmentation, overspecialization, and marginalization of student/learning supports and outlined first steps to take in pursuing the changes.

In 2024, we sent out a companion document entitled *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Starting the Process*. This guide provides a detailed discussion of the first steps for moving forward, suggests a monthly schedule, and provides links to resource aids for pursuing them. We also offer a few cautions to help avoid potential pitfalls.

The end of the school year and as feasible the summer are ideal times to begin moving forward by pursuing *Step 1 – delineating what is in place & recommending system changes*. Specifically, this includes:

- (a) mapping existing student support activities and operational infrastructure,
- (b) analyzing what has been mapped,
- (c) identifying priorities for and clarifying the benefits of system changes,
- (d) developing recommendations for system changes,
- (e) building a critical mass of support

The Center has a **System Change Toolkit** that has a variety of aids related to the steps outlined in the guides.

To lead the way, we recommend establishing a **Learning Supports Leadership Team**.

Here are a couple of aids for mapping and analyzing student/learning supports.

>**Mapping Tool**

>**A Set of Surveys to Map What a School Has and What it Needs**

Section A of the toolkit also provides brief big picture overviews (including exemplars, guides, powerpoints, webinars, handouts) for policy makers, administrators, and other stakeholders to adapt in moving forward and highlights essential elements, pioneering efforts, and examples of funding stream integration.

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We care about our students, and we care about our neighbors. We will stand in solidarity with the oppressed, and we will not despair. We will not agonize. We will organize. -- Sarah Wofford

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>**Quick Links to Online Resources**

>>**Community Coalition Functioning, Collaborative Structure, and Coalition Models: Enhancing Support for Evidence-Based Practice Implementation**

>>**Improving Ninth Graders' Academic Outcomes Through Personalization for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning**

>>**Effects of Family Socioeconomic Status on Educational Outcomes in Primary and Secondary Education**

>>**Framework for Implementing Improvement Science in a School District to Support Institutionalized Improvement**

>>**Considerations for Building Trusting Relationships Between Educational Professionals and Adolescents in Schools**

>>**Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence**

>>**2025 National Guidelines for a Behavioral Health Coordinated System of Crisis Care**

>>**Teaching Kids How to Deal With Conflict**

>>**Mental Health Support for Black Families**

>>**Helping Kids Make Decisions**

>>**K-12 Education: DOD Needs to Assess Its Capacity to Provide Mental Health Services to Students**

>>**K-12 Education in the Age of AI: The Role of the Social Sciences in Shaping Learning**

>>**Designs for a Transformative Technological Era**

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This moment is hard. They want it to be hard. But we are not backing down; we are doubling down. We have weathered these storms before. We have won before. And we will again because the stakes are too high to do anything else. — Elizabeth G. Taylor

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Here's what was discussed in the *Community of Practice* during May

Redefining the resilience narrative

Student Surveillance vs. privacy: Another dilemma for schools

45% of School Aged Children Lack Summer Learning Opportunities

Protective Buffers: Accentuating the positive and focusing on student strengths

How will education cuts impact students?

Why is it important to have student voices at the table?

A student's perspective on a school cell phone ban

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

If you missed the resources and news in previous issues of the Community of Practice, see
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

>For more resources in general, see our website

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

>For info on the status of upcoming conferences

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upconf.htm>

>For info on webinars

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

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It's time for a drastic change to today's narrative about young people, one that acknowledges the depth of pandemic setbacks but is free of labels and blame..... The win will come when we offer them opportunities to discover their strengths, enrich their relationships, build their academic and social skills and harness their energy to solve problems that matter to them. – Pamela Cantor

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>Calls for grant proposals

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/upcall.htm>

**> job and training opportunities
when available**

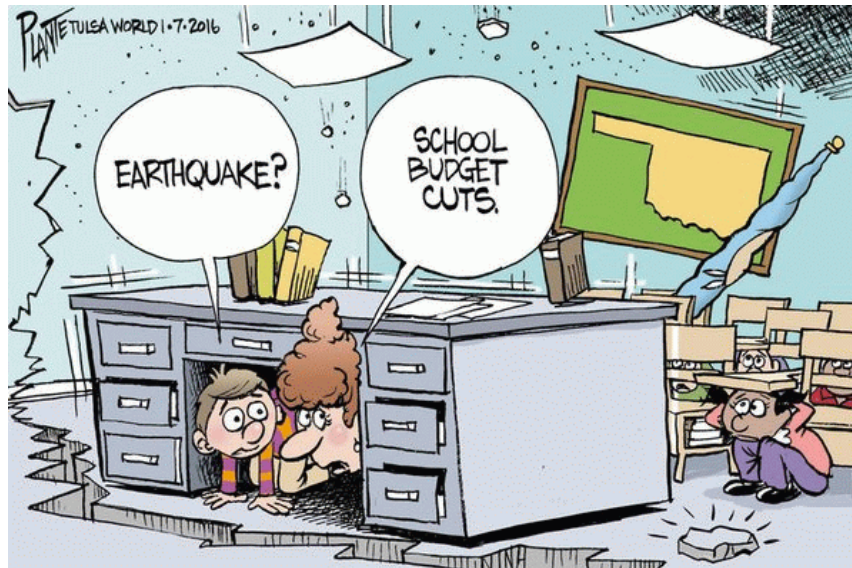
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/job.htm>

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Our Center emphasizes the opportunity to start now to transform how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

Let Us Know about what ideas are being proposed for moving in new directions for transforming how schools address barriers to learning and teaching.

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 can help. Send all info to ltaylor@ucla.edu



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

The administration cuts \$1 billion in school mental health grants, citing conflict of priorities. The administration is moving to cancel \$1 billion in school mental health grants. Grant recipients were notified that the funding will not be continued after this year. The Education Department confirmed the cuts. “The Department plans to re-envision and re-compete its mental health program funds to more effectively support students’ behavioral health needs,” according to the notice.

Cuts in Funding for Autism Research. A funder of autism research has historically been the Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. But recent layoffs have left only a skeleton staff remaining. Autism research at the institute focused on developing and evaluating school-based interventions to improve outcomes for students with autism. Charting My Path for Future Success, a Department of Education program, lost funding because of government cuts. It helped students with disabilities, including those with autism, transition from high school into college or work.

Federal cut to children's advocacy funding 'abandons American children,' says SD nonprofit leader.

A Rapid City-based nonprofit that advocates for children in the state court system lost \$15,000 last week after the federal government terminated grant awards to the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association. Volunteers with CASA advocate for children who've been removed from their families and placed in state care due to suspected abuse and neglect. The volunteers meet with the children and other contacts, such as teachers, therapists and caseworkers. They also write reports to judges about the children's needs, strengths and interests to create "customized services and decision making." The national organization suspended all services and support to state and local programs, it announced last week, after the administration's Department of Justice terminated funding.

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Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. — Cesar Chavez

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>Comments and sharing from the field

We were asked to share the following:

1. David Tokofsky, a former LAUSD school board member, asked us to share the following information related to a California Initiative that might be a model for other states:
"Dear Readers,
As we read about districts worried about declining enrollment, loss of federal funds and cuts to key personnel especially those helping with social emotional supports essential to helping teachers and school site administrators succeed, it's important to emphasize the California Governor's great initiative called Children Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. You can find out more about the program and its reimbursement fee schedule monies on the Department of Health Care Services. In short, this first of its kind program... allows each provider such as a school nurse, psychologist, social worker, and many other licensed providers in the fee schedule to be reimbursed at least 50,000 dollars a year for listed services in the fee schedule..."
Fee Schedule at <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CYBHI/Pages/Fee-Schedule.aspx>
For an overview of this initiative, see <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/cybhi>
2. "I've been on the listserve for a number of years, and I'm grateful for your efforts. I wondered if you might be able to speak with me about the dissemination of a program that has been shown to be efficacious in controlled and uncontrolled evaluations involving collegiate and high school athletes (also feasibility initiatives in schools directly). I've included some information below:
The Optimum Performance Program in Sports (TOPPS) can be implemented in teams/coaches, in classes w/ students/teachers, in assemblies/auditoriums (mini-workshops lasting 30 to 60 mins. or longer). See below for more information about TOPPS (which remains the ONLY program to improve mental health and sport performance while concurrently improving relationships with coaches, family and teammates in collegiate and high school athletes with and without diagnosed mental health disorders). Adaptations have successfully occurred in non-athlete populations (e.g., serious mental illness, substance abuse, faculty/staff/kids at 2 elementary schools). I've done TOPPS with Cirque du Soleil artists, national and world champions, Olympians, and professional athletes.
Development funded by: The National Institutes of Health (NIDA specifically).
Website: <https://www.toppscience.com/>
See demonstration videos summarizing "some" of the TOPPS components and outcomes components

Recent Comments:

>Response to **"Has use of the term 'Mental Health' in the context of schools become a bad thing?"** (5/8/25 commentary)

"Very challenging and important points made by the person you quoted. Can't disagree, and judging from your paradigm and writings that I am familiar with, you don't seem to disagree either. Searching my own conscience, perspective, and philosophy, I have to agree also. It's too "large a bucket, lacking the resolution we truly need for permanent solutions." Also large terms, but perhaps more manageable and less "pathology" oriented are: Therapeutic community, supportive community, or others could be used more frequently.

>Response to **"45% of School Aged Children Lack Summer Learning Opportunities"**

"I read your concern about the lack of activities for children during the summer months. I thought you might be interested in this collaborative effort in Georgia to provide parents with summer resources:

Summer Resources for Parents - Get Georgia Reading

Child Health and Wellness: Engage these available resources from DECAL to reinforce child health and wellness this summer. Here you'll find nutrition education activities like "It's Taste Test Time!" and "Food Education Scavenger Hunt" along with resources about child care nutrition, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Strong4Life Parent, breastfeeding, food allergies, and more.
getgeorgiareading.org

> Response to **"How Harmful are the Changes at the Federal Level to Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching?"** (5/1/25 commentary)

"We are one of the recipients of the SBMH federal grants which funds 10.0 FTE counseling in our rural district! The loss of these grants funds is devastating for our students -- we were notified this week of the DOE's intention! Thank you for the good work you do to support our students!"

>Response to April 17 **"Concerned About Mental Health in Schools?"** (4/17/25 commentary)

"Love your passion, but remember your results will be dictated by the acceptance of your solutions. As soon as you use the term "Mental Health in Schools", you've lost in my mind. I don't disagree but that immediately alienates Parents, Administration, and it's a no-win political topic, probably for reflective reasons but does it matter? Children go to School and a lot of other places, Mental Health is in them. I would also maybe challenge that term as too large a bucket, lacking the resolution we truly need for permanent solutions. In fact I would hypothesize that most "Students" need a different approach, they don't truly have "Mental Health Issues", they have understanding issues as do most of us. I was taught the 3R process from my Father: Recognize, Report and Remedy. I think we may recognize and even report those with "defined" mental health issues, but the remedy part still needs some attention. The truth is we are all broken in some form, that is the design. We can and will address this. Ignorance has been, is and will always be our greatest enemy, don't treat the symptom, treat the root cause. I m very appreciative of your efforts!"



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
- **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

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 <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> or email Ltaylor@ucla.edu or adelman@psych.ucla.edu

Send info to share with others or ask for specific resources by email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu